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Managing Customer Complaints in Online Auction Markets

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Abstract

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by

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MBA, University of Phoenix, 2013

BBA, Azad University, 2002

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore strategies managers in the online auction industry used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. The targeted population consisted of 4 managers of online auction companies in the southwestern region of the United States. The conceptual framework for the study was Argyris and Schön's double-loop learning theory. Data were collected via semistructured interviews with business managers, observation of company operations and behaviors, review of documentation, and member-checking activities. Data analysis consisted of text interpretation of data and notes using coding techniques. Data analysis resulted in 5 themes: business orientation, customer purview, complaints handling, coping strategies, and learning abilities. The implications of this study for positive social change include facilitating the growth of online markets and increasing lower-cost purchasing opportunities for consumers with limited access to conventional marketplaces.

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Dedication

I dedicate this research study to my beloved parents and brothers, and my sister, Mozhgan Mousavi, and my lovely niece, Dorsa Mousavi, whose inspiration, support, and encouragement have helped me to finish the course. This achievement is as much theirs as it is mine.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The electronic shopping and mail-order business is more than a $500 billion industry segment in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Customers increasingly buy goods online and rely on a high level of service quality when vendors deliver the ordered goods to them (Tadelis, 2016). Online vendors deal with a variety of customer complaints and have to resolve them adequately as complaints affect their business performance and profitability.

In this multiple case study, I examined strategies vendors employ to deal with a variety of customer complaints that relate to customer behavior and customer satisfaction. Online vendors may use strategies to increase customer satisfaction and decrease the number of customer complaints. The literature review consists of an in-depth discussion of various strategies online vendors may apply. The problem statement, the research question, the concomitant purpose statement, and the rationale for choosing the qualitative research method are part of this section.

Background of the Problem

Online vendors need to pay attention to resolving customer complaints, as these complaints may affect the sales online vendors generate in online auction markets impacting the profitability of their businesses. Buyers often complain of online vendors (a) not delivering ordered goods and services appropriately, (b) not responding to other complaints about the quality of goods, or (c) not delivering the goods (Snijders, Bober, & Matzat, 2017). Buyers also complain because purchased goods are not up to their expectations (Nguyen, De Leeuw, & Dullaert, 2018). Online vendors try to decrease the number of complaints and increase customer satisfaction by various means, such as technology enablement of operations, the functioning of the auction website, the bidding behavior of buyers and sellers, reputation of the online auction, and the trust between buyers and vendors in these online auctions (Chen, Lu, & Tu, 2017). These factors relate to customer complaints studied at online auctions such as eBay, one of the largest online auctions in the world (Chamba, Arruarte, & Elorriaga, 2016; Prashar, Vijay, & Parsad, 2015; Yan, Zheng, Wang, Song, & Zhang, 2015).

In this study, I investigated the effective strategies vendors used to reduce complaints and improve customer satisfaction. Online vendors compete fiercely in the online auction markets. They have to adapt quickly to changing market conditions and customer demands to make a profitable return (Tadelis, 2016).

Problem Statement

The online auction market grew significantly less than the traditional electronic shopping and mail-order business during 2012–2016, the latter of which increased to $469 billion in the United States by 9% annually (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Customer complaints are a significant concern for online vendors because complaints may erode customers' trust, which results in dissatisfied customers filing complaints and a reduction in sales and profitability (Hui, Saeedi, Shen, & Sundaresan, 2016; Mamun, 2015). The general business problem was that online vendors need to find ways to deal with an increasing amount of customer complaints and determine appropriate responses, as otherwise, they will experience a decrease in their sales and profitability. The specific business problem was that some managers of vendors in online auction markets lack effective strategies to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. The targeted population included managers of six companies in Los Angeles, California, who successfully implemented effective strategies to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. These vendors sold their products in online auction markets such as eBay.

The implications of this study for positive social change include facilitating the growth of online markets and increasing opportunities to buy and sell goods and services among those who have limited access to conventional marketplaces and brick-and-mortar stores. Online markets also benefit consumers and the economy as a whole by lowering the cost of goods and improving services for consumers with market participants profiting from efficiency gains from the use of and access to electronic transactions.

Nature of the Study

Research methodologies can have a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed research nature (Mason, 2017; Venkatesh, Brown, & Sullivan, 2017; Yin, 2018). Morse (2015) used qualitative methods to generate a rich description of phenomena under study. Qualitative methods met the needs of this study because I provided a thick description of the strategies managers of online vendors use to manage customer complaints in this study. Applying constructs and assessing quantitative data were not part of this study because many more variables would exist than those captured data points. I focused on the experiences, behaviors, beliefs, and values of managers related to the phenomena under study which centered on managing customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction successfully.

Ravitch and Carl (2015) used quantitative methods to test hypotheses and relationships among variables. This study did not pertain to testing any hypotheses nor any relationship among variables. Therefore, a quantitative research method did not meet the needs for this study. Lee, Lee, and Bong (2014) and Yin (2018) stated that using the mixed method must combine qualitative and quantitative methods when hard data is available to measure and validate constructs or when a succession of either of these methods is necessary. Constructs to measure successful strategies for managing complaints to improve customer satisfaction have not been the subject of much academic research. Most of the research on online auctions concerns the way these auctions work and depend on hard data to assess the mechanism of the auction and the behavior of auction participants (sellers and buyers) as explored by Muthitacharoen and Tams (2017). In this study, I did not focus on the mechanisms of an auction, but on the managerial aspects of applying the appropriate effective strategies to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction for which the variables to formulate and test hypotheses were not available in the academic literature as indicated by Yan et al. (2015). Extending this research by conducting a succession of two qualitative research methods or designing a succession of a qualitative and quantitative research study did not meet the needs of this study because of time limits conducting the research. The research method was of a purely qualitative nature for studying strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage complaints to improve outcomes to improve customer satisfaction. Therefore, using the mixed method did not meet my needs.

The four qualitative study designs suitable for this research included: phenomenological, ethnographic, narrative, and case designs. Goulding (2005) used a phenomenological design to build the essence from lived experiences based on interpretations and meanings without an explicit theoretical orientation primarily based on interview data. Goulding described that the goal of phenomenological research is to capture a deeper and larger understanding of immediate experiences by conducting interviews and reading participants' narratives which result in extracting significant statements, the formulation of meanings, and finding meaningful themes to create an essential structure on the explanation of behavior. This study contained multiple interviews from more than one source and included other data, such as observations, documents, and artifacts, to develop a detailed analysis and description of multiple cases of a phenomenon. Therefore, a phenomenological design did not meet the needs for this research. Goulding used ethnographic designs to study cultures to look for rounded, and holistic explanations by working with participants in their natural settings. Even though familiarity with the organizational culture of the companies would be useful, becoming a member of the culture to collect data did not take place due to time constraints.

The focus of this research study was not on organizational culture from an embedded perspective. For these reasons, an ethnographic design was not applicable to this study. Buchanan and Dawson (2007) and Guetterman (2015) used a narrative design to describe the phenomena under study using participants' storytelling in chronological sequence with a sample size as few as one. Narrative designs were not suitable for this study due to sample size and reliance on interview data as a primary source. Mason (2017) used case study designs to study *what, how*, and *why* research questions. This research concerned a *what* research question to identify and explore the strategies managers of online vendors used to manage customer complaints successfully. Hence, the case study design was suitable for this study.

Research Question

The research question for this study was: What effective strategies do managers of vendors in online auction markets use to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction?

Interview Questions

The interview questions were:

1. How would you describe your experience from the start up to this date at the eBay platform for conducting your business that relates to complaints and customer satisfaction?
2. What type(s) of complaints do you receive most frequently?
3. What specific strategies or approaches have you used and were effective to address these complaints?
4. On a typical day, what do you do to manage these complaints? Please make sure you can recall specific details you did, what, when, where, how, for whom.

5. What do you intend to accomplish by managing these complaints?
6. How, if at all, are you changing your approaches and strategies to manage customer complaints?
7. How have these complaints influenced your behavior dealing with eBay and/or your customers?
8. How do you assess the effectiveness of your strategies for handling customers' complaints?
9. What other issues, subjects of interests, comments, or suggestions have we not discussed regarding your strategies for complaint management?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was double-loop learning theory to research managerial and behavioral phenomena in online auction market companies. Argyris and Schön (1978) postulated the double-loop learning theory and clarified how organizational learning is a process of detecting and correcting errors. The central concept in double-loop learning theory is the action-based strategies managers use to change habits and attitudes of organizational actors. These strategies have consequences for the interactions between managers, the outcomes of which illustrate a degree of organizational learning and effectiveness of the organization (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Single-loop learning occurs when managers handle each incident or event based on established procedures or policies. Double-loop learning refers to the processes where managers question existing underlying organizational policies and processes to achieve objectives in a different fashion which are long-term by orientation (Baskerville, Spagnoletti, & Kim, 2014; Villar, Alegre, & Pla-Barber, 2014).

Double-loop learning was applicable to this study because this theory provided a useful theoretical lens for identifying and exploring the strategies and actions online vendors used to manage complaints to improve customer satisfaction effectively. Effectively managing complaints might have required to question the status quo in the organization fundamentally and to organize work and procedures differently. In this manner, online vendors would prefer to improve their processes significantly than perform business activities as they would use to do them previously.

Operational Definitions

Bidding behavior: In this study, bidding behavior relates to general, aggregated behavior across the phases of the auction, rather than behavior confined to a specific phase of the auction (Cui, Lai, & Liu, 2008).

Complaints: Complaints are expressions of dissatisfaction stemming from a feeling of having been wronged (Snijders et al., 2017). Customers who have complaints can express dissatisfaction with a company's customer service or allege a company has defrauded them. Complaints concern problems regarding (a) delivery, (b) the ordered good, (c) refund or compensation, (d) communication with the vendor, and (e) issues with bidding behavior and auction outcomes (Scott, Gregg, & Choi, 2015).

Consumer behavior: This term consists of actions of consumers directed to the outcome of the online auction and includes behavior demonstrated by consumers who file complaints and reconsider their reactions based on the responses of online vendors to these complaints (Cui et al., 2008).

Dutch internet auction: An auction where the auctioneer determines the starting figure and quotes prices at descending intervals until the last bidder becomes successful with the highest bid (Adam, Eidels, Lux, & Teubner, 2017).

Facilitating factors: These are factors that facilitate online auctions and affect consumer behavior and the auction outcome (Cui et al., 2008).

Intermediary factors: These factors (including *complaints*) relate to other variables by influencing the competitiveness and success of auction operations (Cui et al., 2008).

Online auction: An auction held via the internet, specifically a Dutch Internet auction (Cui et al., 2008). In this study, the online platform eBay is applicable which is a multi-unit auction where consumers pay the same price per item and bidders do not only bid on prices but also on the quantity they want to buy.

Seller factors: These factors relate to auction settings and the seller's reputation in online auctions (Cui et al., 2008). Auction settings usually refer to product characteristics (such as the product picture and description), starting price, bid increments, auction duration and auction time (Cui et al., 2008).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts, statements, or suppositions that the researcher holds as accurate or truthful without having the ability to validate them (Birley & Moreland, 2014;

Englander, 2016). Additionally, the credibility of the assumptions the researcher believes are applicable and which relate to the theory or conceptual framework (Johnston, 2014).

My main assumption was that the choice of the research design (the exploratory case study) was appropriate to explain those phenomena related to managers of online auctions who dealt with handling complaints to improve customer satisfaction. My second assumption was that participants in this study answered to the interview questions truthfully. It was a reasonable assumption because in this study interviewees were not urged to release any trade secrets or facts that can damage their competitive advantage. Another assumption was that participants would find the results of this study useful for their business practices when they review the intermediary findings for verification and feedback purposes.

Limitations

Horga, Kaur, and Peterson (2014) defined limitations as shortcomings of a study over which a researcher does not have control. Limitations may become evident when the research is in progress. Alternatively, limitations surface and emerge when the researcher completes the analysis and interpretation (Ravitch & Carl, 2015).

Exploring strategies related to managers of vendors in online auction markets managing customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction, the identification, and verification of these strategies had their basis in the conducted interviews and other available documentation. This study did not consist of experiments to assess collected data and did not pertain to applying quantitative research methods. Consequently, the findings of this study were not as generalizable in the same way as when the study were a quantitative research. Another limitation of this case study concerned the available information that was available based on the documentation related to participants who were willing to provide and share in the interviews. The sample size of online auction market companies in Los Angeles, California, might not have represented the total population of companies in online auctions.

Delimitations

Delimitations are those attributes and constraints of the study that define the scope and applicability of the research (Birley & Moreland, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This study contained collected interview data and documents about strategies managers use to manage customer complaints. The delimitation relates to the geographically defined area, Los Angeles, California, as interviews and collected documentation related only to online auction market companies in this geographic area. Even though online auction markets operate in a global or national setting, local regulations and culture might affect the subject matter of this study concerning strategies for managing customer complaints.

Significance of the Study

Online vendors of auction companies that sell products in online auction markets face a variety of customer complaints ranging from nondelivery of goods to defective products. Online vendors must understand why these complaints occur, what causes the complaints, and how to avoid and reduce them. Online vendors should be able to identify, select, and apply those strategies and actions in their organizations and manage these complaints to improve customer satisfaction. Online vendors depend on reducing the number of complaints for the success of their business, as complaints inhibit customers from participating in the auction process. Vendors of online auction markets may be able to reduce potential conflicts and resolutions between customers and themselves by using appropriate strategies to reduce costs and increase profitability.

Contribution to Business Practice

Findings of this study may be useful for online vendors in understanding what they can do to manage and handle complaints. Vendors may learn how to decrease nonpositive feedback from buyers, decrease customer disputes, and increase seller ratings on the auction platform website or reputation platforms. As a result of deploying the right strategies to manage complaints, vendors may improve customer satisfaction and enhance customer experiences to buy goods in their online markets. These strategies may lead to increased sales and vendors may spend less time and resources managing and resolving complaints.

The outcome of this study may illustrate to business practitioners and leaders how to change management practices by identifying, designing, and implementing new processes and procedures in organizations when adapting to external circumstances is required to stay competitive. These management practices incorporate the extent to which individuals, teams, and management learn how to react to internal and external stimuli to make changes in their service operations. Especially in online auctions, vendors rely on a high quality of service with very low levels of complaints which require vendors to review management practices (Tadelis, 2016).

Implications for Social Change

The results of this study may lead to social change by facilitating the growth of online auction markets consumers and auction participants accept well because complaints may deter the use and further acceptance of these markets. Expanding online markets can bring about positive social change in two ways. First, online markets lower the cost of products and services to consumers by enabling information technologies and (disruptive) innovation (Camisón & Villar-López, 2014). Online markets make it easier for consumers to do comparison shopping, increasing competitiveness for producers and services providers. Online vendors do not have the overhead of having brick-and-mortar stores or a large sales force.

Increased competition and the cost savings from electronic online sales transactions lower the cost of products and services for consumers. Second, expansion of online markets can provide access to products and services to consumers who otherwise have limited access. Poor neighborhoods and remote rural areas have a limited choice of stores and vendors. Also, people who have physical disabilities may have difficulties in traveling to stores. Online markets break down these physical barriers by providing equally convenient access to any consumer.

Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

This section contains a more in-depth and critical analysis of the conceptual framework of double-loop learning as introduced in the previous section. In this section, I elaborate on the merits and the extent to which this theory applies to managers of vendors in online auction markets for managing customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. This review concerns supporting and contrasting theories about double-loop learning to explain (dis)similar theories that managers of online vendors might use otherwise. This introductory section consists of preliminary remarks about the strategy for searching the literature and the formulation of its purpose. Succeeding subsections include supporting theories to double-loop learning. These are (a) organizational learning, (b) learning organizations, (c) the co-evolutionary framework, and (d) community of practice. Contrasting theories are: (a) dynamic capabilities, (b) absorptive capacity, (c) situated learning models, (d) self-efficacy theory, and (e) the categorization-elaboration model (CEM).

The systematic integrated literature review (SILR) methodology for searching literature is useful for identifying the essential components of published literature reviews by using keywords in multiple databases (Takai, Yamamoto-Mitani, Abe, & Suzuki, 2015). I sorted articles by themes and concepts on organizational learning as a result of (a) using the keywords *organizational learning, learning organizations, online auctions, complaints, single-loop learning, double-loop learning, triple-loop learning, competitive advantage, qualitative research, case study, community of practice, small-business development, leadership, collaboration, innovation*, or a combination of keywords and related terms in multiple academic databases and repositories of Walden University; and (b) finding literature related to major authors in organizational learning, learning organizations and collaboration, such as Argyris, Schön, Van Knippenberg, Van Ginkel, Homan, Volberda, Van Den Bosch, Heij, and Cui.

The primary databases I used include SAGE Publications, ScienceDirect, ProQuest, Emerald Management Journals, EBSCOhost, US Census, ProQuest Central, and ProQuest Dissertations. I searched these databases to find resource material for this research topic that consisted of journal articles, dissertations, and case studies, focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles. The leading journals for finding peer-reviewed articles were *Management & Organization Studies. Academy of Management Journal, Administrative Science Quarterly, Communications of the ACM, MIS Quarterly*, and *Harvard Business Review.* Additionally, I searched for articles and related information using Google Scholar by applying combinations of keywords, author names, supplemented by search selections by date. This subsection contains 125 peer-reviewed sources and seven seminal publications, of which 114 peer-reviewed and six seminal sources originate from 2014 or earlier. Of all these sources, 91.7% are from 2014 or later.

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. I used the literature review to identify relevant and salient literature regarding the topic of this study. This literature review is the foundation to answer the research question. For this purpose, I conducted a review of scholarly and peer-reviewed journal articles, other seminal literature, and dissertations. The literature review consists of an overview and an analysis of the literature related to the conceptual framework of this study in the areas of (a) individual and team learning, (b) learning in and between organizations, (c) the capabilities of an organization, and (d) collaboration. The research question and topic closely link to these theoretical perspectives.

Based on this literature research, various theoretical perspectives were chosen closely linked to the research question and topic, such as double-loop learning and theories related to organizational learning, learning organizations, and collaboration. I sorted and reviewed these articles accordingly in themes as illustrated by the naming of the subsections in this review. These theories were used to synthesize and analyze concepts and their suitable applicability in the context of this doctoral study.

Double-Loop Learning

In this subsection, I introduce the concept of double-loop learning (DLL) and provide a review of the literature on this concept to answer the research question. Participants in organizations contribute to the attainment of goals in an enterprise. These participants perform job-related tasks by leveraging their knowledge and expertise to processes and procedures that managers control based on preset objectives (Argyris & Schön, 1978). These processes and procedures become standard, and participants to these become used to them or can improve their efforts in attaining the objectives related to these tasks. People acquire tacit and explicit knowledge implementing routines and learn accordingly (Pilemalm, Andersson, & Yousefi Mojir, 2014). When the environment changes, participants in organizations should flexibly change routines and acquire new knowledge to initiate a course of change and take appropriate action. Most of the time, improving the way stakeholders, managers and employees, perform their daily jobs is not the solution (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

Going beyond day-to-day routines, thinking about new ways to perform jobs and set-up new processes, and assessing and re-formulating organizational goals require other modes of organizational learning. The detection and correction of errors is related to organizational learning (OL), whereby the discrepancy between what members in an organizational context aspire to achieve and what they actually achieve results in an error (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Organizational learning is founded on the theory of action that distinguishes between what people say they value and desire (their espoused theory) and what they do regarding their theory-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Kim, MacDonald, & Andersen, 2013).

Argyris and Schön (1978) argued organizational learning should not be conceived of as a self-productive process, but they emphasized members of an organization are not merely a storage bin of past rational experiences. Argyris and Schön suggested an organization's knowledge exists through integrations of its member's knowledge to produce performance change. A subsequent section contains a discussion of Heorhiadi, La Venture, and Conbere (2014) who described double-loop learning as transformative learning and its relationship to the learning organization (LO). As such, organizational learning is a cognitive system that members of an organization develop and share. Organizational learning can achieve results along at least two dimensions, and these dimensions have a variety of names. Commonly these dimensions are called single- and double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

Single-loop learning (SLL) concerns action-oriented, routine, and incremental tasks and decision-making processes, occurring within existing mental models, norms, policies and underlying assumptions (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Lee, 2014). Single-loop learning is more of a repeated attempt at the same problem without a variation of an applied method or ever questioning the goal or objective (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017). According to Jaaron and Backhouse (2017), when members of an organization focus on SLL-related strategies to improve tasks and performance, they find solutions based on existing behaviors and attitudes which are the norm. Jaaron and Backhouse (2017) conducted their mixed method research study in 2015 which concerned two service organisations in the United Kingdom.

These services organizations were an adult social care department in north Wales and a mortgage operations departement of a large banking and financial institution in Edinburgh. The authors chose these organizations using an extreme case sampling technique by making sure through confirming patterns that the phenomena to conduct their studies were highly available. The study contained questionnaires for 55 and 200 employees respectively with 21 items with seven dimensions measuring the learning organization which complemented interviews with 14 participants in total (six for the adult social care department and eight for the financial services institution). The results of this study by Jaaron and Backhouse indicated that employees and managers likely did not confront senior management or suggest learning opportunities outside established themes, routines and proven ways of doing things as discussed by Senge (1990).

The more complex, dynamic, turbulent, and threatening the organization's environment, the more double-loop learning becomes necessary (Lee, 2014). Lee conducted a qualitative study in a South-Korean hospital with 134 participants filling out questionnaires to study the relationship between person-job fit, self-efficacy, and individual performance. The results indicated that despite the urge to change norms, policies, and routines, management would continue to adhere to single-loop learning and related problem-solving patterns (Lee, 2014). The implications of the study concerned those efforts which enhance learning on one dimension may limit success on the other since single- and double-loop organizational learning competes for the same limited organizational resources.

Double-loop learning is a strategic, flexible organizational learning methodology for managing change and promoting continuous learning in an organization (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The potential of double-loop learning is to let employees collaborate by integrating each individual's learning with that of the organization as investigated by Lee (2014). Argyris and Schön (1978) postulated that action-oriented learning based on technical rationality and reflective practice is the basis for double-loop learning to happen. For double-loop learning to happen, an individual's extant mental models should be confronted and questioned as Pérez-Bennett, Davidsen, and López (2014) did by using a case-based simulation game using 72 MBA students in Latin America.

Pérez-Bennett et al. (2014) demonstrated that double-loop learning is an organizational approach necessary to overcome obstacles for improvement efforts and to induce organizational stakeholders thinking beyond their traditional comfort zones. Managers stimulate double-loop learning to empower employees and other stakeholders to come up with new ideas, solutions, and decision-making processes to alter the way how they do things constructively (Pérez-Bennett et al., 2014). The implementation of double-loop learning unfreezes the organization or processes and bring them to an altogether different stage as they were in before. Organizational stakeholders successfully implementing double-loop learning put the organization at a higher and effective organizational performance level (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

Single-loop learning and double-loop learning may exhibit reciprocal disrupting effects since single-loop involves changes with action-oriented, routine, and incremental tasks and decision-making processes (Lee, 2014). Second-order learning challenges the very frameworks and assumptions that underly such actions and routines (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Two dimensions of learning are indeed more or less incompatible, and organizations may have to face trade-offs in learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017).

Changes in organizations may only take one organizational learning path. Hence, stakeholders in organizations can only learn either in an evolutionary or revolutionary way for changes to take effect. Organizational learning relates to organizational stakeholders who can only deliver fundamental improvements requiring double-loop learning to effectuate sustaining competitive advantage when traditional improvements efforts to calibrate organizational performance fail (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017).

The practice of unlearning seems to be essential for achieving resilient performance improvement actions in organizations and is only connected to double-loop learning (Hislop, Bosley, Coombs, & Holland, 2014). Hence, double-loop learning has a more significant effect on organizational performance than practicing single-loop learning. Organizations generally do not practice double-loop learning to generate and implement necessary improvement and changes contrary to conventional wisdom in organizations which would result in ineffective and unprofitable operations as found by Hislop et al. (2014) who assessed the organizational literature on unlearning. As a result, organizations rarely succeed in going through operational changes that do not conform to their core values and beliefs.

Double-loop learning conforms to knowledge acquisition when organizations achieve their redetermined goals and predefined best performance (Argyris & Schön, 1978). When organizations refine and reformulate their mission, vision, and value statements, triple-loop learning (TLL) results in redefined organizational processes, management, and work trade-offs. Triple-loop learning pertains to continual reflection on the learning process, the contexts within which learning occurs, and the assumptions and values motivating the learning and influencing its outcomes (Lozano, 2014). Triple-loop learning entails developing new processes, or methodologies, to reconsider and adjust mental models and facilitates responses and changes concerning the environment (Reynolds, 2014).

Managers find difficulties in changing performance and inducing improvements in organizations because adaptations in organizations require a refinement of statements related to the core believes and values of the organization (Unger-Aviram & Erez, 2016). Acquiring new knowledge and rigid attitudes might hinder the organization's adaptation ability to change conditions concerning processes and embedded dynamic capabilities. Unger-Aviram and Erez applied an experimental design with repeated-measures in three groups with 120 students who took an undergraduate university course on leadership in Israel in 2015. Unlearning is the process in organizational learning related to identifying and discarding or clearing out obsolete beliefs and old routines that do not meet current challenges or objectives (Hislop et al., 2014). Unlearning implies organizational stakeholders challenge the current organization set-up, routines, and understanding. Hislop et al. found significant relationships between unlearning and the practice of double-loop learning which requires unlearning efforts and transformation of attitudes, beliefs and thought.

An enterprise's competitive advantage depends heavily on the ability of its human resources to leverage their tacit skills and to identify and deploy strategies they use to improve performance or perform the tasks in a different albeit more effective way. According to Argote and Guo (2016), managers of companies use dynamic capabilities to adapt, integrate, and reconfigure their resources and competencies in response to changes and challenges in their environments forcing firms to respond and avert courses of actions. These capabilities include learning abilities and collaboration efforts of people involved in an enterprise. The result of these abilities and efforts is people disseminating information, generating, sharing and mobilizing ideas to promote and institute change in organizations. Accordingly, scholars categorize the extent to which people learn and the concomitant effects of SLL, DLL or TLL typology.

Organizational learning is the descriptive stream and deals mostly with the learning processes in the organization and how people learn. Argyris and Schön (1978) dealt with organizational learning in the perspective and context of social psychology. Members of a learning organization view the organization as a social system with embedded processes for (a) continually generating, retaining and leveraging individual and collective learning to improve performance of the organizational system in ways relevant to stakeholders; and (b) by monitoring and improving performance (Santa, 2015). Organizational learning is a precursor for the level of required change to alter organizational conditions to effectuate outcomes meeting organizational challenges and sustaining a company's sustainable advantage. The effectiveness of these outcomes depends on the extent to which organizational managers and stakeholders learn and adapt.

Organizational learning consists of behavioral learning and cognitive learning which are significant ways how people within organizations learn and adapt their behavior based on existing or prevailing interpretations (Senge, 1990). By contrast, cognitive learning refers to the continuous review and modification of ways of working for performance improvements (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017). Senge (1990) suggested two types of learning: (a) adaptive learning whereby individuals gain knowledge through small-scale adjustment of past decisions; and (b) generative learning whereby individuals gain knowledge through challenging, questioning, and repudiating decision while making assumptions. Senge (1990) claimed double-loop learning requires factors as systemic thinking, a shared vision and team learning (collaboration) without which a shared context does not exist as found by Al-Raqadi, Abdul Rahim, Masrom, and Al-Riyami (2015). The latter authors used a learning organisation questionnaire in 2013 among dockyard employees in five organizations in Oman with a total sample size of 420 participants. The participants were highly educated and included administrators, logisticians, technicians, engineers and managers between 5 and 30 years of experience.

Externalization of tacit knowledge is necessary for true organizational learning to occur; otherwise, business leaders and employees continue the status quo which mostly is typical for single-loop learning behaviors (Pilemalm et al., 2014). Double-loop learning only takes place when people can learn from their (conflicting) learning experience, and consciously create a community of practice. Pilemalm et al. conducted a survey of the Swedish Rescue Services organization which comprises of state and municipal departmental units by employing an exploratory multiple case study design which involved studying documents, holding interviews, participant observations, and workshops. The number of participants were at least two per case.

At the organizational level, the routines, procedures, and policies of the organization as defense mechanisms against double-loop change are not clearly understood (Argyris & Schön, 1978). Individuals engage in defense mechanisms in order to not change their behavior and avert actions which might improve the profitability and other goals in an organization. How double-loop learning takes place or what kind of mechanisms makes learning efforts advance from the individual level to the organizational level is not often clear (Rauffet, Cunha, & Bernard, 2014).

The next topic to address is what learning typifies and encompasses to analyze how double-loop learning takes place in practice. Rauffet et al. (2014) studied an industrial setting at a global automotive supplier Valeo by conducting interviews with 30 participants assessing their competences roadmaps which management and employees use to transfer management practices and capabilities in their organizations. Organizational learning is a tool and results from organizational change and development to attain a competitive advantage through the exchange of knowledge and collaboration to determine an organization's future (Senge, 1990).

Lozano (2014) reviewed a typology of learning across SLL, DLL, and TLL involving the following learning modes: (a) adaptive learning being a reactive form of learning involving the search for direct solutions to immediate problems; (b) anticipatory learning focusing on avoiding future problems by identifying potential events and searching for the best ways to prepare for them; and (c) action learning seeking ways to resolve real problems or tasks through experimentation and applying experiences. Individuals, teams, and organizations learn at various levels and intensities. These learning models define the way how individuals acquire knowledge and the extent to which they create and refine their mental mindset to work together in teams and organization (Senge, 1990).

Rauffet et al. (2014) connected double-loop learning with attempts that organizational stakeholders take to improve organizational set-ups and processes in their current states without altering these. Also, stakeholders do not refrain and feel empowered to alter these states by trial-and-error. As such, stakeholders do not have to take recourse to unfreeze organizational set-ups to improve conditions and results dramatically (Rauffet et al., 2014).

Various modalities of learning exist. *Passive learning* primarily occurs through attaining skills through schooling to accomplish immediate tasks (Lozano, 2014). The focus is on a particular current task requiring attention (Lozano, 2014). *Forecasting learning* concerns with an increasing skill set to prepare for future tasks, events, or problems without the need for a rationale or interference of other tasks or problems (Lozano, 2014). This type of learning is mentally abstract oriented. *Coaching learning* refers to increasing skills through training to accommodate for immediate or future tasks through real-life practical problem solving which represents a more ‘hands-on' approach without the need for a rationale or interference of other tasks or problems (Lozano, 2014).

People using *proactive learning* question and investigate immediate assumptions, policies and mental models to find the causes and fundaments of problems and challenges without the need to take future situations or mental models into account based on mental abstractions (Lozano, 2014). *Backcasting learning* aims at challenging mental models by comparing future ideal scenarios with current ones. People can plan and implement changes in organizations accordingly (Lozano, 2014). This learning process also uses mental abstractions.

Experiential learning is comparative to proactive learning, but people use real-life problem-solving abilities and a hands-on approach to challenge mental models (Lozano, 2014). *Discerning learning* involves not only questioning concepts and mental models but also developing new processes and methodologies which individuals can implement or apply in the future. Managers may deploy reconstructionist strategy propositions that can result in both a low cost and differentiated operation to attain a competitive advantage by the use of mental abstractions as suggested by Lozano (2014) and Mauborgne and Kim (2017).

Finally, *inquisitive learning* is about developing new processes and methodologies by the use of real-life problem-solving skills which challenges current mental models and re-frames current mindsets (Lozano, 2014). People who want to be involved in changing the mission and vision of a company want to induce change and achieve results which do not relate particularly to adaptive processes. Triple-loop learning goes beyond adaptive approaches. The latter approach may only help to change (business) processes within a narrow scope. These learning process typologies are to delineate much further actual phenomena in situational settings which goes beyond the assessment of single-loop, double-loop, or triple-loop learning only (Hwang & Wang, 2016; McClory, Read, & Labib, 2017; Simonin, 2017a, b). The processes as defined above refine how organizational stakeholders learn and what processes contribute to the level of learning, change and improvement efforts.

Organizational learning can play a role in determining what specific strategies and goals managers of a company assert concerning the direction of the company. Organizational learning or learning organizational efforts cannot replace strategic planning efforts. Strategic planning is an organizational management activity tied to strategic thinking used to focus energy and resources, set priorities, strengthen operations, ensure that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals, establish agreement around intended outcomes, and assess and adjust the organization's direction to a changing environment (Bryson, 2018; Wolf & Floyd, 2017).

As the effects of strategic planning on an organization's performance are still unclear, especially in rapidly changing operating environments, strategic planning remains an approach to achieve strategic goals, plan performance, monitor budgeting efforts, and align operational activities to corporate strategy (Haines, 2016). The benefits of strategic planning are that it sets overall strategic goals for stakeholders, managers, and employees, and provides an overview of direction where healthcare organizations need to focus on within a planning horizon of 12 months. Strategic planning is a decision-making activity about how individuals attain goals by using various management techniques such as discussed in this section to act and respond in a competitive environment (Bryson, 2018).

In this context, the gap in the present academic literature is how managers use organizational learning and learning organization efforts to make decisions effectively. Changing the way that one does things can be difficult. Even more difficult is changing the way that a company does things. One example of deploying strategic planning is business process re-engineering (BPR) as discussed by Nadarajah and Kadir (2016) that managers can apply to any service function or any environment. Business process re-engineering is the process of rethinking how and why people do things or act in a certain way. Nadarajah and Kadir used a close-ended survey in a qualitative study using the Likert scale with 274 executive managers of organizations across Malaysia. Intelligently done, business process re-engineering can lead to dramatic improvements. Strategic and operational issues should be understood at the activity level to improve business processes which focus on customer satisfaction.

The central function of business process re-engineering is to manage and improve processes (Haddad et al., 2016). The latter authors used a single case study design to deploy BPR for the social responsible department of Caja Santandereana de Subsio Familiar which is a nonprofit organization in Bucaramanga, Colombia. Improving processes can also be a time-consuming, painful, and costly process. Learning organizational efforts would improve business process re-engineering initiatives (Nadarajah & Kadir, 2016).

Since 2000, some authors suggested various methodologies, concepts, and frameworks in order to explain how individuals learn, acquire knowledge, and create new behaviors to adapt the organization by disseminating information (Haddad et al., 2016; Liepė & Sakalas, 2015; Senge, 1990). Given the abundance of literature on single-loop, double-loop, and triple-loop learning, Liepė and Sakalas emphasized that academics do not accept any particular model of organizational learning and categorize various learning models into nondeutero (SLL and DLL) and deutero (TLL) learning types. This categorization is a static way of describing what happens in organizations in terms of culture, team and group dynamics which oversimplifies learning situations. For instance, individuals in organizations who adhere to nondeutero learning associated with plan-do-act quality cycles deliver only small changes and improvements (Taylor et al., 2014).

Thomson, Mickovski, and Orr (2014) demonstrated the applicability of double-loop learning in flood risk management to seek new knowledge to come up with new decision-based frameworks by questioning present systems and considering evidence-based practices. The study concerned a mixed research study consisting of a questionnaire survey with 22 Scottish local authorities participating and undisclosed stakeholder interviews. Attempts to induce double-loop learning failed due to the absence of required (project management) skills, engineering mindsets, apathy, the absence of reporting, and expert knowledge.

In practice, management, employees, and other stakeholders use and apply the double-loop learning paradigm in many situations, settings, industries, and entrepreneurial learning (Secundo, Schiuma, & Passiante, 2017). Pérez-Bennett et al. (2014) assessed the use of simulators and its impact on the ability of participants to advance learning in management education. In these settings, students question their mental models and preconceived ideas, the result of which will trigger the students to reset their imagination and offset their preconceptions. Pérez-Bennett et al. observed an improved learning experience among their student-participants. Students experience enhanced learning when they devise new or alternative strategies to overcome complex problems or meet challenges through inducing deeper thought processes.

In the same manner, Reddick, Chatfield, and Ojo (2017) researched a local U.S. government's department whose managers intended to improve the interactions between the local government and its citizens through interactions of its associated Facebook portal. The study was of a single case study design for the City of San Antonio Solid Waste Management Department in Texas and focused on analyzing Facebook-generated documentation. Reddick et al. (2017) concluded that the managers failed to enter into a double-loop learning mentality because they focused on only promoting the government's agenda on recycling policies without asking the public what they needed and as a result failed to change the public's behavior.

In supply chain management, Ramish and Aslam (2016) used double-loop and triple-loop learning methods to propose key performance indicators that industry leaders can apply. Drupsteen and Guldenmund (2014) reviewed the literature related to safety incidents in organizations and the processes involved in preventing disasters, accidents, and other unwanted situations. Preventing incidents involves stakeholders to detect incidents and infer meanings and the importance of the occurrence of these and the conditions of learning. An important factor in double-loop learning is the identification of incident causes.

For double-loop learning to occur, people should share the lessons learned to change work practices in an environment of organizational trust. The sharing and diffusion of knowledge through an organization require other processes which go beyond the detection and identification of incidents and their direct causes based on a literature review of safety and the prevention of unwanted events in organizations (Drupsteen & Guldenmund, 2014). According to Argyris and Schön (1978), learning agents in organizations assist individuals in attaching and embedding the lessons learned in appropriate ways in the appropriate organizational setting. The less-known understood factors in double-loop learning processes are knowledge sharing in organizations, the dissemination of knowledge, and the roles of people (Drupsteen & Guldenmund, 2014).

According to Argyris and Schön (1978), the organization as an entity holds knowledge which should be captured by learning systems and changes in work practices to correct any mismatches between intentions and desired results. In this sense, individuals in a learning organization apply formal and informal knowledge to develop their skill and further the capability of an organization (Senge, 1990). Single-loop and double-loop learning also take place in project management. In this field of management, lessons learned from previous project management efforts are essential for organizations to engage in new projects.

For this purpose, McClory et al. (2017) discussed the roles of knowledge management and organizational learning systems for lessons-learned processes by evaluating an online qualitative survey on successes, failures, and near-misses when conducting projects and the role of the project manager in those processes to mitigate risk. Project managers use databases and other management systems to store project-related information to assess project management performance. McClory et al. collected their data anonymously from practicing project managers mostly working in the UK and members of professional project management organizations, such as the Project Management Institute (PMI). The participants had professional qualifications for working in project management (office) environments.

Out of 350 participants targeted, 66 decided to participate in a 30-minutes qualitative on-line survey. The majority of participants (30%) had between 16 and 25 years experience in project management. The purpose of the study concerned how triple-loop learning could improve project management regarding project planning, execution, and successful outcomes by introducing company goals and culture necessary to stimulate learning about learning that could take place in a program management office (PMO). The framework of a capability maturity model had its application in assessing unpredictable, repeatable, defined, managed and optimized processes. The learning in project organizations concerned the willingness and readiness of project stakeholders to learn, act, and think out of the box when tackling various encounters when conducting a project. These PMOs have the role of monitoring projects, defining learning plans, and updating organizational goals (McClory et al., 2017).

The outcome of McClory et al.'s (2017) study was that many organizations lacked qualified project management staff and management did not apply a standard project management methodology. Double-loop learning processes resulted in making changes in project management policies in organizations, re-assessing project outcomes, and updating project processes and parameters. Fillion, Koffi, and Ekionea (2015) referred to triple-loop learning as processes which are transformative where creativity matters. In McClory et al. this learning happened by questioning and adapting the organization's cultural values and goals by reporting project management issues and changing the attitude of project management sponsorship at the board level.

Liepė and Sakalas (2015) emphasized that individuals apply the learning organization concept benefit by enabling and expanding its capacity to shape the future. For this to happen, individuals in organizations have to change the way they think and interact with others for an organizational change and learning to take place (Senge, 1992). Senge proposed a five-factor framework concerning the factors needed to enable learning in organizations: (a) systems thinking to further integrative approaches, (b) personal mastery for skills development and continuous, (c) mental models with assumptions about the world individuals live in, (d) a shared mental model to engage the vision and aspirations individuals have, and (e) team learning to achieve tangible results.

As such, the concept of the learning organization consists of many paradigms, concepts from various disciplines (psychology, organizational development, management science, strategy, production management, sociology and cultural anthropology) which may not have usage for employing a definite approach empirically for delivering practical results (Haddad et al., 2016; Liepė & Sakalas, 2015; Senge, 1990).

Using a case study design, Orsato, Barakat, and De Campos (2017) investigated the use of organizational learning in companies to adapt to challenges. Their research concluded that single-loop learning and double-loop learning are not adequate to bring about desired changes in organizations. This study was of a single case study design in the electricity distribution and concerned EDP Bandeirante in Brazil. The study consisted of a total number of 6 interviews with participants having a variety of positions in R&D, EDP institute, sustainability, operations and customer service (call center); energy risk and planning; and meteorology.

Furthermore, Orsato et al. (2017) coded other documentation to find common themes. Of particular concern was the institutionalist approach of organizations to change the direction of a company which depended on perceptions and capabilities of management constrained by external social, cultural, political and economic structures and processes. Orsato et al. noted that there is a gap in the research on how organizational learning occurs in practice and what the decision-making processes are. For organizational learning to happen, knowledge acquisition, information distribution and interpretation, and organizational memory are prerequisites. Therefore, organizational learning depends on (a) routines of organizational behavior for adjusting organizations to a next stage based on anticipations, (b) organizational knowledge to be present to make rapid change necessary, and (c) learning by observing how other organizations change or based on other information (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Loxano, 2014; Orsato et al., 2017).

Vinther, Jensen, Hjel-Mager, Lyhne, and Nøhr (2017) observed feedback learning loops in organizations are necessary to create a shared vision and understanding. The study was of a single case study design on adverse event reporting in a Danish nursing home. Nine participants (six staff members, the nursing home manager, a representative for the municipality, and the local risk manager) were part of the interviews. Vinther et al. noted adverse events (external or internal to the organization) could facilitate people in organizations in initiating systemic change with appropriate goal settings. Vinther et al. studied the implementation of Senge's (1990) learning organizational tools for assessing learning potential in the healthcare sector. As found by Vinther et al., double-loop learning is necessary to attain a level of learning requiring the involvement and participation of people concerned. Vinther et al. concluded that this learning would only occur in bottom-up approaches of management practices and change.

Berta et al. (2015) remarked that organizational learning entails small-scale adaptations to organizational processes and work routines which relates to organizational performance. These routines influence people's behavior and changing work routines. Organizational learning does not exhibit those decisions and behaviors which do not pertain to changes, as noted by Berta et al. Organizational learning does not capture everything that people learn, know, or experience (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Berta et al., 2015, Senge, 1990).

The literature on online auctions consists of predominantly quantitative studies and an occasional mixed method study and has a focus on the optimization of online outcomes where complaints are a mediating effect on these outcomes, such as in Cui et al. (2008). Cui et al. postulated a conceptual framework and tried to clarify how customer complaints could determine the overall auction setting and to predict online outcomes based on three concepts: (a) facilitating, intermediary, or seller factors, (b) consumer behavior, and (c) auction outcomes. These factors - from the vendor, buyer and bidder perspectives - determine the effects of technology properties, service facilities, auction mechanisms, auction setting, sellers' attributes, bidders' attributes and social influence on consumer behavior in online auctions. The varieties of consumer behavior displayed, including technology adoption, entry decision, bidding behavior, and bidding strategy, in turn, can also be used to explain auction outcomes.

These frameworks do not describe or use the concepts of single- or double-loop learning. Neither do they describe or try to explain the role of customer complaints in establishing customer satisfaction (Cui et al., 2008). Buyers and vendors of companies that trade in online auction markets make decisions to optimize online auction outcomes. Customer complaints are an integral part of the decision-making process. Although Cui et al. and Lai and Liu's (2008) conceptual framework provides the context to investigate the role of customer complaints, and to explain the extent of the applicability of the three concepts, the authors did not explain the roles of complaints. Buyers complained when goods bought did not match their perceptions of how vendors market their products (Cui et al.). Buyers adjust their buying intentions when they become aware that the auction fulfillment process is not satisfactory because of many complaints on review boards. Vendors see lower amounts of completed auction outcomes when there is an abundant amount of complaints and inadequate regress (Cui et al., 2008).

Dynamic Capabilities and Absorptive Capacity

In this subsection, I introduce the concepts of dynamic capabilities and absorptive capacity (AC) and provide a review of the literature on these concepts. In the previous section, the topics of single-loop learning and double-loop learning were reviewed and treated the extent to which organizations and stakeholders adapt depending on the needs and urgencies managers and their employees envisage or can effectuate. As concerns the characteristics of single-loop learning, double-loop learning, or triple-loop learning, the object of investigation should be about the requirements or conditions to bring about transitions or shifts between single-loop, double-loop, and triple-loop learning regarding necessary resources and changes in mindset in the organizations and individuals (Haddad et al., 2016; Liepė & Sakalas, 2015; Senge, 1990).

Dynamic capabilities are the ability of an organization and its management to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to respond effectively to changing environments (Teece, 2014). Organizational processes can only be used having dynamic capabilities which are a result of an organization's effort based on past resources to create knowledge and transform them in routines and become more valuable over time, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015). Also, companies may use intellectual and tangible assets to generate cash flows, to increase the efficiency and effectiveness in their organizations, and attain competitive advantage (Yallwe &

Buscemi, 2014). Organizations should hold organizational learning capabilities as a reflection of having a variety of intangible assets. Dynamic capabilities are a source of absorptive capacity and a focus to create situation-specific new knowledge (Argote & Guo, 2016).

According to Gao, Yeoh, Wong, and Scheepers (2017), the gain and release of resources in terms of routines relate to dynamic capabilities. Specifically, dynamic innovation capabilities have an inverted U-shaped relationship when applied to breakthrough innovation (Huang, Lai, & Huang, 2015). For companies to adapt or respond to new commercial or organizational challenges, people have to contend with organizational inertia and change present and established routines to find new and different dynamic capabilities (Lord, 2015). Lord used an electronic survey with 168 participants from 191 US colleges/universities in an electronic survey to qualitatively assess an open-mindedness construct to assess critical inquiry and the ability of individuals and groups in organizations to reflect which is a measure for double-loop learning. Organizational inertia is a factor to prevent individuals and managers specifically to shift to double-loop learning and triple-loop learning stages.

The discussion on dynamic capabilities relate predominantly to four related but distinct components related to the internal environment of a company: (a) adaptive capability, (b) innovative capability, (c) integrative capability, and (d) absorptive capability. A firm's ability to identify and capitalize on emerging market opportunities through strategic flexibility by readjusting resources or adapting the organization defines adaptive capability. Innovative capability refers to a firm's ability to develop new products and/or markets, through aligning strategic, innovative orientation with innovative behaviors and processes (Lin, Su, & Higgins, 2016; Lin & Wu, 2014). Lin et al. collected data from 823 participants from a qualitative survey of manufacturing companies in China that adopted at least one management practice encompassing an adoption of innovation. Out of 823 participants, 264 completed a follow-up survey.

Lin and Wu (2014) surveyed CEOs and senior executives from the top 1000 companies in Taiwan and 157 participants followed up the surveys with interviews of seven CEOs and three scholars to assess four constructs for the purpose of content validity. These constructs were valuable, rare, inimitable and nonsubstitutable (VRIN) resources, non-VRIN resources, dynamic capabilities, and performance. Integrative capability refers to the ability to relocate, recombine and reuse both existing resources and those obtained, including the re-use of knowledge obtained in the past (Lin et al., 2016).

Dynamic capabilities are essential in this respect for the development of learning and organizational capabilities with knowledge integration components (Garavan, Shanahan, Carbery, & Watson, 2016). Capabilities are the enablers for organizations and people for learning opportunities, managing change initiatives, and innovation or improvement of business processes and routines. In order to change strategies or to devise new strategies to tackle new problems, managers of companies should have the necessary capabilities or learning capacity to change current situations and adapt their organizations to new realities (Garavan et al., 2016).

Double-loop learning also relates to organizational learning and challenging leaders to rethink their SLL-oriented behavior, apart from settings wherein managers and employees question old procedures and find new ways for improving conditions and outcomes in organizations (Haddad et al., 2016; Liepė & Sakalas, 2015; Senge, 1990). The question is how people in organizations can acquire new knowledge, review situations, and change and act upon new understandings which are the precepts for initiatives for new routines, processes, and improvement opportunities.

Absorptive capacity (AC) emanates in the form of habits, rules, standard operating procedures or heuristics. These emanations involve the regulation of activities related to managing internal variation, selection, and retention processes and as such induce management innovation. Cohen and Levinthal are the founding fathers of AC with an emphasis on cognitive learning and economics (Tortoriello, 2015). Absorptive capacity is a function of organizational learning and requires exploratory, transformative or exploitative learning capabilities to assimilate knowledge for problem-solving skills and knowledge creation (Love, Teo, Davidson, Cumming, & Morrison, 2016). Love et al. (2016) conducted an exploratory single case study using unstructured interviews and analyzing documentary with 26 participants from a variety of organizations and backgrounds. These organizations related to an alliance in Australia with people actively involved in initiating and implementing program management activities and technological changes and processes necessary for the alliance to succeed. Peeters, Massini, and Lewin (2014) researched the evolution of absorptive capacity routines in organizations, and more specifically on the consequences of firm-specific underlying processes within different organizations for their effectiveness in inducing change in current management practices, adapting, adopting new processes and transforming and diffusing them.

Stakeholders acquire knowledge by (a) recognizing and understanding potentially valuable new knowledge outside the firm through exploratory learning, (b) assimilating valuable new knowledge through transformative learning, and (c) using the assimilated knowledge to create new knowledge and better performance through exploitative learning (Mariano, Mariano, Awazu, & Awazu, 2016). When individuals learn in organizational structures, those structures should contain a learning effort which is higher than the sum of their parts due to organizational memory, cognitive and associative learning abilities, mental maps, norms and values which should endure (Senivongse, Mariano, & Bennet, 2015). Huang et al. (2015) and Shokri-Ghasabeh, and Chileshe (2014) espoused that for the companies' ability to learn and innovate, organizations have dynamic capabilities to integrate, build, reconfigure, and recreate internal and external competencies to act in rapidly changing environments. These competencies are difficult to replicate and fully to comprehend.

Huang et al. (2015) used a qualitative study and employed structural equation modeling with data collected from 200 Taiwanese-owned small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in mainland China. The study contained interviews with a total of 49 managers and specialists to provide contents validity and investigator triangulation during the study. The results indicated that when insourcing R&D to enhance innovation within a company, managers should consider the availability of organizational and transformational capacity to make performance and efficacy happen. Shokri-Ghasabeh and Chileshe (2014) conducted a qualitative survey with 81 useable responses from 450 organizations in the Australian construction project market. The research focused on the extent to which people can learn from tacit and explicit knowledge present in organizations from post-project reviews and project members retain lessons learned.

Dynamic capabilities are an extension of the resource-based view (RBV), explaining how companies can obtain a competitive advantage and attain a superior level of profitability (Kozlenkova, Samaha, & Palmatier, 2014; Warnier, Weppe, & Lecocq, 2013). The concepts of double-loop learning and organizational learning find their bases in the RBV and dynamic capabilities in the sense of practitioners, such as managers, putting their resources into practice by interaction with their colleagues embedded in the competitive environment. An example of this practical approach is the community of practice (CoP) that I describe in the next subsection.

When stakeholders learn they contribute to a continuous learning process potentially providing tacit and explicit knowledge which at the end of that process has to stick. People obtain tacit knowledge through informal interpersonal contacts and sharing of knowledge in a social and situated setting (Love et al., 2016). The extent to which learned experiences remain in the organization or with its stakeholders and stakeholders apply this potential again is the absorptive capacity. The higher the absorptive capacity, the larger the chance is managers and stakeholders in organizations can induce the organization to make a leap from single-loop learning to double-loop learning (Jansson, Lundkvist, & Olofsson, 2015; Love et al., 2016; Tortoriello, 2015).

The acquisition and transfer of knowledge happen within an organization and between independent organizational bodies. Factors influencing absorptive capacity are (a) implementing change, (b) a conducive learning climate; (c) learning from lessons learned, and (d) learning in action (Duffield & Whitty, 2015; Love et al., 2016). Examples inhibiting AC are (a) corporate staff emphasize quantity over quality when performing (process) activities; (b) a reluctance to get external advice outside the organization; (c) duplication of workload, (d) a lack of perceived value, and (e) a high level of internal competition (Wiewiora & Murphy, 2015).

Wiewiora and Murphy (2015) conducted a multiple case study with four project organizations in the telecommunication industry, heavy engineering and building, communication services, and mining in Australia. Wiewiora and Murphy held four to nine interviews per case study in which the authors investigated the lack of capturing, storing, and disseminating lessons learned in the respective organizations due to the absence of tools and processes for stimulating knowledge exchange. Organizations exhibiting low levels of AC have inadequate communication capabilities exacerbated by a silo environment where personnel adds little value when they are under time constraints. These organizations have managers with short-term objectives, a lack of collaboration experience with partners and contractors, and a belief learning leads to over standardization (Jansson et al., 2015).

Jansson et al. (2015) investigated the experience feedback and learning loops from building in the house-building development industry in Sweden. The qualitative multiple case study concerned 10 construction project and required four interviews per project within a span period of 6 years apart from additional archival studies and observations. The overall conclusion was that the organizations exhibited a lack of incentives, inefficiency of processes, lack of clear guidelines, lack of employee times, and a lack of management support which were not conducive to efficiently diffuse innovation processes (Jansson et al., 2015; Shokri-Ghasabeh, & Chileshe, 2014).

Case study research concerns the identification of changes in the mindset which is illustrative for a shift from single-loop learning to double-loop learning through the mechanism of absorptive capacity emanateing in the form of habits, rules, standard operating procedures or heuristics (Jansson et al., 2015; Shokri-Ghasabeh & Chileshe, 2014; Wiewiora & Murphy, 2015). These emanations involve the regulation of activities related to managing internal variation, selection, and retention processes and as such induce management innovation. Other applications of absorptive capacity concern project management, six sigma implementations with a high reliance on teamwork and collaboration, collaboration in R&D environments, and export abilities of small companies (Love et al., 2016; Mariano et al., 2016; Senivongse et al., 2015; Villar et al., 2014).

Villar et al. (2014) investigated knowledge management dynamic capabilities and management practices with Spanish and Italian ceramic tile manufacturers. The quantitative study concerned 157 valid 7-point Likert-type scale questionnaires from 95 Spanish SMEs and 62 Italian SMEs and the authors applied structural equation modeling. The results indicated that dynamic capabilities are crucial and more important than knowledge management practices for the tiles export success of these companies.

According to Acklin (2013), and Wolff and Amaral (2016) absorptive capacity and applying maturity models connect to the extent to which individuals learn and management of organizations perform. Acklin and Wolff and Amaral described organizations demonstrating double-loop learning as having a higher degree of absorptive capacity and accordingly, should have a high degree of maturity.

Learning processes contribute to the effectiveness of solving problems or meet complex challenges. Double-loop learning and triple-loop learning determine the skill which individuals apply to create, acquire, and transfer knowledge. In this process managers and individuals modify their mind maps, outlooks and behaviors to reflect new insights and a new understanding of how they can take care of new situations and challenges. Managers should stimulate learning environments to induce learning and thus the ability for double-loop learning to occur provided the degree of absorptive capacity is high in organizations. This suggestion is also applicable to *N*-Loop learning as described in the next subsections (Lozano, 2014).

Companies use the resource-based view to assess resources, capacity, and processes for establishing a competitive advantage and engage in strategic planning exercises (Akaeze, 2016; Silva, Gomes, Lages, & Pereira, 2014). Akaeze (2016) employed three semistructured interviews who held small auto dealership businesses in New York City, NY. Silva et al. (2014) conducted a survey of 112 Portuguese manufacturing firms with 224 questionnaires before applying partial least squares methodology to determine the role of total quality management (TQM) constructs in affecting strategic product innovation.

A firm-level capability is TQM (Silva et al., 2014). The result was that only product design capabilities contributed to product innovation with a mediating role for the TQM culture in the organization. Managers use RBV-based structuralist strategies, such as economies of scale or scope, to deploy unique assets in a company. In this context, one gap in the literature concerns the extent to which companies can attain a competitive advantage by just deploying resources or attaining capabilities without appropriate learning skills (Laursen & Salter, 2014).

Laursen and Salter (2014) used the 2005 4th UK Innovation Survey to select 2931 manufacturing firms having more than ten employees with 744 firms only relied on past innovations. The authors administered a qualitative study using a variety of regression models to assess open innovation in relation with a company's appropriability strategy to (in)formal methods, such as patents, trademarks, and secrecy to impede collaboration with external actors. It is not well understood how absorptive capacity works, and the extent to which learning helps to promulgate absorptive capacity (Martín-de Castro, 2015).

Van Doorn, Heyden, and Volberda (2017) investigated how senior management would benefit from advice from external advisers to aid them in decision-making processes in a top-down strategy deployment approach. Future research should also investigate how absorptive capacity works in a company and what factors such as education, team size, age of personnel, and industry could determine the effect of absorptive capacity in a company. Thus, there should be a relationship between organizational learning and learning organizational efforts on the one hand and organizational resources on the other hand which is not discussed and examined in current research (Lazzari, Sarate, Goncalves, & Vieira, 2014).

Managers use the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities to seek structuralist and reconstructionist to attain a competitive advantage relative to their competitors by leveraging an enterprise's competencies and resources to deliver superior customer value. Mauborgne and Kim (2017) espoused that traditional strategic management or planning have a mindset focusing on the environment within which they have to meet competitive moves by entrenched players. In this mindset, managers of an enterprise focus on ways how to sustain its competitive advantage by implementing strategies and adapting its organization to this environment, or put differently, where structure shapes strategy. This orientation has its roots in the structure-conduct-performance paradigm of industrial organization economics. This type of strategies is called structuralist strategy to which Mauborgne and Kim (2017) do not resort when writing about organizational learning strategies and learning organizational capabilities and the extent to which absorptive capacity applies in these contexts.

There is an opportunity to include learning organizations, organizational learning, and absorptive capacity paradigms in strategic planning efforts when managers of enterprises leverage their competencies and resources in a way to pursue new opportunities in markets where they are not able to outperform existing rivals due to excess supply, cutthroat competition, and low-profit margins (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015). In these environments, strategies with an orientation on innovation or reconstructionist strategies can make a difference (Mauborgne & Kim, 2017). When an enterprise gets stuck in the middle by not being able to choose between these two types of strategies, a sustenance of their performance can only be achieved by implementing a strategy in conformance with an organizational mindset where individuals use double-loop learning and learning organizational-based capabilities as illustrated by Spyropoulou, Katsikeas, Skarmeas, and Morgan (2018).

Spyropoulou et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative survey of 446 firms out of 1032 firms eligible from a Dun and Bradstreet database that were exporting manufacturers in the UK. The authors used a psychometric construct and applied confirmatory factor analyses with maximum likelihood estimation to demonstrate that companies with stronger internal and organizational capabilities can obtain their intended strategies more easily. Managers deploying reconstructionist strategy propositions can deliver both the attainment of low cost and differentiation to attain a competitive advantage (Mauborgne & Kim, 2017). The underlying thought is that a company can shape its destiny by carving out it's competitive positioning where nobody trod before. Reconstruction or renewal of industry structures and markets are a result of this strategic approach. The origin of reconstructionist strategies is in the emerging field of economics of endogenous growth portraying the paradigm that individual economic actors can shape economic and industrial landscapes (Akcigit & Kerr, 2018).

Berta et al. (2015) regarded absorptive capacity as a learning capacity or the ability of an organization and its individuals to take advantage of new knowledge and information by applying them in new work routines or changing organizational processes and set-ups. Gao et al. (2017) and Zahra and George (2002) applied the concept of absorptive capacity in many areas of research, such as information systems, strategic management, technology management, international business, and organizational economics. As exclaimed by Damanpour (2014) and Van Doorn et al. (2017), the processes of absorptive capacity are not well understood and determine the extent to which (adaptive) learning through social or meta-routines can happen due to external and internal influences to the organization. These routines or processes occur in communities of practice also where people from different companies and organizations partner to create new knowledge for performance improvement efforts and make innovations happen which might not occur otherwise.

The gaps in the academic literature consist of explanations for how these structural mechanisms or routines form and how they work to induce change and variation in the way individuals do their work. Absorptive capacity also relates to learning retention and unlearning in organizations or so-called micro-systems, the latter of which represents all actors and institutional set-ups related to work processes and its changes. High-order learning (double-loop and triple-loop learning), the generation and adaption to new knowledge, and the processes contributing to absorptive capacity are not well-known and understood (Berta et al., 2015; Damanpour, 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2017).

Liepė and Sakalas (2015) demonstrated how triple-loop learning (deutero learning) could help companies to speed-up new product development to provide customers more value and organizations to sustain their competitive advantage by seeking continuous feedback and attaining holistic experiences. The authors emphasized the benefits of acquiring knowledge and share information by individuals throughout the organization to envision new contexts. Several factors contribute to knowledge exchange and for information transfers to happen, such as unlearning, thinking, improvisation, memory, and sense-making (Hislop et al., 2014; Lindh & Thorgren, 2015; Lozano, 2014). These factors contribute to an environment wherein individuals introspect their learning experience for improvement opportunities.

The concept of absorptive capacity has its use in many situations where learning is conducive to change and adaptation initiated within and outside the organization (Berta et al., 2015; Damanpour, 2014; Liepė & Sakalas, 2015; Van Doorn et al., 2017). One research area concerns entrepreneurial orientation that top managers have when taking risks, being proactive and innovative. Van Doorn et al. (2017) noted that companies whose managers are entrepreneurially oriented tend to deliver better results, especially in dynamic environments. In these organizations, the extent to which individuals and managers gather knowledge, gain insights, process (new) information, make informed decisions is a measure of absorptive capacity. This absorptive capacity is about the ability of individuals to filter, process, and assimilate new information (Van Doorn et al., 2017). Top managers might seek advice from external advisors to close the gaps in their knowledge to improve the operations and strategic direction of their company.

Van Doorn et al. (2017) took a sample of 9000 firms from a database in The Netherlands and resulted in 226 firms in various industries (agricultural and natural resources, semi-product manufacturing, utilities and construction firms, trading firms, transport firms, financial services, professional services, IT, media, semi-public sector, and manufacturing. The authors used the survey to quantitatively measure an AC construct for entrepreneurial orientation to measure the extent to which top managers are apt to take risks and innovative, demonstrate proactive behavior, and can implement new knowledge to resolve problems. The drawback of the study is an emphasis on how top management processes new information. In this particular study, the authors researched organizational learning at lower levels in the organization or inter-organizational cooperation.

The Co-Evolutionary Framework

In this subsection, I describe the co-evolutionary framework (CoEF) which is a particular application of double-loop learning and absorptive capacity. The CoEF represents a platform for how individuals can induce double-loop learning by bringing about changes or variations in the external or internal environment. Peeters et al. (2014), Smith, Hayes, and Shea (2017), Van Doorn et al. (2017), and Van Knippenberg and Schippers (2007) regarded the co-evolutionary framework as an approach which evolved from the absorptive capabilities paradigm.

The key question is how organizations can start improving and speeding up the generation, adoption, adaptation, and diffusion of management innovation. Damanpour (2014), Van Doorn et al. (2017), and Van Fenema and Keers (2018) regarded innovations as (disruptive) improvements in the way people perform work routines and (business) processes. Absorptive capacity plays a decisive role. A co-evolutionary framework of management innovation could explain the roles of human agency in four dimensions within an organization that constitutes potential and realized absorptive capacity:

generation, diffusion, adoption, and adaptation of (management) innovation (Damanpour, 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2017; Van Fenema & Keers, 2018).

These four dimensions have the following modes of operation: the stages of variation, selection, and retention (VSR). Three types of settings characterize variation: new to the world (type 1), new to the organization and adapted to the setting (type 2), and new to the organization without adaptation (type 3). Peeters et al. (2014) suggested managers should not underestimate cultural diversity as it plays a huge role in these stages, settings, and processes. The ability of a firm to recognize the value of new, external information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends is attributable to absorptive capacity (Peeters et al., 2014). As such, a firm's capability consisting of a bundle of organizational routines defines absorptive capacity. Meta-routines define the general, abstract purpose of routines and their conceptual foundation.

Absorptive capacity is primarily a function of a firm's prior knowledge and is mainly related to how well it can use new knowledge to achieve desired innovation (Damanpour, 2014). Over time, an organization becomes resistant to change as managers and employees find it difficult to change and adapt well-established routines. Managers demonstrating a high level of absorptive capacity learn to adapt form-specific knowledge based on external information or triggers and transform these in already embedded routines (Hon, Bloom, & Crant, 2014; Love et al., 2016).

Peeters et al. (2014) conducted a two case study design using a public company in Chicago, IL, and an IT company located at in the east of the United States to conduct research on the adoption of and success with global sourcing of business services and global sourcing decisions and processes which related to management innovation. Apart from collecting documentation, the study consisted of 21 interviews held at the Chicago company and 40 at the IT company. The interviewees had a variety of backgrounds consisting of front-line managers, senior managers, and CEOs with key persons having multiple interviews. The authors explained how the co-evolutionary framework works by means of various processes. These processes are to facilitate variation and enable the emergence of new ideas within organizations. These ideas are used by people to further select, and develop concepts with the purpose of sharing, combining and recombining knowledge and superior practices across the organization.

In this way, managers and employees will be able to reflect, update and replace established management and working practices. The co-evolutionary framework has various mechanisms where learning and the exchange of knowledge takes place. Individuals use their skills and experiences in real work activities in which they socially interact and learn that resemble single- and double-loop learning environments in various degrees (Snoeren, Niessen, & Abma, 2015; Van Doorn et al., 2017). Snoeren et al. (2015) conducted a participatory action research project with an intrinsic case study design in a care unit for older people in The Netherlands who had psycho-geriatric problems. The participants consisted of 39 persons of whom 20 were vocational trained nurses and health-care assistants, one nurse manager who supervised 18 students.

Damanpour (2014) reviewed the management innovation literature in various areas of interest and along some dimensions: (a) the antecedents of management innovation which are managerial, intra-organizational, and inter-organizational; and (b) the dimensions of new practices, processes, structures, and techniques. Damanpour (2014) discussed the outcomes of (management) innovation in terms of performance along the lines of firm performance, productivity growth, quality of work, and group satisfaction. Organizational size and competitiveness of the industry are contextual factors determining the extent to which (management) innovation has its impact on an organization. Management innovation research is still very fragmented, and this research consists of the rational school, the institutional perspective, the international business perspective, and theory development (Damanpour, 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2017).

Van Fenema and Keers (2018) developed a process model where individuals in organizations create inter-organizational value with performance improvements involving absorptive capacity and a co-evolutionary approach. The role of dynamic capabilities regarding sensing, learning and coordinating capabilities are still not well understood, especially the evolution of absorptive capacity over time and its role in inter-organizational cooperation and achievement (Lane, Koka, & Pathak, 2006; Van Fenema & Keers, 2018). In this respect, Van Fenema and Keers (2018) noted that the mechanisms behind translating organizational processes into performance are unknown and integrative (co-evolutionary) frameworks explaining inter-organizational performance and dynamic coordination mechanisms are lacking.

According to Lane et al. (2006), the goal of a company’s learning processes is its ability to identify, assimilate, and exploit knowledge from the external environment which is achievable by absorptive capacity. Management, individuals, and teams should continuously improve and adapt the knowledge base of the firm to perform and remain viable. Lane et al. reviewed the literature extensively on absorptive capacity and the applicability of the construct of absorptive capacity which most of the times remains elusive as in many situations this construct is a given (Lane et al., 2006; Van Doorn et al., 2017; Van Fenema & Keers, 2018). The implication of absorptive capacity is to modify actions through single-loop learning than to modify assumptions which define double-loop learning. Lane et al., Van Doorn et al. (2017), and Van Fenema and Keers (2018) regarded absorptive capacity as a consequence of prior innovation and problem solving which depends on critical thinking and information exchange between the members of an organization. Therefore, absorptive capacity is path-dependent and depends on knowledge sharing and communication efforts between and within departmental organizations.

The concept of absorptive capacity evolves and extends to many papers. This concept has its application in the resource-based view which has implications for its meaning and practical use, as the underlying construct is taken for granted or becomes elusive for regarding absorptive capacity as a resource (Damanpour, 2014; Lane et al., 2006; Van Doorn et al., 2017; Van Fenema & Keers, 2018). There is no new reconceptualization of the construct of absorptive capacity, and few studies concern the absorptive capacity itself directly, assimilation of knowledge, or the influence of external knowledge on absorptive capacity directly (Lane et al., 2006; Van Doorn et al., 2017).

The concept of absorptive capacity is useful in the context of knowledge, organizational structure, organizational scope and flexibility, cross-functional teams, knowledge sharing routines, motivation, and competencies with contradictory empirical evidence for the measurement of its construct (Lane et al., 2006; Love et al., 2016; Zahra & George, 2002). Defining co-evolutionary frameworks using feedback loops (Van Den Bosch, Volberda, & De Boer, 1999; Van Doorn et al., 2017) extends the original AC concept in a meaningful and practical way where the focus is on iterative learning between the organization and the external environment. Van Den Bosch et al. (1999) conducted two case studies in The Netherlands which concerned a publishing company (SDU) and a business newspaper (Het Financieel Dagblad) without disclosing the specifics of the research design. In the same manner, Zahra and George (2002) introduced a process perspective to illustrate that internal knowledge sharing and integration are essential for absorptive capacity to occur by organizational routines.

Zahra and George (2002) typified absorptive capacity as a dynamic capability having a multidimensional construct which requires learning capability and develops problem-solving skills to create knowledge for innovation to happen. The authors distinguished between potential and realized absorptive capacity, the former of which Van Den Bosch et al. (1999) call coevolution of absorptive capacity with the external environment. Van Den Bosch et al. developed an integrative framework of the coevolution of a firm's path-dependent absorptive capacity and the knowledge environment which incorporates managerial actions, institutional influences, and environmental phenomena. New knowledge is often the result of combining existing knowledge.

Van Den Bosch et al. (1999) applied the framework using three absorptive capacity dimensions: (a) efficiency related to a company’s identification, assimilation, and exploitation of knowledge based on economies of scale; (b) scope concerning of a variety of knowledge which is present; and (c) flexibility which captures the ability of a company to create, acquire, or combine knowledge. This framework is helpful to assess the extent to which companies can innovate incrementally, modularly, architecturally, or radically. Combinative capabilities consist of (a) systems capabilities as demonstrated by policies and procedures; (b) coordination capabilities exist due to lateral coordination between group members; and (c) socialization capabilities concern social integration in and between groups implicating tacit understanding of rules, actions, and norms (Van Den Bosch et al., 1999). Feedback loops influence the extent to which absorptive capacity is effective through these combinative capabilities and decisive for adapting the company's organizational form.

In addition, by operationalizing the absorptive capacity construct, external and internal knowledge using mediator and independent variables has a research emphasis (Lane et al., 2006; Van Den Bosch et al., 1999; Van Fenema & Keers, 2018). Factors as everyday skills, knowledge bases, culture, and cognitive structures define knowledge and determine the extent of knowledge absorption and assimilation giving way to tacit knowledge, embedded in complex interactions, processes, and routines (Lane et al., 2006). Absorptive capacity should also be able to address knowledge complexity which is the number of interdependent technologies, routines, individuals, and resources linked to a particular knowledge or asset (Lane et al., 2006; Van Den Bosch et al., 1999).

The relationship between absorptive capacity and performance in the organization and organizational learning is elusive and has not been tested enough for validation (Lane et al., 2006). Lane et al., Van Den Bosch et al., 1999), and Van Fenema and Keers (2018) found some empirical evidence that depends on organizational structures. Although much emphasis is on exploitative learning than exploratory learning, Lane et al. (2006) gave not much attention to the implications of learning in the organization. Frameworks for study for learning experiences concern co-evolutionary (interpretative) frameworks using the underlying processes where knowledge applies to the content (Smith et al., 2017; Van Den Bosch et al., 1999).

Future studies should incorporate how to operationalize absorptive capacity regarding recommendations and policies in companies involved in R&D and non-R&D activities where interactions between individuals in various organizational structures matter (Zahra & George, 2002). Also, transformative learning is a topic that requires further study because this is a context in which exploitative and exploratory learning takes place, and individuals create new knowledge for which they require prior knowledge within a company which Van Den Bosch et al. (1999) and Van Fenema and Keers (2018) demonstrated. Also, the impact of information systems on organizational absorptive capacity together with coevolution (integrative) frameworks should be of interest, as suggested by Gao et al. (2017).

Situated Learning Models

Learning is an effort and a process entailing the change of behavior of the organization using learning activities which takes place and transfers from individuals to the collective (Senge, 1990). The term learning organization relates to organizations being able to build knowledge and increase performance through continuous learning efforts (Senge, 1990). For instance, stakeholders in organizations only achieve double-loop learning by eliminating causes of problems which might not require expensive efforts. Senge espoused the need for organizations to learn and develop using the mastery of five core disciplines (self-mastery, shared vision, team learning, mental models, and systems thinking). Three levels of learning provide logical steps to a learning organization: (a) the individual level mental models and personal mastery, (b) the group level team working, and (c) the organizational level regarding shared vision and systems thinking (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Lee, 2014; Lozano, 2014; Senge, 1990).

Collaboration is a necessity lest organizations remain inept to change course and directions. For this to happen, deep interventions and collaborative efforts contribute to changing individual and team behaviors, and as a result, these affect double-loop learning. Senge (1990) and Fillion et al. (2015) referred to single-loop learning as adaptive learning and double-loop learning as generative learning. Senge (1990) explained mental models and team learning in the context of informal and social networks. People can use their skills or competencies to act in a double-loop learning mode. Otherwise, they remain relatively incompetent. Through the foundation of social relationships, people interact through dialogues consisting of processes of reflection and inquiry. As such, deeply held assumptions surface, and as a result, new thought paradigms form and people re-frame new mental models enabling a transitioning to double-loop learning (Senge, 1990).

Managers of online vendors need to react to complaints to increase customer satisfaction. These managers are dependent on their teams to find or implement the appropriate strategies. These strategies could entail leveraging the experience and awareness of stakeholders in the organization concerned to come up with new ideas, routines, or new business processes which is the domain of learning organizations (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Haddad et al., 2016; Senge, 1990).

In the previous sections, I discussed the concepts of double-loop learning, single-loop learning, and triple-loop learning. To extend these concepts, Simonin (2017a, b) postulated the notion of *N*-loop learning to capture a wide variety of views, models, and levels of organizational learning ranging from zero learning and single-loop learning to quadruple-loop learning. Simonin noted the emphasis on empirical research as this is up to this date lacking. The purpose of *N*-loop learning is to confer managers of organizations with the flexibility and agility they need to face a range of circumstances or challenges they have to meet. Simonin (2017a, b) reflected upon the various meanings of triple-loop learning. These meanings comprise of collective mindfulness to co-invent for stakeholders in the organization to discover the extent to facilitate or inhibit learning producing new structures and strategies for learning. Triple-loop learning (N=3) encapsulates a continuous reflection on learning processes, and their context wherein learning happens together with motivations necessary for that to occur to promulgate desired outcomes and effects. Quadruple learning ($N = 4$) has elements of reflections and thoughts on a philosophical level where the learners (individuals or organizations) change with respect to their apprehension and position regarding cognitive and behavioral traits. In the *N*-loop learning paradigm, $N = 0$ corresponds with unlearning (Hislop et al., 2014; Lindh & Thorgren, 2015; Lozano, 2014).

Reflection theory concerns the systematic, intentional, and disciplined meaning-making process which moves a learner from one experience into the next with a more in-depth understanding of its relations and connections to other experiences (Lindh & Thorgren, 2015). In this way, people can improve taking subsequent actions and can learn from previous mistakes by using new insights and knowledge, also when critical events are a cause for people to think and explore to act critically (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Lindh & Thorgren, 2015). For this reason, Lindh & Thorgren conducted 15 semi-structured interviews and follow-up weekly surveys using a 7 points Likert scale for an inductive case study with prospective entrepreneurs in a Swedish training program. Work-based learning and workplace learning are examples of organizational learning contrasting double-loop learning (McCormack, Manley, & Titchen, 2013; Snoere et al., 2015). Snoeren et al. (2015) conducted an intrinsic case study design in a care unit in The Netherlands with 39 participants that the authors interviewed. Members of organizations also reflected upon their actions and directions.

Organizational learning and learning organizational methodologies have their fundaments on dynamic capabilities and the resource-based view and have their orientation on system thinking. The traditional focus is on attaining competitive advantages vis-à-vis the competition and organizations strife for the increase of financial or organizational performance through problem-solving or information-processing. Kim and Mauborgne (2015) emphasized organizations also need to be more flexible and innovative to attain a leadership position in the market which needs more focus on creativity and triple-loop learning. People in organizations should question processes, procedures, product, and systems. Unlearning efforts are the drivers to think differently, and people should depart from their theories-in-use. Knowledge creation and innovation capabilities are essential drivers of value innovation (Hislop et al., 2014; Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; Lindh & Thorgren, 2015; Lozano, 2014).

I will try to understand in this research study the extent to which organizational learning happens or operationalizes regarding *N*-loop learning or other modalities. Assessing what activities in organizations contribute to the collaboration effort are necessary, and with what type of *N*-loop learning managers of vendors associate their strategies. The notion of *N*-loop learning can capture and explain various phenomena stakeholders in organizations will encounter. The disadvantage of classifying these phenomena is that the underlying factors or constructs related to the occurrence of learning remain unexplained which are the premise on which organizations interrelate, collaborate, learn, and adapt to changing circumstances to which Senge (1990) also paid attention. Learning in organizations change the competencies (resources) and capabilities with which to tackle problems or meet challenges. Hence, finding out how knowledge flows in organizations is necessary for the learning effort and what factors or actions trigger to do things in a different way (Lindh & Thorgren, 2015; Lozano, 2014).

Stoner and Cennamo (2018) recommended reflection in situated learning situations what Argyris and Schön (1978) described as reflection-on-action. Learners in this context are not only students, but they become practitioners as well within their specific environment or setting. Practitioners should well go beyond as reflection-on-action as suggested by Argyris and Schön because they need to prepare themselves for novel and unanticipated situations and resolve problems which requires self-awareness and learning to cope with given situations. In this sense, situated learners are adaptive and able to contribute to performance improvements and act upon their experience.

According to Stoner and Cennamo (2018), situated learners use those tools and schemas as provided by their social environment for problem-solving. The creation of new knowledge comes from these problem-solving activities within the cultural context in which they occur. As situated learning is used in practice as an instructional strategy in many situations and contexts, the most common implementation of this concept is apprenticeships, internships, or in a simulated actual work environment (Stoner & Cennamo, 2018). The goal of situated learning is to create meaning and significance within learning activities through shared practice and discourse as suggested by social constructivists and situated learning theorists (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1980).

Lave and Wenger (1991), Stoner and Cennamo (2018), and Vygotsky (1980) demonstrated that experienced learners and experts do not follow the rules based on higher-order knowledge, but they use an in-depth understanding of the situation they are facing based on practice and experience This understanding has its base on a tacit understanding of complex situations in contexts that do not concern independent technical-rational models. Situated learning also takes place in various environments with an integral and inseparable social practice (Stoner & Cennamo, 2018). One example is an entrepreneur who needs to understand the context and business environment and to deal with a variety of social relationships such as partners, customers, friends, and mentors). These relationships may exhibit conflict, social risk, stress, and discomfort which give way to higher-level forms of entrepreneurial learning in a specific environment. Situated learning can occur in (social) networks where learning requires trust, respect, and exchanges of experience (Stoner & Cennamo, 2018).

Situated learning research is developing around the situated character of human understanding and communication with a focus on the relationship between learning and social situations (Stoner & Cennamo, 2018). Lave and Wenger (1991) formulated situated learning as social co-participation which deals with social engagement rather cognitive processes and conceptual structures which have implications for the skills learners develop. Learners gain their skills as a result of being engaged in a process where the individual exchanges practical knowledge with experts having a limited degree of responsibility in that process. They do not acquire a set of abstract knowledge which learners can apply in other situations. Research based on this concept and understanding of Lave and Wenger’s paradigm is cognitive in nature and consists of discourse and sociolinguistic analysis concerning the meaning of words and experts’ activities in an actionable context and a participation framework.

Lave and Wenger (1991) studied the learning of improvisation, interaction, and processes which they only could capture in terms of phenomenological and practice-oriented approaches Stoner and Cennamo (2018) regarded situated learning as a transitory concept between learning as a result of cognitive processes and as an outcome of social practices in which that outcome is meaningful. Stoner and Cennamo reported many studies where situated learning and its associated processes of socialization in practice have positive and negative effects. McSharry and Lathlean (2017) conducted one of the studies in clinical teaching using a qualitative design to study in-depth holistic understanding of students' and preceptors' perceptions and practices related to teaching and learning using 26 participants in semi-structured interviews. The authors used an interpretive approach to assess the interviews and discover patterns of meaning, understanding, behaviors, and values.

Situated learning takes place in various environments such as information technology practices where informal learning in practice takes place. Chadhar and Daneshgar (2018) analyzed a sequence of events and issues which led to an unsuccessful enterprise resource planning (ERP) post-implementation project at a large IT service management company in Australia. Chadhar and Daneshgar conducted a qualitative research study using an interpretive single case study interviewing project stakeholders in 38 focus groups with additional one-to-one interviews with individual group members. This project was unsuccessful because of various contributing factors: (a) individuals' lack of understanding of the ERP system, (b) insufficient connection between the ERP system and associated business processes, (c) insufficient training by the ERP vendor1, (d) unrelated ERP training to the actual work processes, and (e) disconnect of management of staff about what training and engagement individuals need.

Situated learning studies do not provide integral frameworks for analyzing how individuals and organizations acquire, assimilate, and disperse new knowledge to the benefit of the performance of a company. Although learning in situated learning contexts can be complicated, intricate, and practical at the same time, learners should be able to interact with the organization as a whole as in Senge's (1990) learning organization to apprehend what capabilities they bring to the company.

Self-Efficacy Theory

In this subsection, I describe another theory contrasting the learning organizational and organizational learning capabilities. Managers, stakeholders, and the organization can transcend from single-loop learning to double-loop learning stages or may reach *N*-loop abilities. Individuals connect their psychosocial functioning through personal agency to contributions and acts they undertake. In other words, they believe they can effectuate upon their beliefs to achieve any organizational goals, assisted by an urge and motivation to do so.

Self-efficacy (SE) is a social cognitive theory explaining what determines individuals' motivation to act according to what they believe (Cherian & Jacob, 2013). The concept is defined by Bandura in 1986 to study people‘s judgments related to their capabilities to stipulate, organize and execute courses of action required with the purpose to attain designated types of performance (Cherian & Jacob, 2013; Lee et al., 2014; Williams & Rhodes, 2014). Lee et al. conducted a qualitative research study with 500 middle school students (253 girls, 246 boys, and one genderless) from two middle schools in two suburban cities near Seoul, Korea in two separate surveys.

Lee et al. (2014) assessed cognitive and affective motivational constructs measuring self-efficacy and grade goals and the students' use of self-regulatory strategies by repeated measures analysis of variance and structural equation modeling. Goals setting ties self-efficacy with achievements. Accordingly, it is the judgments of individuals what they can achieve depending on the skill set they will leverage to attain the ends rather than the individuals' actual abilities. The effectiveness of individuals' actions depends on four main forms of influence: (a) mastery experiences, (b) vicarious experiences, (c) social persuasion, and (d) physiological and emotional states, where the mastery of experiences is the most important form. Self-efficacy for learning concerns beliefs enabling individuals to learn facilitated by self-regulatory processes to learn, especially to acquire skills to perform novel tasks and activities. Individuals with high self-efficacy achieve excellent outcomes regarding satisfaction and performance (Cherian & Jacob, 2013; Lee et al., 2014; Williams & Rhodes, 2014).

Individuals' performance and ability to act depend on the interpretation of their self-appraisals and on the impact social persuasion has. The latter has to do with feedback and information individuals receive from the social environment about actions required to attain success. This research study contains an assessment about whether self-efficacy plays a role in inducing *N*-loop or double-loop learning transitions by behavioral outcomes potentially managers of online auctions employ to increase the organizational performance of stimulating learning for its intended effects. Individuals with high self-efficacy have a higher ability to align themselves with new challenges by generating new ideas and come up with innovative solutions and better collaborate in teams.

Managers of eCommerce companies compete fiercely for market performance, and shareholders expect an increase in companies’ valuations on a continuous basis (Sokol & Ma, 2017). Therefore, these managers need to innovate, disrupt current markets and search for new growth opportunities, and perfect their services. Online auction companies have to survive in a growing knowledge-based economy, and to thrive in a socioeconomic environment which is increasingly unstable and competitive (Muthitacharoen & Tams, 2017; Tadelis, 2016). In fast-changing technology-oriented markets, these enterprises are continuously looking and differentiating themselves for new customers in segments that they create attracting customers from existing markets, disrupting the auctions industry using new business models (Muthitacharoen & Tams, 2017). Additionally, managers of online auction companies have to continuously improve their current business models through strategic planning exercises to stay ahead of the competition, which is called sustainable innovation (Tadelis, 2016). Disruptive innovation is an activity that calls for strategic thinking about where an enterprise has to be in 3-5 years as suggested by Vecchiato (2017). Vecchiato (2017) employed a multiple case research design using Motorola and Nokia in the mobile communication industry and Eastman Kodak and Hewlett-Packard in the imaging and printing industry. Apart from publicly available documentation, the author used semi-structured interviews with an undisclosed number of internal and external informants to study disruptive innovation and management's cognition to adapt to changing market conditions.

Against this background, self-efficacy theory concerns strategic planning approaches as regards conditions of the market and legal uncertainties, international political unrest, shifting social values, and economic imbalances in the marketplace by executing strategy (setting direction, goals, defining a roadmap, allocating resources, commitment and coordination). Strategic planning depends on the preservation and rearrangement of established categories (corporate, business, functional) and the established types of products along current strategic business units and related structures (Bryson, 2018). Current literature focuses on factors that determine entrepreneurs' persistence in reaching their goals (Bullough, Renko, & Myatt, 2014; Davidsson & Gordon, 2016). Davidsson and Gordon (2016) conducted a survey and interviews with 625 individuals who they regarded as nascent entrepreneurs. Of this group, the follow-up resulted in 493 interviews. At the end of a year, 337 participants remained engaged in entrepreneurial activities. Conducting a hierarchical logistic regression analysis was part of this qualitative study and contributed to these activities.

Academics apply the concept of self-efficacy in various environments, such as in online learning (Alqurashi, 2016), nursing (Shen, 2015), psychological interventions (Tang & Chan, 2016), and business (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Newman, Obschonka, Schwarz, Cohen, & Nielsen, 2018). Alqurashi (2016) noted that some topics need more research on the nature of the relationship between self-efficacy (other than technology factor) and online learning regarding learning, interaction, and collaborative skills. Shen (2015) described various cultural assessment tools to assess and measure the self-efficacy construct regarding cultural awareness, knowledge, cognitive skill, awareness, encounters and desire domains. Shen developed close-ended surveys for any research environment based on for instance proper literature review, factor analysis, question development, and expert panels' items previews.

Liñán and Fayolle (2015) reviewed the literature on entrepreneurial intention (EI) models concerning the behaviors and mental processes of entrepreneurs. The authors concluded that the field on EI lacks systematization and categorization. In some models of entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy is a motivational antecedent of entrepreneurial intention. In addition to self-efficacy mediating the influence of some background variables for entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurial education has a significant effect on self-efficacy (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015). Learning orientation and passion for work mediates the influence of perceived ability and attractiveness on intention (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015) and a 22-item multi-dimensional measure exhibits entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Newman et al., 2018). Current self-efficacy assessment instruments have drawbacks: (a) few assessment instruments survey outcomes in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of culture and practices; (b) lack of psychometric evaluation whilst the validity or reliability of these studies are not up to research standards; (c) the role of self-efficacy in interdisciplinary teams or groups; and (d) answers might demonstrate social desirability (Shen, 2015).

Newman et al. (2018) reviewed the literature on entrepreneurial self-efficacy. Entrepreneurial intentions and entrepreneurial emotions and mental state determine entrepreneurial behavior, venture creation, and entrepreneurial performance. The antecedents of entrepreneurial self-efficacy are the cultural and institutional environment, firm characteristics, education and training, work experience, role models and mentors, and individual differences such as gender, personality, and risk-taking preferences. According to Newman et al., the psychological construct in entrepreneurship research centers on entrepreneurial motivation, intention, behavior, and performance.

Entrepreneurs need to confront environmental events, contend with personal factors, and manage their behaviors that affect their decision-making processes. Although self-efficacy deals with managers' beliefs in their capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments (Bullough et al., 2014), managers should have the resources and build organizational capabilities to achieve their goals. Bullough et al. conducted a qualitative research study by surveying 148 Afghan persons of which 79% attended high school or higher and 109 participants who applied to a women's business development training program.

In general, research does not incorporate mechanisms of organizational learning or learning organization to attain these goals, nor how these organizations or individuals attain goals (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015) although social cognitive theory and the theory of planned behavior relate to study outcomes of entrepreneurial self-efficacy. The emphasis on self-efficacy is on motivational factors enabling managers or entrepreneurs to find ways to identify those strategies to deliver results. Additionally, there is a lack of research in (entrepreneurial) self-efficacy at the group level or team-based organizational structures (Newman et al., 2018).

Community of Practice

Farnsworth, Kleanthous, and Wenger-Trayner (2016) defined the community of practice (CoP) as an organizational learning mechanism or social platform to increase knowledge in organizations by sharing knowledge, experiences and business model designs. The community-of-practice mechanism emphasizes knowledge-sharing between companies or organizations to evaluate how decisions work out to improve performance, resolve problems stakeholders have in common, or share common interests. For that purpose, stakeholders in organizations use maturity models as repositories and knowledge bases which reflect CoP mechanisms to increase knowledge and stimulate the exchange of experiences (Farnsworth et al., 2016). The participation of the members of the communities of practice is essential for its effectiveness, advancement, and a continued effort. Communities of practice often publish capability maturity models to describe various levels of practices within an industry, sector or profession (Langston & Ghanbaripour, 2016).

A community of practice is a group of people who share a work profession, a practice or an interest (Cordery et al., 2015). This community can emerge on its own but also be developed and designed on purpose to generate knowledge in a particular area (Pilemalm et al., 2014). Cordery et al. conducted a qualitative research study within a division of a large multinational company operating in the metals industry in the United States, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Australia using operational log data of a period of 298 weeks. Applying a Bayesian change-point detection model helped to evaluate changes in operational procedures from a revised work model assessing 10 CoPs. Through the sharing of information and experience, the group members learn from each other and can develop both on a personal plane and in their professional roles (Kolb, 2014). Charband and Navimipour (2016) noted that the academic community does not yet fully understand how members of a community of practice evaluate their experiences to be beneficial or what impact in terms of inducing double-loop learning in organizations. The conclusion is that satisfaction and knowledge self-efficacy are factors for members of the community of practice to continue using the platform (Charband & Navimipour, 2016).

Members of community-of-practices and who apply maturity models advance learning in organizations, stimulate absorptive capacity and increase their awareness to improve routines and business processes to resolve problems and improve customer satisfaction objectives (Rauffet et al., 2014). At the same time implementing and further customizing industry practices induce double-loop learning. The nature of absorptive capacity, dynamic capabilities or *N*-loop learning settings are still unclear as concerns how this learning happens specifically (Jaaron & Backhouse, 2017; Van Doorn et al., 2017).

Lave and Wenger (1991) described the learning practices in communities of practice where participation of students is essential for learning to occur through legitimate peripheral participation (McSharry & Lathlean, 2017). Alternatively, Vygotsky (1980) explained through the zone of proximal development and instructional scaffolding theory how students and practitioners enhance their level of practice to the next level under expert guidance, interactive dialogue and coaching efforts. In communities of practice, participants address deficits in their knowledge and (re)construct their knowledge to create meaning and significance within learning activities (McSharry & Lathlean, 2017). These communities of practice provide both reflection opportunities on lived experiences as well as situated learning experiences (McSharry & Lathlean, 2017). As observed by McSharry and Lathlean, most research studies contain support to only retroactive reflection-on-action learning experiences within situated learning contexts or communities of practice with a specific culture, dialogue, and practices which remains not useful outside these contexts.

Communities of practice grow as soon as a specific area of knowledge or field matures through newcomers and their participation. These communities of practice have the ability to develop and produce themselves in transformative ways through acculturation and socialization rather than skill development and an emphasis on principles which are independent of a social context, as described by Lave and Wenger (1980). Hollinshead, Stirling, Kerr, and Massey (2015) noted that communities of practice offer participants a platform to share knowledge, learning and innovation, and a vehicle for collaborative problem-solving.

Academics and managers of organizations use capability maturity models to evaluate the extent to which collective of individuals as an organization can learn in terms of processes that depict repeatable, unpredictable, defined, managed, or optimized processes (Langston & Ghanbaripour, 2016). The concepts of single-, double-, and triple-loop learning, learning organizations, and capability maturity models have some drawbacks. According to Fillion et al. (2015) and Van Doorn et al. (2017), these concepts do not adequately describe the power structures in organizations, nor the way how people interact, and disseminate knowledge, and attain an understanding of complex problems.

Senior management mostly determines the conditions under which individuals collaborate (McClory et al., 2017) requiring top-down leadership. Bottom-up approaches to improve organizational processes or renew strategies would require other mechanisms than those of SLL, DLL, and TLL efforts as suggested by Mauborgne and Kim (2017) and McClory et al. (2017). In many communities-of-practice studies, authors research various facets defining the community of practice (tools, procedures, stories, and language) detached from their actual practices (Lane et al., 2006).

The Categorization-Elaboration Model

For stakeholders and managers to learn what strategies to apply to effect desired outcomes, organizational learning is essential as discussed in the previous sections. In this section, I discuss how the notion of collaboration fits into learning, absorptive capacity, and *N*-loop type of stages. Collaboration is a major factor in communities of practice, teamwork, and close cooperation with management to achieve organizational goals.

Boughzala and De Vreede (2015) demonstrated by applying a collaboration maturity model at an international automotive manufacturer that collaboration is an essential ingredient of organizational life as people work together to create value for their companies and society. The critical success factors for collaboration efforts to yield success are a shared understanding of business processes, goals, information, goal alignment between individuals and teams, averting groupthink, and choosing the right methodologies and techniques to advance within-team collaboration and fruitful cooperation across organizational borders. The objectives expressed by the central agency leading the studied process aimed at implementing double-loop learning objectives by revising the incident reports and improving future operations accordingly. Collaboration efforts are necessary to prepare organizations for double-loop learning efforts and as such to transfer tacit individual knowledge to a team and organizational level (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Pilemalm et al., 2014).

In this context, making a joint effort toward a group goal comprised of acts of shared creation and/or discovery defines collaboration. Individuals do not attain this effort by double-loop learning, or any effort necessitating organizational learning or learning organization. Boughzala and De Vreede (2015) conducted a mixed research study using a focus group of 15 chief knowledge officers from different companies and sizes in different sectors (including automotive, software, audiovisual, civil engineering, and telecommunications) in France. The participants took part in a quantitative survey on appropriate collaborative maturity models. Boughzala and De Vreede interviewed the executives on their experiences with the implementation of these models. The results accentuated collaboration as a process in which two or more agents (individuals or organizations) share resources and skills to resolve problems so that they can jointly achieve one or more goals. During this process, agents communicate with each other to coordinate their tasks. Prevention of conflicts and mediating mechanisms to avert conflict affecting the performance of distributed teams are worthy of closer study. Relational conflict (also called affective or interpersonal conflict) represents personal disagreements between people characterized by anger and dislike. Task conflict (also referred to as cognitive conflict) refers to disagreements about the content of the task individuals perform (Bradley, Anderson, Baur, & Klotz, 2015). Communication can play a decisive role.

Diversity plays a role in conflict situations, because of (a) underlying cognitive attributes, such as values, attitudes, knowledge, experiences, and personality (deep-level diversity), and (b) high-visibility diversity, based on apparent attributes such as age, gender, or race (Pieterse, Van Knippenberg, & Van Dierendonck, 2013). Pieterse et al. (2013) employed two qualitative studies using 79 and four teams and 312 and 436 students respectively who were students of a Dutch business school engaged in a human resources business simulation class. Pieterse et al. used surveys to measure goal orientation, cultural diversity, and team performance, and they applied hierarchical multiple regression for the analysis of results.

Meyer et al. (2015) conducted a quantitative survey assessing log-likelihood-based models with 3,263 consultants forming 325 teams from a large financial consulting company in Germany in the period between 2005 and 2008. Meyer et al. measured performance, the occurrence of disparate events (crises) that would impact the consultants' performance, and identity-based faultline strength, the latter of which would measure the extent to which a group would break up. The adverse effect of team diversity relates to the social categorization process with regard to which people consider themselves as (dis)similar to others, and this induces in-group and out-groups (Meyer, Shemla, Li, & Wegge, 2015). The members of the last group are believed to be different, and as a result cohesion, trust and perception of performance are affected. The process and its effect have an impact on collaboration, knowledge sharing, information processing, and the variance in team performance or effectiveness (Bezrukova, Spell, Caldwell, & Burger, 2016). Shared understanding can be a distinctive mediator of the conflict-effectiveness relationship. Cognitive conflict relates positively to teams reaching a shared understanding (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Task conflict relates negatively to shared understanding and team effectiveness (Bezrukova et al., 2016). Bezrukova et al.

(2016) conducted a quantitative survey with multisource, multilevel data on 30 Major League Baseball (MLB) teams in the United States applying hierarchical linear modeling and regression analysis. The results indicated that group-level faultlines negatively associated with group performance with internally focused conflict exacerbating the effects which negatively influences performance.

Teams, as information processors and being functionally diverse, reap the benefits to produce innovations through knowledge sharing by the moderating effect of affect-based trust (Cheung et al., 2016). Cheung et al. conducted a qualitative study evaluating surveys using regression models with 96 research and development teams with a total of 443 employees from a large IT company in China. Measures included functional diversity, affect-based trust in a team, knowledge sharing, and team innovation. The authors indicated functional diversity had a negative indirect relationship with team innovation via knowledge sharing when affect-based trust in a team was low, and this relationship became less negative as the level of affect-based trust in a team increased. In this way, the social categorization process is used to avert conflict due to diversity differences by emphasizing commonalities amongst team members. The development and implementation of novel and useful ideas characterize innovation in this context.

The definition of functional diversity is the degree to which team members have different experiences and skill sets in a specific function during the greater part of their career. Other similar definitions of innovation are: the intentional introduction and application within a job, work team or organization of ideas, processes, products or procedures which are new to that job, work team or organization and which are designed to benefit the job, the work team or the organization (Hon et al., 2014). Diversity reflects the degree to which there are differences among people within a group (Barak, 2016). Diversity may refer to any attribute, but research has mainly focused on differences in gender, age, and cultural backgrounds which include race, ethnicity, and nationality, tenure, educational background, and functional backgrounds (Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014).

Against these backgrounds, the categorization-elaboration model (CEM) is a tool to explain the relationships between work group diversity and performance through the reconceptualization and integration of information/decision making and social categorization perspectives on work-group diversity and performance (Meyer, Glenz, Antino, Rico, & González-Romá, 2014). The CEM model applies to diversity research with a focus on mediators and contingency factors to explain performance in organizations where also information elaboration takes place (Pieterse et al., 2013; Van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007; Van Veelen & Ufkes, 2017). The dimensions of diversity (e.g., race, gender, age, culture, and nationality) determine the rationale of information/decision making and social categorization processes. The implications for the management of diversity are: (a) to retain the potential benefits of work-group diversity, and the prevention of potentially disruptive effects, diversity management should focus on fostering elaboration; (b) intergroup biases being associated with negative affective–evaluative reactions to the group and its members should be prevented; and (c) the elaboration of task-relevant information should not be disrupted. Diversity management should focus on task motivation and ability. The categorization-elaboration model is about preventing negative effects of diversity and stimulating its positive effects. The absence of adverse effects in itself is insufficient to motivate behavior by promoting the performance benefits of diversity (Pieterse et al., 2013).

Barak (2016) discussed the theory and implications of diversity in workgroup compositions incorporating differences in functional or educational background. The authors emphasized the importance of processes underlying the mediating effects of diversity and how to manage these processes which pose major challenges to research in organizational behavior by looking at the mediators and moderators of these linear and curvilinear effects. At the workgroup level, group composition affects group performance, cohesion, social interaction, group members' commitment, satisfaction, and other indicators of subjective well-being. Barak (2016) presumed social categorization processes engender more favorable attitudes toward in-group than out-group others, more trust, more willingness to cooperate, and generally smoother interaction with in-group than with out-group others. Similarly, clients of a selection and assessment company concerned research on minority dissent in teams in conjunction with team innovations (Schippers, West, & Dawson, 2015). Schippers et al. conducted a qualitative research study consisting of 98 primary health care teams working in the NHS across the UK. The following measures and methodologies were applicable: team reflexity, work demands, team innovation, applied surveys, and analyses of variance. Results showed more innovation and greater team effectiveness under high rather than low levels of minority dissent, but only when there was a high level of team reflexivity.

According to Van Knippenberg and Schippers (2007), the overall main conclusions were (a) typologies of diversity (most commonly differentiating forms of demographic and functional diversity) did not explain the differential effects workgroup diversity may have on group process and performance; and diversity simply as dispersion on a single dimension of diversity; and (b) diversity research should pay more attention to the moderators of social categorization, intergroup bias, and information/decision-making processes. The role of double-loop learning, organizational learning, or learning organization efforts is not part of the categorization-elaboration model. Future research should incorporate organizational learning and learning organization elements as well as demographic and structural factors to illustrate how the categorization-elaboration model works in practice (Tröster, Mehra, & Van Knippenberg, 2014). Tröster et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative study using regression analysis consisting of 92 student teams (461 individuals with 60 different nationalities) at a major European business school. Tröster et al. measured team performance, team potency, workflow network centralization, workflow network density, and cultural diversity.

Although teams are building blocks in any organizational design, more emphasis should be put on the incorporation of the dynamics of teamwork and networks of teams based on its composition of individual members which changes over time. The categorization-elaboration model exhibits the relationship between individual relations and the performance of teamwork regarding the team structure and social categorization, compositional arrangements, coordination actions, and psychological state. The relationship changes in time and is dynamic in practice. The capturing of team dynamics in processes and emergent states may describe team outcomes. Also, the team relationships change over time.

For these reasons, Mathieu, Hollenbeck, Van Knippenberg, and Ilgen (2017) suggested to develop new quantitative-oriented measurements to describe various constructs. Tröster et al. (2014) employed network analysis techniques to measure the collaboration effects of team diversity focusing on the potential for differences in member nationality to influence conflict and workflow coordination in a longitudinal study of 92 self-managed teams. They concluded that the more diverse a team is, the more successful teams perform in a centralized network of teams to perform workflows. Teams performing work in network arrangements may perform differently than uniform variable patterns suggest (Mathieu et al., 2017). As such, studying multilevel, multiplex, and dynamic features of workgroup, team composition, and team-based arrangements is beneficial, as the nature of team-based work is changing.

Van Knippenberg and Schippers (2007) and Van Veelen and Ufkes (2017) noted that in the extant literature the relationship between diversity and team performance remains inconsistent and is a cause for many interpretations. It is for this reason that Van Veelen and Ufkes complemented and extended the categorization-elaboration model to a theoretical framework in which team learning and efficacy are mediators, and team identification is a moderator. Van Veelen and Ufkes performed a cross-sectional study among 72 project teams at a European university and used additional data from various sources (self-reports, database, and performance assessments) for studying intragroup dynamics and interactions only using structural equation modeling. The result of the study showed that team diversity is a contributing factor to team performance when there is a strong collective team identity through learning and team-efficacy. Objective and subjective measures can lead to different results and conclusions.

Mathieu et al. (2017) stated that the traditional views of learning, as discussed in this section of the professional literature, is changing as individuals change teams often and may work across different organizational structures, in communities of practice, using agile software, or deploying other fluid temporary arrangements. Future research should include the consideration of the impact of changing team memberships concerning team dynamics which depends on previous processes or team outcomes. As a consequence of all changes in real-life situations, research should also include the account of changes in linking static antecedents and mediating mechanisms in prevalent models to describe outcomes and performances. Also, appropriate feedback loops should account for the dynamics of team interactions. Research on team diversity and elaboration in combination with team learning is scarce (Tekleab, Karaca, Quigley, & Tsang, 2016). Tekleab et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative research study using longitudinal survey data comprising of 45 teams (227 participants) of students with diverse ethnic backgrounds at a large Midwestern university in the United States. Tekleab et al. used a Capstone Simulation to generate results measuring functional diversity, behavioral integration, team cohesion, team learning, and team performance using confirmatory factor analysis.

Transition

In Section 1 of this study, I provided the background and the reasons for conducting the research, as well as the problem and purpose statements, research question, conceptual framework, operational terms, the significance of the study, and a critical review of the professional literature. The proposed research study concerned identifying strategies online vendors in online auction markets use to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. Quantitative research methods and designs for explaining the inner workings of online auction platforms occur frequently in the field of online auctions (Carter, Tams, & Grover, 2017; Cui et al., 2008; Ma, 2014). To explain online auction outcomes in terms of profitability and customer satisfaction measures, the variable “complaints” often is a mediator. The underlying management strategies and the mechanisms of how these emerge and function remain obscure.

For this purpose, using qualitative research was the appropriate method to find themes that illustrated how managers of online vendors could learn by deploying strategies helping to handle complaints more effectively and efficiently. These themes concerned supporting and contrasting theories associated with double-loop learning. Supporting points of view were the theories of organizational learning, learning organizations, communities of practice, and the co-evolutionary framework. The extent to which managers learn as part of their strategies was a theme which required further exploration. On the other hand, associated with contrasting themes, managers can deploy resources and capabilities to advance their goals. They may use situated learning guided by collaborated efforts (in teams) and motivation to accomplish objectives. The extent to which managers and their organizations can adapt to new and a variety of circumstances will influence their operations and the handling of complaints. These strategies demonstrated the agility of the managers and their personnel, the capacity to adapt, the level of learning they apply, and how they collaborated. Section 2 provides further details on the research effort of this multiple case study regarding the nature of the study, the participants, and the research design. In Section 3, I included the presentation of findings, recommended strategies online vendors can use to improve managing complaints, suggestions for future research, and reflections on my research.

Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage complaints to improve customer satisfaction. I identifed these strategies by interviewing managers of vendors and using other documentation (customer reports, financial reports, and online auction data). The interviews resulted in finding key issues and themes managers found important to manage complaints. The outcomes of this research have an organization and learning theories perspective. This study was different from traditional studies in online auction research. Traditional studies were mostly of a quantitative design, such as those from Carter et al. (2017), Cui et al. (2008), and Ma (2014).

This section contains an elaboration on how I conducted the research and the underlying research methodology and design. The study included open-ended interviews with a sample of managers of vendors in online auction markets. The findings and related discussions are part of Section 3.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. The targeted population consisted of managers of six companies in Los Angeles, California, who successfully implemented effective strategies to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. These vendors sold their products in online auction markets such as eBay.

The implications of this study for positive social change include facilitating the growth of online markets and increasing opportunities to buy and sell goods and services among those who have limited access to conventional marketplaces and brick-and-mortar stores. Online markets also benefit consumers and the economy as a whole by lowering the cost of goods and improving services for consumers with market participants profiting from efficiency gains from the use of and access to electronic transactions.

Role of the Researcher

The primary role of the researcher in qualitative studies is to collect data, explore, explain and exchange ideas, results, and information by performing data analyses using themes and theories from the professional and academic literature (Bailey, 2014; Boynton, 2016). I selected participants who gave consent to participate in this qualitative research and contributed to the research by providing specific company information and data concerning effective strategies to manage complaints in online auction markets.

I operated as an online vendor in the online auction market for luxury watches for 3 years (2014–2016) in the capacity of an executive in Los Angeles, California. As a result of my past involvement in online auction markets, the operations of an online auction market company and the industry were familiar to me. In addition, the interviewing took place with some of the participants who developed business relationships with me. There were no personal relationships between myself and the participants.

While conducting this research, I followed the guidelines and principles of the Belmont Report (1979) using institutional ethical standards academics practice in the

United States and apply the principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. Using these standards, the researcher informs participants thoroughly about the study and obtains consent and specific permission when conducting audio or video recording. Participation in research was at all times voluntary. Participants may have withdrawn at any time. I did not apply coercion, fully disclosed my funding sources, provided anonymity for persons and results, and applied the appropriate research methodology, as suggested by Vanclay, Baines, and Taylor (2013). I attended appropriately to ethical concerns by informing participants about the purpose and scope of the study and their rights before and after participating in this research. I completed the NIH training on the protection of human research participants and received the certificate. After participants decided to accept the invitation for this study, they signed a consent form or letter of cooperation informing them of the voluntary nature of their participation and assuring them confidentiality during and after the research effort (see Appendices A and B).

Tuohy, Cooney, Dowling, Murphy, and Sixmith (2013) dealt with the issue of bias during their studies especially when they were familiar with their research topic. Recognizing my role in the study during data collection consisted of mitigating any concerns by restricting my personal bias to a minimum to uphold the credibility of the interview data. All collected data were subject to the preservation of their integrity. Setting aside any preconceptions and understanding of the online auction market was crucial for the full evaluation of the collected data from the participants in the interviews and other sources. Additionally, honest and open interactions contributed to the avoidance of any misrepresentations. Talking subsequently to the participants resulted in feedback and the collection of additional information. Using triangulation techniques and member-checking maintained any bias at a minimum level.

Preparing for the collection and retrieval of the most important information from the participants, an interview protocol was imperative (see Appendix C). I interviewed participants in an appropriate setting in which they felt unoppressed and free to share any information they wanted. The interviewing questions, as formulated in Appendix D, had a purpose of asking questions which mattered. Preparatory work, before the interviews took place, culminated in addressing key elements of effective strategies participants used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. Answering meaningful questions resulted in (a) the relay of relevant information to the interviewee as regards the purpose of the interview; (b) providing information to the participants about what the procedures are to store the collected information; and (c) answering any confidentiality concerns the participant had.

Participants

The main eligibility criterion for study participants in this study was that they were managers of vendors in online auction markets having effective strategies to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. These managers had at least 2 years of experience working at an online auction market. Participants had comprehensive insight into how their business works and were proficient in identifying and deciding how to handle and manage a variety of customer complaints. Online vendors (the companies) exhibited a strong vision for their company by having proven to maintain a competitive advantage.

Measures of this competitive position were (a) a long-year experience in the online auction business of at least 2 years, (b) a loyal customer base demonstrated by at least 30% of customers who were revisiting the online auction company as recorded in vendors' systems by comparing the number of visitors at the time of the interview with those in the previous year, (c) recognition from the online platform eBay acknowledging the participant's company was a trusted vendor with a high customer satisfaction rating, (d) reports from eBay showing the online auction vendor satisfied customer services requirements, and/or (e) high customer satisfaction surveys as demonstrated by eBay or implied in the annual report, by other documentation of the company, or publication (such as a trade journal). The participants already had a long track record in the online vendor market and demonstrated their abilities in dealing with customer complaints in a successful manner. These criteria aligned with the problem statement and the research question of this study.

To find eligible participants, using my network of contacts in the online auction industry was vital. As an online auction vendor in luxury watches for 4 years, I was a well-known member of the online auction community in Los Angeles, California. This presence in the community provided an opportunity to meet appropriate online vendors in Los Angeles, California, by reaching out to them personally and/or writing them a letter to ask them to participate in this research effort. I used an invitation letter (see Appendix B) to contact participants.

The strategy of establishing a working relationship with prospective participants was to introduce them to the topic of the research and clarify to them how the results of this study could benefit them. I motivated participants in this research by providing them with feedback on the preliminary results of the study for potential adjustment and additional input. Participants were likely to be eager to receive feedback based on this research and gain insight to address customer satisfaction issues on their online auction platforms by applying the appropriate strategies. Most importantly, they wanted to know more about how learning in organization works and can contribute to the improvement of the bottom-line of their companies.

Research Method and Design

This part of the study entails the choices and their justifications made to conduct a qualitative multiple case study based on the specific business problem and the research question formulated in Section 1, containing two subsections. These subsections relate to the research method and design chosen for this research study. The purpose of this research study was to find themes to characterize strategies successful managers of vendors in online auctions used to satisfy buyers. Exploratory research without the use of quantitative data limited the research study, as answering the research question required an in-depth understanding other than an assessment based on numerical outcomes as suggested by Yin (2018). The mixed-method approach did not meet the needs of the research study. The qualitative method was more appropriate. I used a case study design. Four of the five analytic techniques applied to analyze collected evidence from case study research, as outlined by Yin (2018).

Research Method

Research is the systematic process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data to understand an area of interest or a phenomenon by formulating at least one research question for the inquirer to investigate the phenomenon of interest (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). In academic research studies, the two most common methods of inquiry are quantitative and qualitative. According to Friedensen, McCrae, and Kimball (2017), Jordan and Wood (2017), and Padgett (2016), philosophical postpositivist worldview assumptions influence quantitative research, while interpretive constructivism inspires qualitative inquiries. Qualitative research concerns the processes, contexts, interpretations, meanings or understanding through inductive reasoning to describe complex phenomena which do not rely predominantly on statistical or numerical analysis (Cronin, 2014).

The aim of qualitative research is to describe and understand the phenomenon studied by capturing rich results and communicating participants' experiences in their own words via observations and interviews through contextualization, interpretation, and understanding of the participants' experiences (Cronin, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Ravitch and Carl (2015) conducted quantitative inquiries to seek explanations and predictions that generated data to either establish, confirm, or validate the relationships between the variables, as well as developing generalizations contributing to the study. The features of a qualitative study include an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world allowing the researcher to study things in their natural habitat in an attempt to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena based on the meanings assigned by individuals

(Mason, 2017). By employing a quantitative methodology, the researcher can examine the existence of a correlated relationship (if any) between input and independent variables the last of which would explain the underlying construct capturing and explaining behavior of phenomena (Mason, 2017). Quantitative research studies rely on predetermined mechanical techniques and standardized procedures where the emphasis is less on human experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Mixed-methods research involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods (Larkin, Begley, & Devane, 2014). Using this research method may address complicated research questions by collecting a variety of richer data. Limiting research to a qualitative or quantitative research method may not deliver results as aniticipated (Larkin et al., 2014; Yin, 2018). Mixed-method studies might involve a combination of two qualitative studies to describe a certain environment and a quantitative one to hold experiments in this environment by manipulating conditions to test hypotheses. Yin (2018) remarked that mixed methods research is more difficult to execute than studies constrained by a one-method research approach.

Conducting a qualitative study by creating an in-depth understanding of phenomena and managerial behaviors could necessitate an appropriate construct to explain their causes and effects. Many more variables might exist than data points available to capture. I was not aware of a theory positing independent variables or inputs as to measure, assess, and detect a construct. Using any construct to describe and explain complaints as an attempt to do so would prove counterproductive as suggested by Spillman (2014). Because of the reasons as mentioned above, a qualitative research study was the only appropriate choice to study customer complaints as specific phenomena in an online auction market context.

Research Design

Qualitative research designs are holistic in the sense that these designs pertain to what is relevant in the particular contexts, parts, or cases of the investigation to include and what is not by making well-founded choices (Mason, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2015). When applying these designs, the researcher tries to understand the phenomenon and situations as a whole (Mason, 2017). From a study perspective, the assumption is that the research design as a whole is greater than the sum of its parts and is adequate when the focus of the research is on processes (how something happens) rather than on the outcomes or results obtained (Mason, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2015).

According to Yin (2018), case studies can be used to analyze (a) distinctive situations in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, (b) multiple sources of evidence which might converge using triangulation methods, and (c) prior theories determining data collection and analysis. As such, case studies involve an in-depth exploration of an individual, a group of people, an activity, or an event (Cronin, 2014). Case studies can be intrinsic, instrumental, or collective. Instrumental case studies focus on issues by selecting groups of participants to examine specific patterns of behavior (Mason, 2017). A collective case study pertains to a study of multiple cases to examine particular phenomenon by collecting data from multiple data sources (Mason, 2017).

Mason (2017) and Thomas and Myers (2015) noted that intrinsic case studies are useful for acquiring a better understanding of the particular case of interest without the purpose of building theories. I chose an intrinsic qualitative case study (QCS) which is an exploration of a bounded system or case over a particular time period through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, each with its sampling, data collection, and analysis strategies to study beliefs, values and attitudes to tackle specific problems (Thomas, 2015). The outcome is a case description comprised of case-based themes (Thomas & Myers, 2015). Qualitative case study approaches relate to a contextually based tradition (Mason, 2017; Thomas, 2015; Thomas & Myers, 2015).

A case study concerns the investigation of typical phenomena in depth within its real-world context when the boundaries between the phenomena and the context may not be evident (Yin, 2018). The central research question of this study was what strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. By means of collecting data, holding interviews, and methodological triangulation, I attained a high degree of validity and credibility of the study. A multiple case study design was best suited to research concerning the *how*, *what*, or *why* questions (Mason, 2017). The qualitative case study was the most appropriate design for this research describing complex social phenomena. I saw these phenomena under study where reality was objective and predictable which reflected a postpositivist approach (Mills, Harrison, Franklin, & Birks, 2017).

According to Pérez-Bennett et al. (2014), the qualitative case study provides research with an intensive holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon within various organizational settings by analyzing persons, programs, processes or social units and applying theories and methodologies. I collected these experiences which contained both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on the memory, image, and meaning as explained by Thomas and Myers (2015). In this research, I was the primary instrument in the data collection process because of using interviews with open-ended questions and other materials such as reports, company data, and other information to explain the phenomena under study.

Conducting a phenomenological study was not applicable because the goal was not to use or assess my own empirical experiences of the phenomenon but to conduct interviews with participants. The goal of phenomenological research is to arrive at the essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). As such, my role was an observer in the research effort and not part of this effort. In using phenomenology as a review technique, the unit of analysis is the research report rather than an individual who experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). To achieve data saturation, the phenomenological research would necessitate more interviews and using any triangulation method might not attain the desired results.

Additionally, my own interpretations, opinions, and experiences to empirical claims about the phenomenon of lived experience were not contributions to this research. Therefore, employing a phenomenological study did not meet the needs for describing and translating particular research observations in clusters of meaning through descriptions based on human behavior and experiences which occurred in a natural setting. As noted by Harris (2014), conducting interviews only when collecting data does not restrict research.

According to Suopajärvi (2015), ethnographic study designs provide a holistic socio-cultural understanding of human interactions in a particular context or environment based on a shared language, values, beliefs, norms, rituals, and practices of a cultural group. Although studying and interviewing people in the online auction industry that might have similar backgrounds regarding education or occupational lives, the attention did not focus on the participants' ethnographic backgrounds, such as age groups, gender, or ethnic and social backgrounds when conducting interviews. Also, the objective was not to conduct long-term observations and immersion of myself in the environment when speaking to my participants and participating in this setting because these activities would take up too much time. Interviews and collecting other documentation, such as customer reports, financial reports, and online auction, restricted this study.

Narrative research designs are to analyze narratives and tales in a holistic way in terms of their content, form, categories or settings to understand concrete and complex situations of social actions and embodied experiences which might connect to a reader's own experience (Clandinin, Cave, & Berendonk, 2017; Geelan et al., 2015, Mason, 2017). I did not conduct interviews to collect and analyze stories, such as biographical interviews. Nor did I observe the participants during a long-term period to uncover a more in-depth understanding and consciousness of lived experiences and complex problems connecting the past to the present. Also, my focus was not on the social and cultural settings on which the participants' base and express their narratives.

Fusch and Ness (2015) noted that the requirement of accountability for data saturation when using a personal lens to explain phenomena. Participants' as well as the researcher's biases and worldviews are present in social research, both intentionally and unintentionally (Fields, Kafai, & Giang, 2017; Fusch & Ness, 2017). To address the concept of a personal lens, in qualitative research, the researcher is the data collection instrument and cannot separate himself from the research which brings up special concerns (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Guest, Namey, and McKenna (2017) and Namey, Guest, McKenna, and Chen (2016) systematically documented the degree of data saturation and variability over the course of their thematic analysis of data from 40 in-depth interviews and 40 focus groups on the health-seeking behaviors of African American men in Durham, North Carolina. They used a bootstrap simulation using 10,000 samples by deducing how many data collections they needed to attain saturation for specific themes. Based on these findings, Namey et al. (2016) were able to make evidence-based recommendations regarding nonprobabilistic sample sizes for interviews where five in-depth interviews were sufficient to reach 90% saturation. I ensured saturation occurred within the least possible number of interviews where basic elements for meta-themes were present as early as possible under the condition of variability within the data following similar patterns until no new themes surface. In case data saturation did not occur, I continued interviewing participants and member-checking the results until data saturation occurs.

Population and Sampling

Benoot, Hannes, and Bilsen (2016) used purposeful sampling to select in a nonprobabilistic and subjective way participants that might suit the objective of the research study. The purposeful sampling method is the most commonly used form of nonprobabilistic sampling to address research questions apart from stratified random and convenience sampling (Mason, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2015). I used the purposeful sampling method to select an adequate number of participants for this study. Benoot et al. (2016) mentioned the use of the snowball sampling strategy to identify and reach out to potential participants outside the interview group through referral. Accordingly, I asked the participants to reach out to other potential managers of online vendors in Los Angeles, CA, for capturing additional information and alternate experiences these managers of online auctions might have.

Guidelines for how many participants to include for holding interviews are virtually nonexistent (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017; Namey et al., 2016). Bertaux (1981) argued 15 interviews is the smallest acceptable sample size in qualitative research. On the other hand, Kuzel (1992) by tying recommendations to sample heterogeneity and research objectives, recommended six to eight interviews for a homogeneous sample and 12 to 20 data sources when looking for disconfirming evidence or trying to achieve maximum variation in case study research where the research goal is not to generalize but to target specific phenomena or patterns.

According to Morse (2015), a minimum of six participants is necessary to produce excellent qualitative research. Interviewing more participants might be necessary to reach data saturation. Data saturation occurs when the researcher gathers data which is repetitive which provides no more depth related to the data already acquired. Additional data contains similar identified and explored patterns or meta-themes (Morse, 2015). Holding four interviews would suffice unless more are necessary to achieve data saturation. Data saturation could necessitate more and possibly up to 12 interviews after an assessment of the results by applying other external methods, such as data triangulation through multiple data sources, or interviewed my particpants once more. Fusch and Ness (2015) used data triangulation to (a) correlate people, time, and space, (b) investigate findings from multiple study research, (c) use theories for using and correlating multiple theoretical strategies, and (d) methodologically correlate data from multiple data collection methods.

The sample size of participants typically relied on the concept of data saturation, or the point at which no new information or themes surface from the data (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation means the researcher fully explored the phenomena under study (Malterud, Siersma & Guassora, 2016; Mason, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2015). As regards data saturation, the researcher can categorize information, explain the richness and adequacy of descriptions and the depth of data, and clarify the variability among categories (Robinson, 2014). The aim of reaching the data saturation point is to ensure there are no new themes or new information which are important for the research.

In the previous subsection, I formulated the main selection criteria for participants: (a) they are decision-makers working for vendors in online auction markets for at least 2 years, and (b) they must be successful in managing customer complaint strategies contributing to the satisfaction of their clientele, as evidenced by employee records, annual reports, trade journals, eBay (customer satisfaction) reports, or any other documentation the online vendor can furnish. The participants had adequate experience in the organization they work. They were experts in the industry and had gained extensive experiences as regards customer relationships and solving customer complaints. Online managers exhibited the skills for identifying and deciding on how to handle and manage a variety of customer complaints.

Power imbalances in interview settings do not promote open discussions, especially when issues of politics, oppression, or discrimination are relevant to answer the research question (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). I interviewed participants in a setting where they feel free, comfortable, and unperturbed to provide (sensitive) information and data related to strategies they use to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. I conducted the interviews outside the participant's office in an open, safe, and quiet environment. The venues were a café, a library, or a chosen location the participant suggests, but preferably the site of the online auction, that were quiet and provide privacy. Also, I ensured I engaged with the participants in technical and specific terminology when needed to match the interviewer and participant characteristics.

Ethical Research

Qualitative research requires some rigor when participants contribute to the research effort. The researcher depends on sensitive data from research participants which raises ethical concerns and which calls for moral responsibility and meeting moral obligations. Ethical considerations apply throughout the phases of this research project.

Those multiple concerns need attention which are ambiguous when conducting research on an ethical basis (Fuller, Hutter, Hautz, & Matzler, 2014; Griffiths, 2014; Mason, 2017; Vanclay et al., 2013).

Collecting relevant documentation from interviewed participants was part of the research effort. After an initial selection of prospective participants, invited participants contributed to this research. See Appendix B for the invitation letter. Consecutively, prospective participants perused the informed consent or the cooperation agreement. See Appendix A for the letter of cooperation. Participants were fully aware of the procedures to guarantee their confidentiality (see Appendix E). Also, acknowledging the voluntary participation to this research was part of the process.

Participants could withdraw from this study after notifying the researcher. Participants indicated to the researcher verbally or in writing or to Walden University any time during the research to withdraw from the study. Participants also could have opted-out from providing sensitive information at any time, on any topic, without a penalty and must only provide information and participate in interviews on a voluntary basis. If any participant decided to withdraw from this study, I asked them for the reasons for declining to partake in the research. If necessary, any potential problems or issues participants encountered, would need alleviation of these concerns. The incentives for participants consisted of (a) participation in stimulating research, (b) feedback of the (preliminary) research results from their contribution to the research, and (c) results of the overall research project which potentially would benefit their company and enhance their own learning experience. I did not provide any monetary compensation to the participants in this study.

The consent form complied with Walden University policy requirements, and consent should comply with applicable regulations (Larson, Foe, & Lally, 2015). Through the consent form or the letter of cooperation (see Appendix A), I disclosed those arrangements and understandings between the participant and myself as a researcher in conducting this study. Furthermore, I protected the names of individuals or organizations to keep these confidential. Before conducting the interviews and collection of other data proceeded, Walden University's Institutional Review Board provided approval.

The consent form guarantees the rights and the anonymity of participants (Knepp, 2014; Koonrungsesomboon, Laothavorn, Chokevivat, Hirayama, & Karbwang, 2016; Smith et al., 2014). I protected the confidentiality of all participants, and the names of participants and their organizations by assigning codes and pseudonyms. Also, I secured the data and information while working on them. Any specific data I will keep confidential by only mentioning particular information in the research documents, interview transcripts and other materials obtained, such as professional background, age, and type and years of experience. I will store the collected data securely for 5 years in a secure vault to protect the confidentiality of participants before destroying the data.

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher is the primary data collection instrument through the interaction of the investigator with the participants of the study (Oun & Bach, 2014). To identify and understand what strategies managers of vendors of online auction markets use to manage complaints that improve buyers' satisfaction, I conducted semistructured interviews. In addition, I collected data by gathering information available at the participant's company that might be confidential, such as annual reports, financial reports, and customer reports. Also, I gathered other useful internal and external data, such as consumer reports, customer satisfaction data, industry reports, statistics, eBay related industry information, for the research. Obtaining these data is the result of conducting semistructured interviews to identify, find, and collect various kinds of information which are helpful in addressing the specific problem statement and answering the research question. Through the collection of a variety of data, I was able to relate to complex phenomena, the context in which these appear, and people acting in these environments by means of a case study design as suggested by Yin (2018).

The approach employed in this study was using semistructured responsive interviews which required participants being knowledgeable and informed about their subject matter (Bernard, 2017). Using the interview protocol contributed to reduction of researcher bias; see Appendix C. Obtaining a deep understanding, rather than breadth, about the subjects at hand necessitated responsive interviewing, which yielded coherent and transparent results that mattered and were trustworthy, as Robinson (2014) suggested. I interviewed the participant at a designated location at which the interviewee felt comfortable. Making the identity of the interviewees unknown was part of the interviewing transcribing process. This process resulted in obtaining rich qualitative data for further analysis with ATLAS.ti's qualitative software analysis. Coding the interviews was conducive for exploring themes, categories and related threads which were relevant to the research question and the reflection on the worldview of the participants. Using these themes, I identified, explained or otherwise suggested what effective strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage complaints to improve outcomes with the result of satisfying buyers. Themes are dynamic affirmations of control behavior or situations of stimulated activities (Mason, 2017).

Reliability of the data refers to the consistency of measures employed, whereas validity concerns with the extent to which these concerns reflect the phenomena as observed in practice (Mason. 2017). To ensure the consistency of collecting data, an interview protocol and standard interview questions were part of this research when questioning participants which improved the reliability of the primary data collection. Consecutively, loading the information into ATLAS.ti, capturing and analyzing the information in a uniform and consequent way enhanced the validity of the data and the findings. Additional activities were member checking, additional feedback by participants, follow-up interviews, and triangulation with external data or information. Also, triangulation of any case study with outcomes of other case studies took place, as suggested by Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, and Neville (2014).

Analyzing the accuracy of the research findings resulted in the reliability of the research, for instance, by checking and comparing the results with those in the professional literature and previous research, as explained by Harris (2014). As regards the validity of the study, Harris reread and crosschecked the transcripts against the audio recording. Additionally, Harris did a member-checking analysis of the data to ensure the information was correct and accurately portrayed the participants' lived experiences. In the same manner, checked transcripts and performing member-checking contributed to the inclusion of appropriate information and reduction of researcher bias. Also, I analyzed the accuracy of the findings by checking the results of previous research.

Data Collection Technique

The research question concerned strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets use to manage complaints to improve outcomes that satisfy buyers. Data collection techniques include gathering and collecting the data via (a) interpretive techniques (most popular technique – interviews, observations, etc.), (b) recursive abstraction (collecting data without coding), (c) mechanical techniques (electronic or online data collection), (d) self-study, and (e) obtaining additional information, such as reports and documentation (Mason, 2017; McTate & Leffler, 2017; Oun & Bach, 2014). I used interpretive and recursive techniques, predominantly interviews, to collect data. These techniques included semistructured interviews and the collection of organizational documentation. An interview protocol (Appendix C) was appropriate to conduct interviews consistently.

Through semistructured interviews, detailed responses contributed to answering the research question. These interviews were suitable, as the participants engaged the interviewing process in a dialogue format. To ease and optimize data collection, an interview protocol suited as a guidance for obtaining as much as information from participants and informing them of the step-by-step order of events during the interview. Adjustments of data collection techniques were necessary when circumstances or developments during the interview required adapting the techniques to attain the appropriate data for the study. See Appendices C and D for the abridged interview protocol and the interview questions, as employed in this qualitative research.

This research did not contain unstructured interviews which would consist of asking different questions to different participants in any manner befitting the researcher, as that may introduce bias in the interviews, as suggested by Dana, Dawes, and Peterson (2013). Participants answered the same questions in a similar manner. Avoidance of the usage of a set of questions in a rigid, organized, and ordered manner contributed to the quality of the answers, as noted by McTate and Leffler (2017). Conducting semistructured interviews, there is ample opportunity and opportunities to adapting the interviews for investigation purposes and exploring the answers much more in-depth. Together with other documentation collected from the organization (financial, statistics, customer surveys, and performance data), I obtained an account to the fullest extent possible of those strategies, approaches, and other phenomena to explain which effective strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets apply to manage customer complaints. During site visits and follow-up meetings, collection of other data pertaining to the research question took place consisting of mainly other organizational documentation as discussed above.

The advantage of conducting semistructured interviews is the preparation of questions carefully which are unambiguous. Participants should understand the questions with the goal to assist them to generate adequate information within the proper (cultural) context suitable to the research question (Mason, 2017, Yin, 2018). The goal of semistructured interviews is to stimulate reflexivity and enable self-examination by providing them with new and emerging information previously unknown (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). The questions are to stimulate the flow of information and participants can provide the researcher with other questions the participants can answer. Also, the researcher can make behavioral observations of participants.

The disadvantage is that these interviews do not provide the possibility to go further than the scope of the questions that are useful which could potentially provide additional information. The interviews are not guided conversations. Participants might not be able to give answers directly to complex, difficult, or technical questions which should address the use of other means of data collection, such as reports and documentation, as noted by O'Keeffe, Buytaert, Mijic, Brozović, & Sinha, 2016.

For these reasons, the collection of data is necessary from other sources such as (financial) reports, statistics, magazines, and academic and professional literature to get additional information for answering the research question or getting affirmation, verification, and contextualization of the phenomena under study that otherwise is not obtainable through the semistructured interview approach (Mason, 2017). By only conducting semistructured interviews, only essential information is obtainable. Documentation only concerns particular contexts and might not be detailed, comprehensive for evaluative purposes. A textual analysis of documents involves the mediation of content from the point of perspective to the context of research (Mason, 2017).

During the study, I used a research journal to write remarks, make notes, and record observations during the interviews. Bourque and Bourdon (2017), Parrott and

Cherry (2015), and Thorley, Baxter, and Lorek (2016) used this research journal to aid with data collection, data validation, and recollection of memory. Memos and notes written down in the research journal assisted the process of using descriptive materials for substantial and critical analysis. Also, I used this journal as a reference tool when conducting member-checking activities.

Member-checking involves checking and validating interview data and (intermediary) conclusions, and other analysis results with participants for validation purposes. The research journal contained reevaluations, observations, and assumptions I had prior, during, and after having contact with the participants to manage bias and create maximum transparency. The advantage of using a research journal is to help the researcher organize thoughts and make notes for further attention or exploration. The disadvantage was that the research journal was only for practical use to the researcher. Cross-referencing of the data occurred with the results from the application of each theme during the data collection process.

Data Organization Technique

Collecting empirical data and organizing them is an essential part of conducting a qualitative case study research (Dos Santos Bortolocci Espejo, Portulhak, & Pacheco, 2017; Kimball, 2016; Senom & Othman, 2014). Various methods to collect data exist (Akaeze, 2016). During my research, I organized my data using a research journal, a digital recorder in my mobile phone, transcribed interview data, and folders to categorize organizational data. The transcribed interview data were a result of posing nine questions (see Appendix D). I protected the confidentiality of participants by substituting names of individuals or organizations by letters (e.g., A, B, C) or numbers (e.g., 1, 2, 3). This process entailed redacting the interviews by removing information that identified the identity and personality of the participants. Also, I collected other documentation such as customer reports, financial reports, and online auction data by asking the participants for this information. I also assembled data that was publicly available in (academic and professional) publications.

For this study, digitization of collected data took place to the fullest extent possible. I kept that data which could not be stored in a digital format in a locked-up cupboard in my house. In addition, an encrypted external hard drive suited the storage needs for storing digital data; the storage place was the same cupboard. McCurdy and Ross (2017) emphasized the importance of saving data securely for 5 years and destroying them afterward. The destruction process entails secure paper destruction and securely erasing the external hard drives. Non-electronic data consist of tables, graphs, research journal, and other data in paper format. I will be the only individual who has access to the research database, paper-based documents, and any other information being available. The data is accessible during 5 years for future audits or further research in conformance with what Akaeze (2016), Banks (2013), and Holland (2017) indicated. A twicely secured backed-up version of the electronic data is available at a different location for safe storage purposes.

I used a research journal to write notes, make observations, and drafted remarks as many, as Akaeze (2016), Akkoyunlu, Telli, Çetin, and Dağhan (2016), O'Leary, Wattison, Edwards, and Bryan (2015) did. A reflective journal is a record book which allows the demonstration of research process transparency, the recording of broad descriptions, and documenting insights otherwise not captured during the research process. This journal suits the purpose to minimize any bias during this research by reviewing the research process and intermediate results in an objective manner.

Apart from a research journal, I used other digital tools which were databases (FileMaker Pro and Devonthink Professional Office) to store data (interviews, coding, literature) and a qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) computer program to transcribe and code interviews. Specifically, I used a QDAS program to organize, (automatically) code, retrieve, and analyze imported (interview and other qualitative) data for the identification and extraction of themes, as suggested by Paulus, Woods, Atkins, and Macklin (2017), Salmona and Kaczynski (2016), and Woods et al. (2016). ATLAS.ti and NVivo are two known QDAS software programs for qualitative analysis purposes. I used ATLAS.ti (version 8.4.2) for Mac for its simplicity and usefulness. Visualizing the data using matrices and hierarchical tree diagrams assists the research effort in finalizing this exploratory phase (Woods et al., 2016). For an overview of how to apply computer programs and reaping the benefits out of those, see Woods et al. (2016). Carter et al. (2014) explained that triangulation methods could be an appropriate method to test validity of research when information from different sources point can point the researcher to a particular conclusion. In the same manner, triangulation of the case study took place with a variety of interpretative theories to interpret the formulated conceptual and related conceptual frameworks with to-be discovered contextual variables.

Data Analysis

The aim of qualitative data analysis was to provide a meaning from the collection of a variety of data the researcher organized through interpretation of words, videos, or pictures (Flick, 2014). Elo et al. (2014) explained that using qualitative data analysis reduces the collected data to concepts to describe the research phenomena in more detail by also employing insights. As such, after collecting the data, I used a general analytic technique approach for case study analysis to ascertain the internal and external validity of the research results as proposed by Yin (2018). This approach consisted of the following techniques: (a) pattern matching, (b) explanation building, (c) time-series analysis, (d) logic models, and (e) cross-case synthesis. Pattern matching concerns comparing observed patterns with expected ones by using the found themes and patterns from surveys, interviews, and document analysis (Almutairi, Gardner, & McCarthy, 2014; Morgan, Paucar-Caceres, & Wright, 2014). These procedures represent a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena (Mason, 2017).

The goal was to reduce threats to the validity of the study by comparing and analyzing the data within cases, between the cases, and across cases, in this multiple case design as suggested by Kramer et al. (2017). Building an explanation of the case is mainly appropriate for explanatory case studies (Yin, 2018). The purpose of content analysis is to analyze data and interpret its meaning for reducing them to concepts as a description of phenomena in a deductive or inductive manner (Elo et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2015; Yin, 2018). The inductive approach entails open coding and creating categories with a degree of abstraction. In the deductive approach, performing a review of all the data is necessary after developing a categorization matrix and code according to correspondence or exemplification of identified categories (Elo et al., 2014). Logic models refer to repeated cause-effect cause-effect patterns when using interventions in case studies of organizational change which I did not do. I performed a cross-case analysis as I conducted a multiple case study by attempting a cross-case synthesis or meta-analysis of the results by aggregating the findings across multiple cases.

Triangulation was the appropriate data analysis process for case study research (Carter et al., 2014; Joslin & Müller, 2016; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013; Ravitch & Carl, 2015). The purpose of this method is to decrease bias and increase validity through multiple perspectives in order to address the research question (Drouin et al., 2015; Hober, Weitlaner, & Pergler, 2016; Joslin & Muller, 2016). There are four types of triangulation: data, investigator, theory, and methodological (Carter et al., 2014). Data triangulation concerns the capturing of data from multiple sources, whereas investigator triangulation pertains to data collection using multiple investigators (Carter et al., 2014).

By contrast, theory triangulation involves multiple perspectives of the same data under analysis, and methodological triangulation concerns multiple methods to collect data (Gibson, 2017; Joslin & Muller, 2016). By using the applied methodological triangulation, the use of at least two methods suffices to collect data to explore the phenomenon (Akaeze, 2016; Holland, 2017). Conducting various interviews, collecting organizational documentation, notes, and journaling to obtain various perspectives of studying a phenomenon were activities during the research. As such, methodological triangulation to obtain validation of the information was part of collecting further information in terms of richness and depth of the data, as espoused by Drouin et al., (2015), Fusch and Ness (2015), and Iqbal and Hassan (2015).

Accordingly, I triangulated the findings, implications, and conclusions with external data or information and applied the conceptual framework and associated theories in Section 1 to discover contextual variables, themes, and strategies. I employed an approach to analyze the data and representing them on the basis of a qualitative case study design with traditional or specific interviewing techniques. Cronin (2014) and Mason (2017) observed there is not a cookbook to analyze data emanating from a qualitative research study. Bernard, Wutich, and Ryan (2016) and Saldaña (2015) observed that qualitative research does not contain an explanation or mention in detail how research results explicitly derived from the data analysis employed. That makes qualitative research comparatively more challenging compared to quantitative research designs (Bernard et al., 2016).

This challenge is due to the fact of the theory not being adequate by the absence of independent fixed variables to substantially explain phenomena in their contextual settings (Mason, 2017). The researcher is part of the discovery process. Therefore, it was important to play around with the data gathered and develop a suitable analytic and interpretative strategy intuitively (Mason, 2017). Using other qualitative models found in the research literature for data analysis, I enhanced the particular coding of the interviews and themes in the area of research. Accordingly, I performed a cross-case analysis to enhance validity issues when necessary or suitable.

According to Mason (2017), conducting interviews is the most fundamental tool in qualitative research for which various methodologies exist to interpret the data. Coding interviews is an ability requiring learning and experience in praxis. Glaser (2017) discussed the art of coding as the ability to detect codes in such a way where the author linked the assigned codes in an interview to one another in a system of hierarchical relationships and as such can be visualized. Bernard et al. (2016), Ravitch and Carl (2015), and Saldaña (2015) espoused discovering themes is the basis of QCS research.

Data analysis includes describing, classifying, and interpreting data into codes and themes (Mason, 2017). Once the researcher codes the data, the researcher compares the codes and determines a relationship between the codes and themes (Farsi, 2017; Firmin et al., 2016; Mason, 2017; Nassaji, 2015; Oun & Bach, 2014). Conducting research may employ an inductive and iterative approach by comparing the result with the outcomes of multiple reviews of the same data by other research, as suggested by Firmin et al. (2016).

The researcher then completes a four-step analytic process by (a) comparing units of meaning across categories for inductive category coding, (b) refining the categories, (c) exploring relationships and patterns across categories (delimiting the theory), and (d) integrating data to write the theory (Mason, 2017). Bernard et al. (2016) and Saldaña (2015) suggested some techniques (theming, matrix, discriminant analysis, and visualization) to advance the analysis in a meaningful manner. The study included the use of theming and visualization to gain insightful results. Also, I used my intuition as suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2015) to gather insights which might result in additional impressions of the phenomenon. As such, categorical aggregation of the data took place by coding and theming exercises to reduce these to meaningful segments until as a result names were assigned to them (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). In this manner, an in-depth picture of my research emanated.

Research may contain the use of themes drawn from the data to address the overarching research question by identifying keywords and patterns and interpreting the data for validation purposes (Bessa & Tomlinson, 2017; Pohlmann & Kaartemo, 2017; Salmona & Kaczynski, 2016). For the theming, the coding of the transcripts and visualization of the results, I used ATLAS.ti for Mac (version 8.4.2) which is a specialized computer program for qualitative data analysis. By using this computer program and its functionality, finding themes and (hierarchical) relationships between themes and codes was easy to perform. The goal was to provide a perspective by putting the themes and codes into perspective as these elements are illustrative of interview segments. Visualizing the codes altogether and reviewing the quotations helped in this respect.

The coding process involved the identification and continuous refinement of the codes until no new themes emerge (Akaeze, 2016; Edward-Jones, 2014; Oliveira, Bitencourt, Zanardo dos Santos, & Teixeira, 2016). Ormston, Spencer, Barnard, and Snape (2014) emphasized the underlying meaning and essential nature of things, that is, qualities, rather than the attempt to count, measure, or quantify those things. I applied some codes to collapse the findings into broader categories to create hierarchies of codes as mentioned by Glaser (2017). Alternatively, selective coding attempts would produce better results. In these attempts, I used the results of quantitative case studies related to many factors to explain and explore the impact of behavioral traits online auction participants experience. This context proved suitable for coding purposes. To ease and optimize data collection, an interview protocol aimed to guide for the acquisition of as much as information from participants as possible and for informing them of the step-by-step order of events during the interview. Adjustment of this data collection technique took place when circumstances or developments during the interview required changing the techniques for the attaiment of the appropriate data for this study. See Appendix C for the abridged interview protocol I used in my qualitative research.

Against this background, the study included the use of the five analytic techniques as proposed by Yin (2018) to identify codes and emerging themes. These analyses helped to contrast the results of the study with other (more or less similar) cases researched which sustained the validity of the data gathered by putting it into a context. Also, I was able to correlate the findings with the models in the conceptual framework and related theories. I reviewed the collected data, generate initial coders, search and review original themes and name them as indicated by Visagie, Loxton, Stallard, and Silverman (2017). Crowe, Inder, and Porter (2015) demonstrated the use of content analysis in qualitative research to construct categories representing manifest content upon which the researcher can base the themes involved in the research.

Reliability and Validity

Boudreau, Gefen, and Straub (2001) postulated that phenomena are mostly latent in the sense of not being directly observable. Reliability and validity refer to the extent to which measures would contribute to the capture of the essence of that construct which is mostly a social construction represented by a set of intellectually-derived measures. These measures are not self-evident or inherently "true" indirect measures but emanations of the underlying research construct. It is therefore against this background research requires the establishment of types of validity to ascertain the underlying (unobserved) phenomena, sufficiently to explain them through these constructs, and to recognize the conclusions as to be valid and reliable. Accordingly, research reliability and validity involve the concepts of dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability in qualitative research (Kozleski, 2017; Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Dependability

Dependability concerns the quality of findings and conclusions through repetition of the research process captured through an audit trail as explained by Cope (2014) and Ravitch and Carl (2015). The dependability of research outcomes needs enhabcement to make sure that outcomes based on surveys and interviews are consistent, replicable, and repeatable (Chan Huan Zhi, Hj Malek, & Bahari, 2017; Haakma, Janssen, & Minnaert, 2017; Landis, Scott, & Kahn, 2015). For this purpose, I employed an interview protocol with questions as listed in Appendix C during each interview as suggested by Akaeze (2016), Holland (2017), and Townsend, Pisapia, and Razzaq (2015) to obtain data and answers consistently.

Additionally, I used collection and coding techniques to analyze data as suggested by Saldaña (2015) which consisted of (a) audio recording the participant interviews, (b) verbatim transcriptions of these interviews, and (c) employing a codebook with the major codes used and their definitions and outlays in the text using ATLAS.ti qualitative software by examining the data carefully using inductive reasoning. I increased the dependability which contributed to the reliability of my results by (a) validating the transcriptions with the participants to avoid errors, mistakes, and misinterpretations, (b) maintaining consistency when using the codes, (c) member-checking efforts through providing a synopsis and the results of the transcripts to the participants, and (d) organizing follow-up interviews for validation purposes as suggested by Noble and Smith (2015) and Saldaña (2015).

Reliability is a statement about measurement accuracy in the sense the participant can answer the same questions in a similar or approximately the same way each time while reducing bias, according to Akaeze (2016) and Bernard (2017). As such, I explored the phenomena under study as accurately as possible by conducting the interviews consistently. Thus, the reliability of the findings depended on the likely recurrence of the same phenomena and the interpretations thereof. This study was of a nonexperimental design, and as such threats to internal validity are not applicable. Notwithstanding, I had to address threats to statistical conclusion validity.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth and certainty of the data or the participant views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher (Cope, 2014; Miles et al., 2014). Birt et al. (2016), Mason (2017), Ravitch and Carl (2015) suggested that applying the member-checking technique ensures data dependability which implies that the findings conform to the data which are the result of data collection. To enhance credibility, I member-checked the interviews by asking the participants to confirm that the transcriptions were accurate and whether readers could interpret the data accordingly, as Akaeze (2016), Birt et al. (2016), and Mason (2017) suggested to minimize bias. For these purposes, I was very transparent with the participants to show my notes and let them review this information as long as they need to attain their approval. In this way, the validation of the results ensured that (a) the participants were related and had a strong correlation with the phenomenon at hand, (b) the researcher's relationship with the participants was well defined; and (c) the rich, thick descriptions could be traced from the research journal used, as articulated by Noble and Smith (2015). The collected data reflected the participants' feelings, experiences, values, and beliefs as suggested by Harvey (2015).

In addition to taking notes, I recorded the interviews to ensure the reliability of the transcripts, as Akaeze (2016), Birt et al. (2016), and Mason (2017) indicated. I asked the participants on various occasions during and after the interviews for additional clarification and in-depth details to gain full comprehension of what participants would espouse (Akaeze, 2016; Birt et al., 2016; Holland, 2017; Mason, 2017). During these interventions, I followed the interview protocol or process as illustrated in Appendix C to retain consistency and maintained reliability of the case study research, as proposed by Akaeze (2016), Birt et al. (2016), Holland (2017), Mason (2017), and Townsend et al. (2015).

Using various methods of triangulation (data, investigator, theoretical, and methodological) as described in the previous subsection I increased the extent to which the study was credible (Carter et al., 2014). In this way, further analysis and interpreting the data occurred as well as collection of semistructured interviews to increase the accuracy and credibility of my findings. Hence, I made sure that interviews and other collected data were credible by letting participants reviewing the transcripts and commenting on the interpretation of events and by allowing others to recognize the experiences contained within the study through the interpretation of participants' experiences. This process ensured that the explanation of the phenomena under study attains the highest degree of completeness as a representation of collecting the data and capturing and documenting that as suggested by Akaeze (2016), Holland (2017), and Mason (2017).

Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represent the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints and as such reflects the degree of neutrality of the data (Cope, 2014). In this case study research, I conducted interviews and organizational document analysis by using multiple sources of data during the data collection process, as suggested by Akaeze (2016), Holland (2017), and Tarrant et al. (2017). Sources should complement each other and researches should aim to use as many resources as possible to investigate phenomena (Mason, 2017; Ravitch & Carl, 2015; Shadiev, Wu, & Huang, 2017). Accordingly, the research process consisted of collecting as much as data (e.g., documents, reports, statistics, magazines, literature) as possible apart from holdeing the unstructured interviews. In this case study research, the use of multiple sources of data and carrying out an iterative and in-depth analysis contributed to the research outcomes. Hence, the use of in-depth interviews and the collection of other data was essential to identify and analyze the themes and patterns carefully and critically to provide a picture of the phenomena to the greatest extent possible as explained by Akaeze (2016), Kozleski (2017), and Mason (2017). Also, I maintained an audit trail to fully document the findings throughout the study including the decisions and steps taken as suggested by Noble and Smith (2015).

In addition, I reviewed the data and inspected the interview data on several occasions, as to be sure that the perspectives that participants wanted to convey were captured and interpreted in a rightful way. Performing a member checking effort after interpreting participants' interview answers and before analyzing the data ensured the validity of the interview data, as recommended by Akaeze (2016), Birt et al. (2016), and Holland (2017).

Additionally, capturing similarities and differences amongst participants took place. To ensure confirmability, documenting any participants' responses in detail in the research journal in conjunction with my personal notes were crucial for capturing my thoughts and insights. I focused on detailing perceptions and nuances of the conversations with the participants. This process established a link between the notes, the data, and the results. By using various methods of triangulation and analyzing different sources of information, I confirmed and improved the clarity or precision of a research finding, as espoused by various authors (Cronin 2014; Drouin et al., 2015; Joslin & Muller, 2016; Ravitch and Carl, 2015).

Data analysis can pay off, not only in providing diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon but in adding to credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusions the research delivers. In order to reduce researcher bias, I triangulated my data and results by (a) triangulation of sources originating from a variety of sources from my participants to find support of what they had said and correlated with other results from e.g. observations, interviews, documented accounts; and (b) theory triangulation: looking at data from different theoretical perspectives (Carter et al., 2014; Mason, 2017). These data consisted of (a) interviews, (b) annual reports and any other documentation of the online auction vendor, (c) eBay customer satisfaction reports, (d) qualitative studies pertaining to the functioning of online auction markets, and (e) any other documentation (e.g. industry surveys) and/or literature which was available. Additionally, I consulted experts in this research field and find additional eCommerce studies (online auctions in particular) to verify the findings and seek further feedback accordingly.

Akaeze (2016), Gillian and Craig (2016), and Holland (2017) noted that they were unable to finish their case studies and provide conclusions unless they could obtain a certain degree of data saturation. Analyzing the assembled data on a continuous basis and conducting additional interviews resulted in data saturation. Data saturation occurs when additional data collection and analyses result in repetitive, redundant information (Akaeze, 2016; Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Therefore, the collection and analysis of data was useful until that became repetitive and redundant to the extent that new themes or explanations for phenomena would not surface.

Transferability

Transferability refers to findings that reserachers can apply to other settings or groups (Cope, 2014). According to Cope (2014) and Hadi and Closs (2016), external reliability concerns the expectation toward the level of replication of research when contrasted to similar studies. Internal reliability relates to the extent to which agreement exists or replication of assessments, judgments, ratings and so on may happen as regards the internal research effort, as explained by Ravitch and Carl (2015). I demonstrated that by using procedures in the interviewing process and triangulating multiple sources of evidence were acceptable as to provide the techniques of this study applicability in other contexts and settings, as suggested by various academics (Dag & Arslantas, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2015; Tertoolen, Geldens, Van Oers, & Popeijus, 2015).

For this purpose, I enhanced the transferability by providing rich and thick descriptions as suggested by Saldaña (2015) and Yin (2018). These descriptions consisted of ample and sufficient details of the phenomena and themes under study which related to strategies that managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. In this way, readers of this research study and future interest groups can judge whether the findings are useful in their context under the assumptions as employed in this research.

Transition and Summary

In this section, I proposed to conduct an intrinsic multiple case study concerning strategies that managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. Writing included an outline of the role of the researcher and the standard to which I complied to conduct this research ethically. Through purposeful sampling, I selected appropriate participants to explain the underlying phenomena associated with these strategies by exploring various case-based themes. The plan was to select at least six participants in the greater Los Angeles region in California.

Section 2 also consists of detailed descriptions of the data collection process, data organization techniques, the data analysis process, and means of determining reliability and validity during the research study. In addition to applying selected quality measures. I took the necessary precautions to attain reliable results and conducted this research study in an ethical manner, which is the subject of Section 3 of this research study.

Section 3 contains the study's implications for social change and recommendations for useful action steps, based on the conclusions. Recommendations for further study are part of the next section. Part of that section are a reflection on my experiences with the research process by discussing my personal biases, their possible influence on participants, and the changes in my thinking process during the research effort.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this intrinsic exploratory qualitative multiple case study was to explore effective strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. I collected data by using multiple interviews, site visits, and additional documentation which was also available online. The results were to determine and classify strategies applied according to five themes: (a) Business Orientation, (b) Customer Purview, (c) Complaints Handling, (d) Coping Strategies, and (e) Learning Abilities. The first three themes indicated the direction of online vendors chose to achieve business results by placing the customer in the first place by handling complaints in an effective manner and as a priority. Online vendors' standing with eBay depended on feedback rating and high customer satisfaction outcomes.

Online vendors used various strategies to cope with complaints. These were mostly tactics and solutions to satisfy customers immediately, including better information on their websites and providing financial refunds for orders. These coping strategies had their origins in adaptive and behavioral learning to the market environment. Online vendors who had extensive experience were very adaptable and changed course in their decision-making process multiple times using feedback-learning loops, which reflects double-loop learning efforts. These vendors applied anticipatory learning primarily based on experience and accumulated entrepreneurial know-how and knowledge. They were very adamant to succeed and applied self-efficacy. Less experienced vendors lacked the agility to proactively anticipate customer demands and changes in the online market environment; single-loop learning was dominant. Proactive and behavioral learning mechanisms were the drivers of situated learning strategies to handle customer complaints up to a satisfactory level with excellent feedback ratings. Applying experiential and entrepreneurial learning, these mechanisms were more effective by tackling real-life problems. Online auction vendors depended on the extent to which they handled complaints successfully based mainly on skills development and a changing mental model mindset driven by self-efficacy.

Presentation of the Findings

I formulated the research question to address what effective strategies managers of vendors in online auction markets used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. This research question required an answer by explaining the findings by comparing and interpreting the collected data. The study included the application of various techniques of triangulation, as explained in the previous subsections for reliability and validity purposes. In qualitative research, discovering and finding themes are the basis for much research using data analysis and text interpretation. Codes represented ranges in magnitude from a single word and up to a full paragraph of text or a stream of moving images. In further coding attempts, the portions coded can be the same units, longer passages of text, analytic memos about the data, and even reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far. Codes are vital connections in the data collection process for interpreting the collected data and explaining their meaning (Saldaña, 2015).

As suggested by Saldaña (2015), the study included two rounds of coding of the interviews, documentation, and other data collected from the literature and websites. On the first round of coding, performing magnitude, holistic, and provisional coding contributed to capturing the meanings of the interviews. On the second round, when performing hypothesis, simultaneous, and causation coding, while getting rid of unnecessary and redundant codes, this process resulted in a meaningful size of codes and optimal outcome of the data. The activity of building hierarchies of codes and themes involved devising codebooks. Various themes link to the conceptual framework and its associated theories as dynamic affirmations through the expressions and references to them in the quotations of transcripts and other materials employed. The discovery process resulted in the following themes: (a) Business Orientation, (b) Customer Purview, (c) Complaints Handling, (d) Coping Strategies, and (e) Learning Abilities. These themes formed the basis to discuss the findings to the extent these outcomes validate, confirm, or extend the theoretical implications associated with the conceptual framework and associated theories.

ATLAS.ti as a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software tool was instrumental to code transcripts, documentation, and other materials for text interpretation purposes. In conformance to the interview protocol and in conjunction with the interview and a list of follow-up questions (Appendices C and D), I conducted interviews and checked the transcripts of the interviews after transcribing them using Trint. Checking the results occurred manually. Prior importing the data into ATLAS.ti, member-checking to validate the texts and their interpretations was essential. Consecutively, the goal of the final coding attempts was to ensure optimal reliability of results and removed redundant codes. Visualization of the resulting hierarchies of codes and themes took place, as discussed in the next subsections. The improvement of the data analysis resulted from performing analyses by tools provided within ATLAS.ti and using a stop list.

Table 1 concerns the relative importance of each theme. For each participant interview, I listed the frequency of codes per theme. Complaints handling was the second most crucial theme in this study. The extent to which online vendors were able to accommodate their business by leveraging their learning abilities scored the lowest amount of relevant codes employed at around 8% (normalized). Figures 1 and 2 contain an overview of all the codes and themes used in this study, which include relations to the conceptual framework and associated theories (single-loop and double loop learning (SLL/DLL), dynamic capabilities and absorptive capacity (DC/AC), and situational learning). All the themes require reading in a horizontal fashion left to right with the learning abilities feeding the coping strategies, the latter of which connects to the handling strategies as illustrated in Figure 1. The handling strategies relate to the customer purview which directly connects to the business orientation with the complaints

Table 1
Frequency of (Normalized) Codes Sorted by Theme and Participant and Normalized for Comparison

Themes	Participants													
	A1			B1			C1			D1			Totals	
	Absolute	Table-relative	Norma-lized	Absolute	Table-relative	Norma-lized	Absolute	Table-relative	Norma-lized	Absolute	Table-relative	Norma-lized	Absolute	Norma-lized
Business Orientation	99	21.34%	**9.00%**	25	5.39%	**7.72%**	15	3.23%	**5.95%**	15	3.23%	**8.33%**	154	**31.00%**
Complaints Handling	77	16.59%	**7.00%**	20	4.31%	**6.17%**	16	3.45%	**6.35%**	8	1.72%	**4.44%**	121	**23.97%**
Coping Strategies	61	13.15%	**5.55%**	14	3.02%	**4.32%**	16	3.45%	**6.35%**	12	2.59%	**6.67%**	103	**22.88%**
Customer Purview	8	1.72%	**0.73%**	16	3.45%	**4.94%**	13	2.80%	**5.16%**	6	1.29%	**3.33%**	43	**14.16%**
Learning Abilities	30	6.47%	**2.73%**	6	1.29%	**1.85%**	3	0.65%	**1.19%**	4	0.86%	**2.22%**	43	**7.99%**
Totals	275	59.27%	**25.00%**	81	17.46%	**25.00%**	63	13.58%	**25.00%**	45	9.70%	**25.00%**	464	**100.00%**

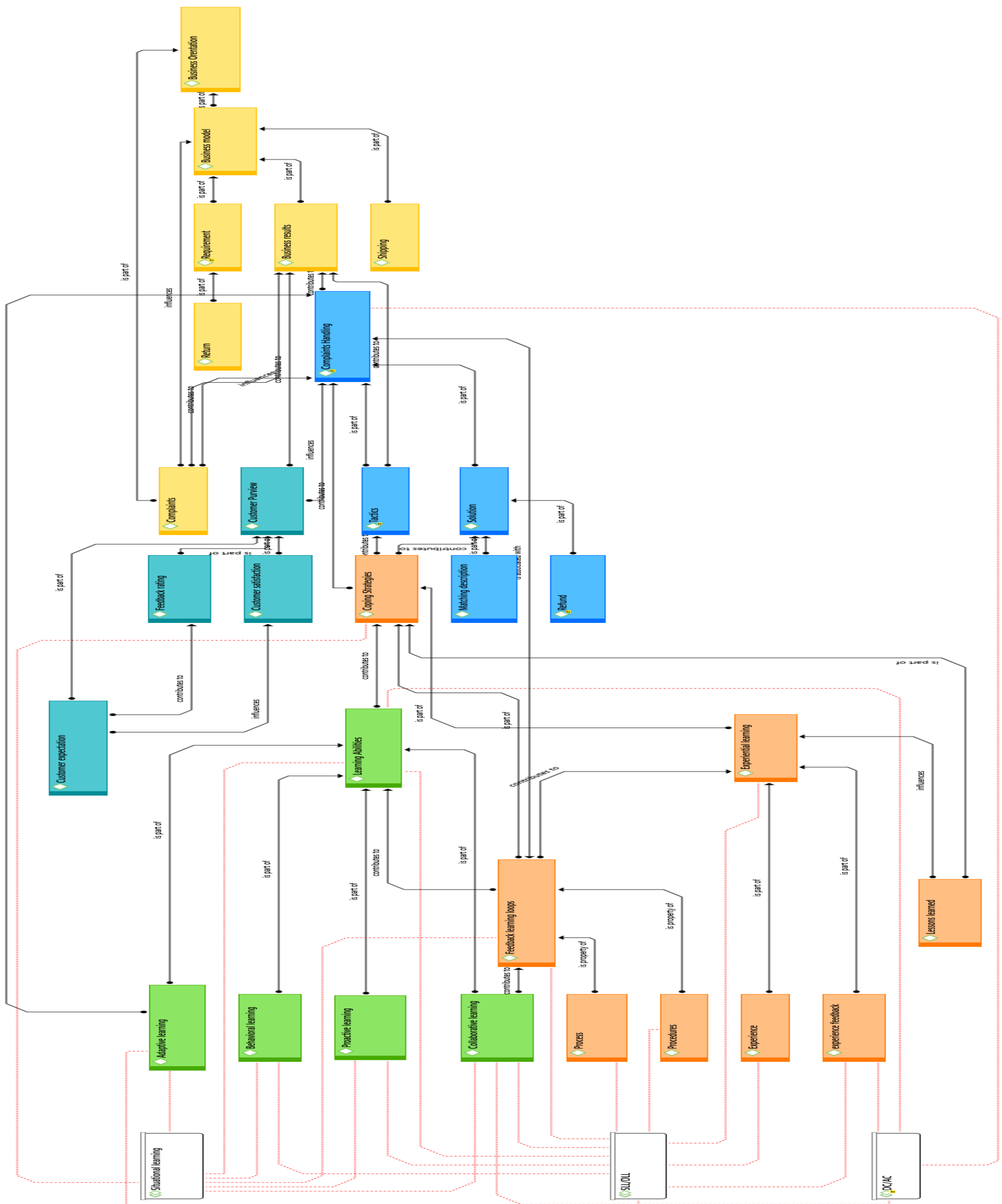

Figure 1. *Map overview (left-to-right alignment) of themes and codes used in the study in conjunction with concepts from the conceptual framework.*

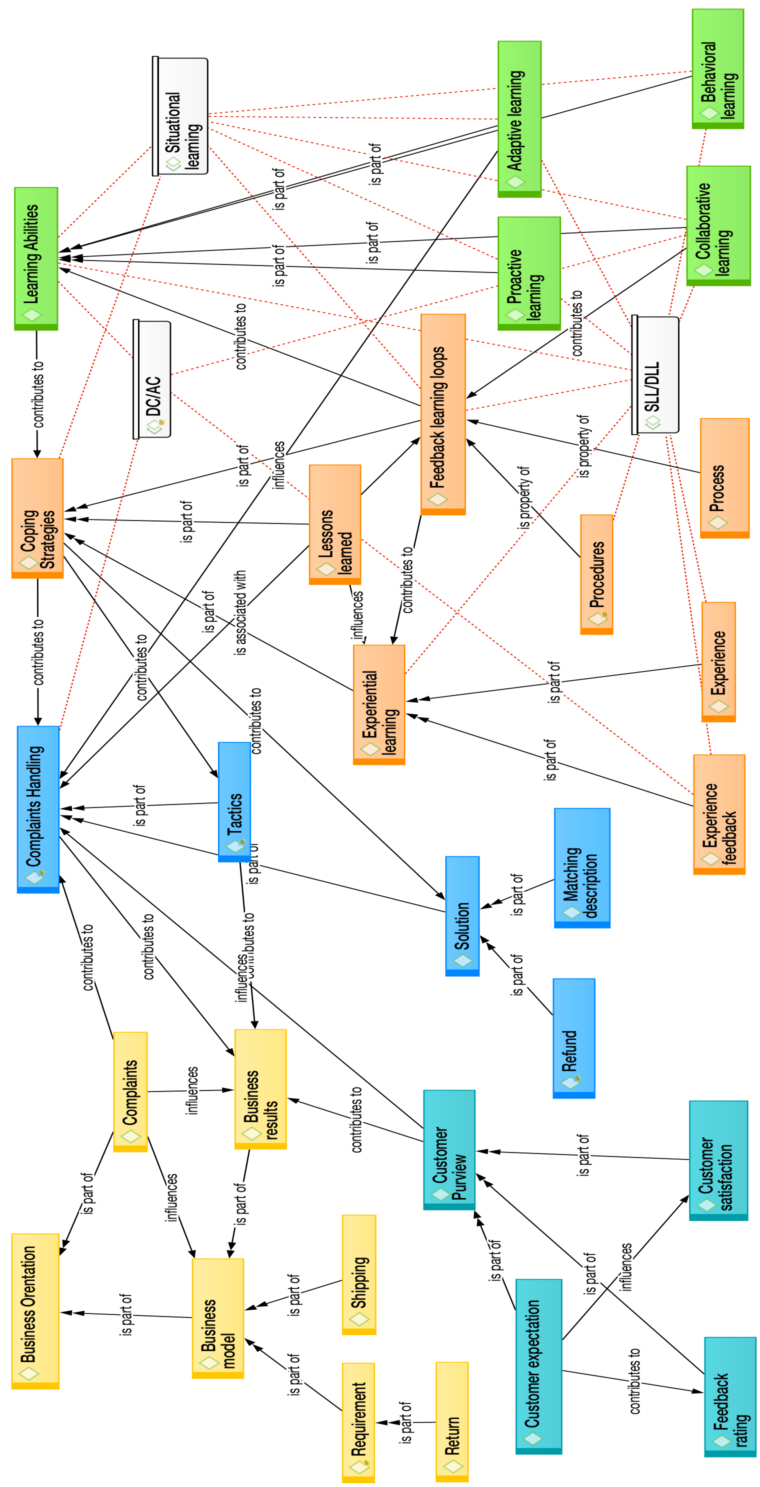

Figure 2. *Map overview (hierarchical, right-to-left arrangement) of themes and codes used in the study in conjunction with concepts from the conceptual framework.*

being an inherent part of this theme. Figure 2 concerns a hierarchical orientation of the themes.

The code co-occurrence table in Figure 3 depicts an overview of the significance of codes used in the coding practice as exemplified by the colors red, yellow, and blue. The business of online vendors depended heavily on handling and managing complaints. The aim is to satisfy the customer and manage customer expectations. Learning abilities mainly consisted of experience feedbacks within a situated learning context. Standard solutions to immediately avail oneself of a problem using appropriate solutions and tactics with refunds taking most of the solution. Complaints mainly consisted of shipping issues and nonconformity of listed items. Noteworthy is the following. For the top 10c-coefficients in the co-occurrence of codes, 0.38 were for experience feedback and experiential learning, 0.33 for self-efficacy and entrepreneurship, 0.35 for customer

	Business model	Business results	Complaints	Complaints Handling	Customer expectation	Customer satisfaction	Experience	Experience feedback	Experiential learning	Feedback learning loops	Refund	Shipping	Solution	Tactics
Business model	0	7	14	13	6	14	4	10	12	13	11	6	8	8
Business results	7	0	3	1	4	9	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0
Complaints	14	3	0	17	7	7	1	15	14	18	8	12	10	9
Complaints Handling	13	1	17	0	9	10	2	10	11	10	10	5	10	8
Customer expectation	6	4	7	9	0	16	0	3	4	1	2	3	3	4
Customer satisfaction	14	9	7	10	16	0	1	1	3	0	2	3	3	3
Experience	4	0	1	2	0	1	0	6	12	2	1	0	2	1
Experience feedback	10	1	15	10	3	1	6	0	22	16	4	3	3	3
Experiential learning	12	0	14	11	4	3	12	22	0	17	3	7	4	9
Feedback learning loops	13	2	18	10	1	0	2	16	17	0	2	2	6	4
Refund	11	0	8	10	2	2	1	4	3	2	0	4	8	6
Shipping	6	1	12	5	3	3	0	3	7	2	4	0	4	7
Solution	8	0	10	10	3	3	2	3	4	6	8	4	0	11
Tactics	8	0	9	8	4	3	1	3	9	4	6	7	11	0

Figure 3. *Code co-occurrence table. The top 5% codes are red-colored; codes in the bracket top 5-10% are in yellow; codes in the bracket top 10-20% are in blue.*

satisfaction and customer expectation, 0.28 for experiential learning and feedback loops and feedback, 0.26 for adaptive learning and lessons learned, and 0.26 were for lessons learned and adaptive learning as well.

Theme 1: Business Orientation

Managers of online vendors have a particular business orientation as concerns the value proposition they offer their customers. Customer complaints are part of this business orientation. See Figure 4 Figure 4. The codes used for Theme 1 (Business Orientation) and the relationship between them. Other themes illustrate the dependencies with this theme.

The success of each of the online vendors' businesses directly related to complaints, as negative feedback impacts the reputation of the sellers, which will force them out of business. Also, by using eBay as a trading and auction platform customer satisfaction was high on the agenda. Customers expect vendors will deliver on their promises. The business model and the success of online vendors depend on the detection and correction of errors. These corrections frequently occurred when shipping products or when the descriptions of the products sold did not match the customer's expectation. The online auction industry has a complex environment, and its markets are dynamic and turbulent. For companies to succeed, they have to be able (a) to handle complaints effectively and efficiently, and (b) focus on everything which matters to the customer, the so-called customer purview. In the following sections, I will demonstrate double-loop learning is essential for companies to be successful and viable in the long-term. In their business focus, vendors were very much action-oriented, which emphasizes double-loop learning

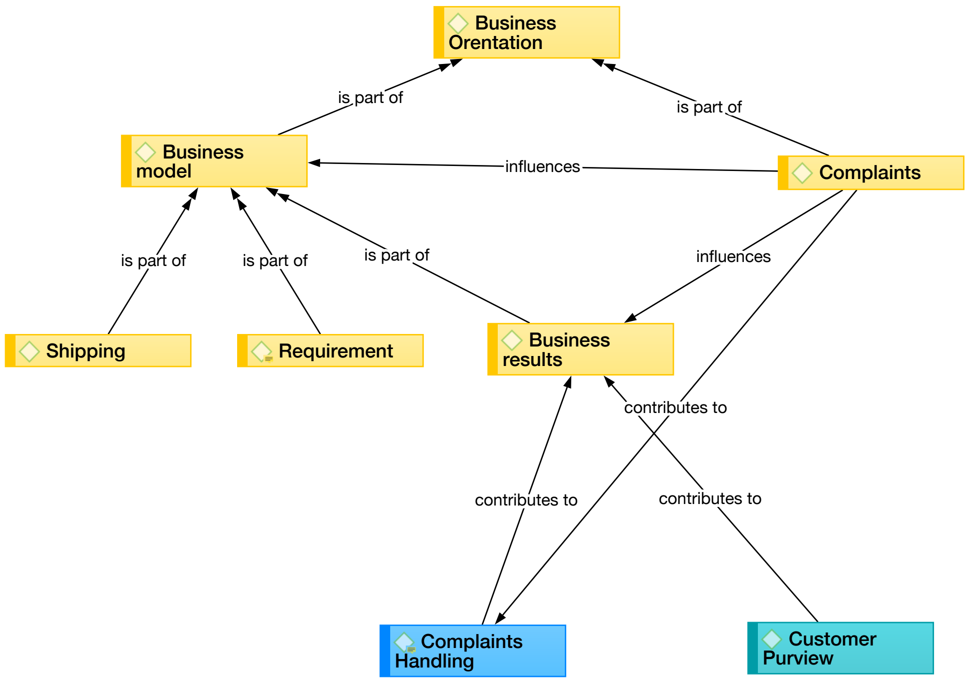

Figure 4. *The codes used for Theme 1 (Business Orientation) and the relationship between them. Other themes illustrate the dependencies with this theme.*

is a necessary prerequisite (Argyris & Schön, 1978).

This research is essential for a critical understanding of business models and frameworks in online auction transactions and the decision-making processes from the point of view of sellers specifically. Online auction success depends on the business model that vendors apply (Ko & Kim, 2015). The subject of the research study concerns managerial aspects of how to cope and handle complaints that directly influence customer behavior and online auction outcomes but not the mechanics of the auction. Strategies to handle complaints are part of the business orientation that managers of online vendors should have. Customer satisfaction is a direct factor to make an online auction business to become successful.

Given the business orientation theme, complaints take a central role as an incident cause for double-loop learning to occur. The extent to which vendors were responsible for depended on the level of absorptive capacity (AC) they were able to demonstrate. The AC is evident from participant A1, who has been in the business for more than 20 years. Generating new knowledge and being innovative enough to satisfy customers, while attaining business results, highly depends on the ability to change routines, procedures, and the way of working which was more evident for participant A1 than the other interviewees. For those vendors who maintained an online business over 5 years, the level of absorptive capacity was relatively low.

Appendix F contains relevant quotations using the codes, as indicated in Figure 4. Academic authors do not offer general frameworks to understand to what extent sellers on eBay or any other online auction platform can influence buyers to buy more goods or successfully complete the auction process when complaints occur. Many quantitative studies and qualitative models exist providing guidance to sellers which (facilitating and intermediary) factors influenced the online auction process (Cui et al., 2008; Ma, 2014). These factors were trusted third-parties (like eBay), reputation mechanism, and technology adoption of the auction platform. In terms of the reputation mechanism, sellers' ranking was a common one, and feedback ratings on online vendors' pages on eBay illustrated this mechanism very well. Auction success directly related in various studies by the experience online vendors could demonstrate (Cui et al., 2008; Ma, 2014); complaints may be a mediating or intermediary factor influencing consumer behavior in online auctions. The results of this study have implications for applications to professional practice with regard to (a) handling complaints, (b) coping strategies, and (c) learning abilities.

Online auction platforms, such were the case in this study, have reputation and feedback systems to induce and enable trust between the online vendor and the customer (Tadelis, 2016). Establishing trust was in the hands of the online vendors to ensure the products offered were of high quality and the online vendor displayed the correct information or the quality of the product accurately. The feedback rating mechanism seeks to establish trust between online vendor and the buyer. The feedback rating system causes biased feedback with the result of online vendors avoiding negative ratings at any reasonable cost in order to satisfy eBay customer satisfaction ratings (Tadelis, 2016).

Trust is a critical ingredient between sellers and buyers at online auctions and in e-commerce environments in general. The element of trust has various meanings and implications (Wu, Chen, K.Y., Chen, P. Y., & Cheng, 2014). Specifically, the reputation of online stores and auctions highly depends predominantly on the factor of trust, and online vendors maintain these by voluntary measures of quality controls as discussed in the next subsections of Themes 2 and 3. As Wu et al. (2014) emphasized, many uncertainties surround the way online vendors perform their services and can affect the perception and expectation of its users, especially when trading in luxury goods (Parguel, Delécolle, & Valette-Florence, 2016).

Experienced online vendors were aware of the complex trading environment eBay offered them. Achieving business results with and outside the eBay platform was their focus. They pushed the boundaries of the possible and experimented with various solutions in terms of pricing, packages, (international) shipping, various modalities of refunds, and customer feedback mechanisms. This behavior was exemplary as many organizations adhere to single-loop learning and related problem-solving patterns despite the urge to change operations in competitive environments (Lee, 2014). Only these vendors exhibited double-loop learning abilities to manage change and confront exceptional online trading conditions where the customer purview was central in achieving business results. For this to happen, the vendors illustrated their business practice was dependent on adaptive and action-oriented learning practices. In this way, they were reflective of how to resolve a variety of customer complaints and eBay-platform oriented operational issues. Also, these specific vendors changed their mental models continuously, as explained by Pérez-Bennett, Davidsen, and López (2014) in order to improve financial performance, sales results, and the avoidance of customer complaints. One vendor exclaimed online vendors had to be knowledgeable, logical, and professional when applying their business model (see Appendix F). Part of the business model is to avoid making mistakes against all costs, irrespective of the reasons.

Vendors who gained much experience demonstrated their unique capabilities to leverage their tacit skills and position themselves in the online vendor market, as illustrated by Argote and Guo (2016). Their competencies relied heavily on the extent to which they were able to learn in practice and formulate coping strategies to operate their specific business model. The courses of action in handling complaints to satisfy customers differed significantly. This held also for the application of a variety of (international) shipping schedules and track-and-trace abilities which depended much on the business model each online vendor used (see Appendix F). One vendor explained the essentials of applying knowledge as doing so would create more advantages on eBay about what he was buying and selling. Crucial to experienced buyers was to devise a long-term strategy and create a consistent presence on the online auction platform. Also, they found a niche where they were able to generate healthy profits.

Theme 2: Customer Purview

The customer purview theme accentuates the customer because any vendor operations centers around getting the highest possible feedback rating on the eBay platform which hosts each participant's online store. Coding of the feedback rating on images on the website took place. The quotations in **Error! Reference source not found.** only relate to the interviews held and concern customer satisfaction and customer expectation. Figure 5 concerns an overview of the codes with the connection to other themes. The customer purview theme accentuated a general lack of trust between vendors and buyers which affects the vendors' reputation and impedes consumers to buy luxury goods on the internet (Parguel et al., 2016). The degree of trustworthiness demands, as is the case in this study, a dedicated focus on customer expectation and satisfaction which help attract potential shoppers and retain customers, such as adolescent buyers exhibiting particular online shopping behaviors (Han-Jen, 2014) and those customers exhibiting social facilitation behaviors (Ko & Kim, 2015).

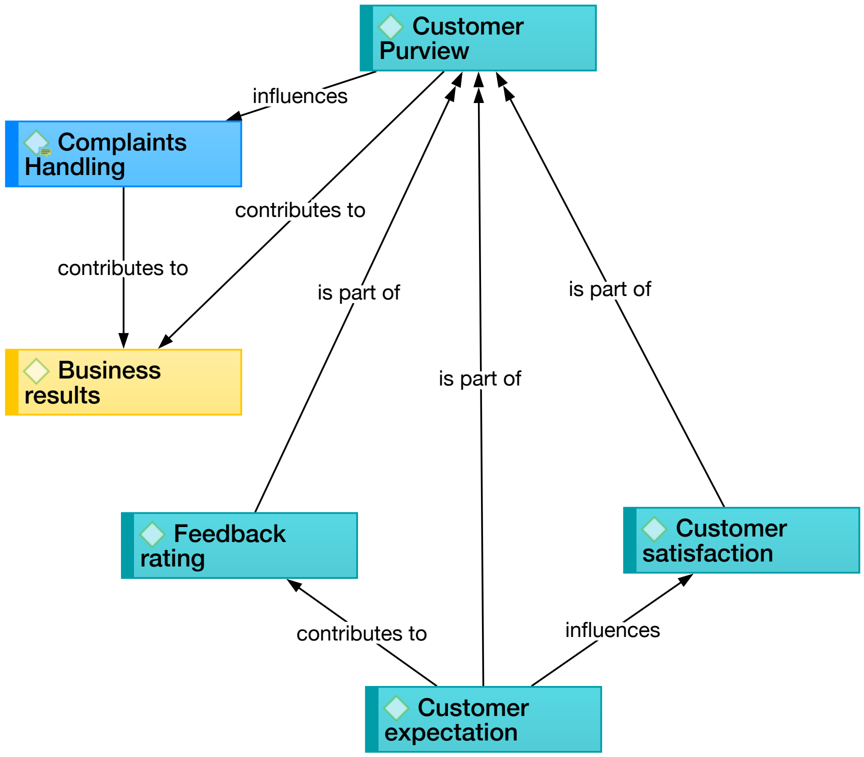

Figure 5. *The codes used for Theme 2 (Customer Purview) and the relationship between them. Other themes illustrate the dependencies with this theme.*

Customers tried to understand how they can make proper decisions when participating in online auctions, and they shape their choices for optimal outcomes accordingly (Liu, Burns, & Hou, 2013; Parguel et al., 2016). In this regard, complaints affect the trading behavior of buyers and sellers. Online vendors may not deliver the goods and services appropriately. An abundance of literature is available to treat the impact of this lack of trust emanating from various participants in these auctions such as at eBay, one of the largest online auctions in the world, cf. Chamba et al. (2016) and Purnawirawan, Eisend, De Pelsmacker, and Dens (2015).

The customer purview concerns ways to satisfy customers and meet the expectations they have. Most of the complaints focus on issues of trust related to shipping (costs), non-delivery problems of goods, and policies. Strategies to handle customer complaints as part of completing auctions is not a subject of many research study during the past decade. Customer feedback ratings are an indirect measure to assess customer satisfaction; eBay feedback ratings are a reflection of those practices of what takes place in an online auction transaction (Tadelis, 2016; Watt & Wu, 2018).

Experienced vendors were aware the customer purview was one of the vital elements which generated business results (see Appendix G). Less experienced sellers did not know the exact rules of the online auction platform with the likelihood of impending negative feedback ratings, which negatively impacted trading operations. On the online platform, the customer purview is king. The seller had to know the particulars of shipping to any country and the handling of postal authorities of shipments in the world in order to meet customer expectations. Vendors had to avoid negative feedback ratings at any cost. Any vendor had different (coping) strategies to pre-empt negative ratings. Behavior learning abilities, in conjunction with situational learning, enabled these strategies to gain more confidence in the ability to sell goods to (prospective) buyers with the result of listings looking good.

Trust related to online auction websites, the online auction vendors, the auction initiators, and the group members. The eBay feedback mechanism constituted a significant part of the online auction platform proposition, as demonstrated by Chen et al. (2017). Trust-building systems in online marketplaces were essential for their operation. Feedback mechanisms reflect the extent to which undesirable transaction behaviors (UTBs) and online auction-related complaints impact the online auction process. Online auction vendors who did not have an adequate established reputation and received a resulting negative feedback rating would considerably sell their goods and services against lower closing prices (Laitinen, Laitinen, & Saukkonen, 2016). As a consequence, an increase in negative feedback points would reduce the final sales price, change consumers' behavior, be a reflection on the level of customer service, and influence bidding strategies.

A feedback mechanism for modeling trust is a platform for providing information on vendors's reputation and buyers who have different behaviors, preferences, and viewpoints. When online auction vendors did not have a long track record, customers had a high level of uncertainty concerning the good or bad performance of offered goods and services. Reliability, similarity and satisfaction were factors to establish trust in the online auction vendor (Chamba et al., 2016). Online auction vendors and managers of auction platforms (like eBay's) usually built reputation mechanisms upon behaviors based on probability theory. In this multiple case study, I did not explore the behavior of the sellers with the goals of measuring the effect of reputation on biased or unfair ratings and vice versa. This learned behavior and online auction participants' preferences could be used to re-interpret the reputation information. This type of research could help online auction vendors to more effectively aggregate and adjust reputation information in order to make decisions, thereby increasing their satisfaction and overall payoffs in their interactions on the auction platform.

Hsu, Chuang, and Hsu (2014) studied intense competition on online auction marketplaces and provided for a model to provide safe and user-friendly shopping environments. Satisfied customers, in conjunction with positive endorsements, influenced the factor of trust. Perceived risk and the trust invested in the seller related to intentions to purchase based on reputation. The online auction vendor's behavior influenced, in turn, reputation by his behavior to deal with UTBs and a variety of complaints. As noted by Hsu et al. (2014), an increase of consumers' trust invested by auction initiators caused more interactions with other auction participants, such as providing the most relevant and updated purchase information. Reduction of uncertainty for the whole online auction process, including the delivery of goods, was vital when customers decided to partake in online auctions. Customers would face other online auction transactions attributes, such as pre-payments and insurance policies and their effects on online auction complaints and UTBs, which could alleviate uncertainty (Zhou, Lu, & Wang, 2016).

The above-mentioned results were in line with the findings of Escobar-Rodríguez and Carvajal-Trujillo (2014). As stated by these authors, the determinants of transactions were trust, online purchase intentions, price savings, habit, cost saving, ease of use, performance and expended effort, hedonic motivation and social factors assisted by facilitation conditions of the online auction. The element of trust was the result of information quality, perceived security and perceived privacy.

Tsang, Koh, Dobbie, and Alam (2014) developed various methods for identifying fraud in an online auction setting which used supervised learning methods by classifying various occurrences of fraud (UTBs). The purpose was to propose a system for predicting fraudulent attempts when delivering online auction goods while taking into account a set of product listings of an online auction site and outputs for each listing using a fraud score. In this way, by analyzing listings online auction vendors decreased the order of risk.

Unlike price, trust was the determinant of online purchases despite the fact consumers were familiar with conducting transactions online (Kim & Peterson, 2017). Therefore, consumer reviews and feedback systems played an essential role in consumer decision-making which indicated a prominent role for online consumer feedback mechanisms and associated consumer forums. Trust was a significant predictor of actual risk perceived between transacting participants (Filieri, Hofacker, & Alguezaui, 2018; Liu & Park, 2015). In this regard, prompt shipping, careful packaging of fragile products, and excellent customer service were crucial factors to avoid customers to generate complaints.

Tsang et al. (2014) researched detecting collaborative fraudulent behavior using quantitative research. These behaviors included shilling fraud, reputation manipulation, and non-delivery fraud, characterized by the fact although the winner sent payment, he never would receive the products as ordered. Non-delivery fraud occurs when buyers complete an auction successfully.

Consumers depended on online reviews by other consumers or advisors for their purchase decisions (Wu, Noorian, Vassileva, & Adaji, 2015). Price level and personality affected the purchase decision. The number of reviews affects consumers' purchase decisions only when price levels are high. In terms of personality, openness significantly related to purchasing decisions when price levels were high, whereas neuroticism affected purchase decision when price levels were low (Chou, Picazo-Vela, & Pearson, 2013; Einav, Farronato, Levin, & Sundaresan, 2018).

Reputation effects have a considerable impact on transactions conducted in internet auctions. Relevant for this multiple case study was a lack of trust which implied consumers bought more luxury goods in-store with pricing displays influencing consumer luxury perceptions (Parguel et al., 2016). The trustworthiness of sellers online alleviated this lack. Convenience, price, product availability, shopping attitude, and online trust were themes investigated in the research conducted by Liu et al. (2013). Differences existed in price consciousness and product availability. Also, significant differences existed in online trust towards customer ratings and risk aversion. Lack of internet trust and the existence of potential risks prevent more consumers from purchasing luxury items online. Lack of internet trust and the existence of potential risks prevent more consumers from purchasing luxury items online. In contrast, in-store buyers prefer to see or feel the product in person, and they demonstrate a higher level of risk aversion. Luxury consumers are a particular segment of shoppers, as was the case in this multiple case study research.

In this respect, according to Niu (2014), consumer decision-making styles determine and shape consumer choices. Online auctions are effectively an automatic price negotiation tool. Online purchasing behaviors relate to consumers' decision-making styles significantly, as confirmed by the research results. Eight factors determine this behavior: (a) perfectionism, high-quality consciousness, (b) brand consciousness, (c) fashion consciousness, (d) recreational, hedonistic shopping consciousness, (e) price and "value for money", shopping consciousness, (f) impulsiveness, (g) confusion from over choice, and (h) brand loyalty orientations toward consumption.

These factors profoundly influenced the complaints handling online auction vendors applied and the coping strategies these vendors discovered in this multiple case study, as discussed in the next subsections. The following observations were noteworthy. The management of the online auction platform played a decisive role in consumer behavior when it tried to prevent specific outcomes of auctions which deemed to be unfair to consumers. Effective customer relationship management strategies correlated to sellers reputations which improved the rate of recurring purchases. The discussion of these strategies takes place in the next subsections.

Theme 3: Complaints Handling

In order to achieve business results, the theme complaints handling is essential to tackle and deal with customer complaints. This theme originates from another theme called coping strategies (see Figure 6) with concomitant codes applied and their relationships. Other themes illustrate the dependencies with this theme. Two principal codes relate to this theme: solution and tactics. The codes of refund and matching description are part of the solution code.

Appendix H contains selected quotations related to the theme of complaints handling. Experienced vendors knew how to solve problems before they were occurring and prior escalation by eBay management. Some complaints handling strategies were

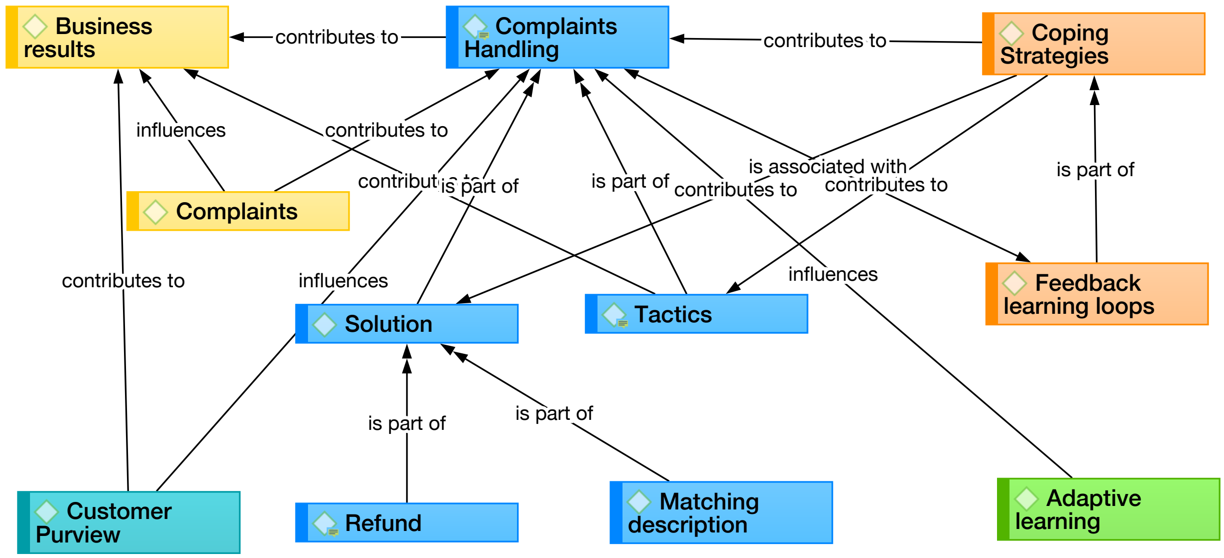

Figure 6. The codes used for Theme 3 (Complaints Handling) and the relationship between them. Other themes illustrate the dependencies with this theme.

those tactics and solutions related to customer expectations. Vendors made sure these expectations were met against all costs and for any reason. Avoiding complaints included goods matching descriptions on the online platform site, refunding customers before they could file any complaint, and pre-empting buyers when online vendors sensed buyers attempted to acquire goods fraudulently. Avoiding any problems was conducive for any online auction transaction.

Any tactic or strategy devising any solution helped to anticipate any fallout for any online vendor. Therefore, learning abilities contributed to finding the appropriate coping strategies for handling customer complaints. The attainment of knowledge on (international) shipping, the appropriateness of refunds, finding the right way to list goods and services on a trading website, and managing the rules of eBay were part of strategies to handle customer complaints.

The results from the interviews and further observations at the locations of the online vendors confirmed the findings and conclusions, as discussed by Nguyen et al. (2016), in the following manner. Complaints handling strategies all concerned and were part of order-fulfillment operations. These strategies related to solutions and tactics to satisfy customers and meet their expectations. In addition, to avoid most of the complaints, online auction vendors made sure those goods and services customers bought matched the description as published on the auction website. These fulfillment operations were crucial to ensure customers would repurchase from the vendor again, vendors accepted returning products and made the appropriate refunds, and vendors were capable of shipping goods to any part of the world without any problems. In this way, online auction vendors would anticipate positive consumer behavior against all costs to stimulate repeat business and make sure feedback ratings were excellent. The purpose of these measures was to improve customer service levels. As such, Nguyen et al. implied complaints handling strategies were one of the vital factors affecting customer loyalty, trust, repurchasing decisions, and risk perception by customers.

Online auction vendors were very imaginative to identify any problem which had to do with product listings and the order-fulfillment process and assessed any outcomes customers experienced in terms of satisfaction, complaints, refunds, deliveries (shipments), product returns (reverse logistics or return management), or any UTBs for that matter. Essential in all complaints handling strategies was the homogeneity of the solutions and tactics each vendor devised. All these strategies influenced the customer purview by making the customer aware of the complaints handling offered and any consideration any vendor made to keep customers fully satisfied according to their expectations.

As implied by Chen et al. (2017), the extent to which online auction vendors handled customer complaints, devised strategies, and adjusted these accordingly, would make or break a business. An auction deal depended heavily on customer experience and convenience, as explained by Ko and Kim (2015). Online auction enterprises had a high rate of not succeeding than traditional brick-and-mortar companies because of the role of feedback rating mechanisms and online auction vendors' reputations (Gregg & Parthasarathy, 2017). None of the online auction vendors in this study used any strategic planning effort or business plan. Their success depended on an integrative approach to (not only) devise complaints handling strategies but to integrate all strategies from a learning organization perspective, originating from Theme 5 and having their effects in Theme 1.

As indicated in the last subsection, these strategies influenced customer reviews by means of feedback ratings and comments informing other (prospective) customers of the complaints handling and order-fulfillment processes. The latter processes included pre-purchase to post-purchase events. The feedback rating system was the most critical element of an online auction platform like eBay (Chen et al. 2017). As discussed by Nguyen et al. (2016), the aspects of shipping consisting of (last-mile) delivery encompassed delivery information and options, shipping and handling charges, and order tracking. Online auction vendors focused on these aspects with great care and attention in order to ensure the timeliness of the delivery of goods (see Appendix H).

Decisions for online auction vendors depended heavily on the ability and the costs of handling shipping. In the end, shipping should be economical. In line with the findings of Hsu et al. (2014), trust played a mediating role between order fulfillment processes (including strategies of the vendor for handling complaints) and customer behavior (before ordering and repeat business). Also, trust was an indicator for delivering customer expectations and the appropriateness and accuracy of product listings on the online auction platform (Nguyen et al., 2016). The latter concerned the code “matching description” as part of the solution theme under Theme 3.

Returns and refund strategies were essential to devise the appropriate policies, procedures, preparations, options, refunds, and returns handling. These strategies were a significant part of any complaints handling strategies online auction vendors applied (see Appendix H) and affected the level of customer service quality, customer satisfaction, customer behavior (social facilitation) and feedback ratings. The more the complaints handling strategies were successful and the higher the reputation of the online auction vendor, the more positive feedback ratings and the higher the viability of an online auction’s business became because of its maturity (Gregg & Parthasarathy, 2017), as was the case with the online auction vendors in this multiple case study.

According to Chen et al. (2017), negative feedback related to complaints handling strategies and solutions to attenuate (common) complaints from buyers; and sellers would have to accommodate for these complaints. Experienced online auction vendors would have fewer complaints. Most of the complaints with negative feedback in the study of Chen et al. concerned (a) buyers never receive goods; (b) online auction vendors dp not respond to buyers' complaints or questions; (c) goods are not functional or faulty; and (d) buyers do not receive any refund. Neutral feedback consisted of the following factors: (a) sellers ship goods very slowly; (b) the conditions of the goods; (c) non-delivery of goods; and (d) buyers do not receive refunds. Buyers gave sellers also positive feedback concerning the satisfaction of goods, quick shipments, items conformed to listing and description, the excellent condition of products, and honest communication with online auction vendor.

Hence, given the arguments mentioned above, complaint handling strategies were an indicator of the long-term ability to achieve performance and success of the online auction enterprise, as all the participants in this study were successful for at least 5 years. Notably, the element of trust was crucial as this multiple case study concerned online auction vendors selling jewelry products and parts which were specialty goods that had a higher level of risks than convenience goods had.

Theme 4: Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are those mechanisms based on feedback, experience, or practice which contribute to handling complaints. Figure 7. The codes used for Theme 4 (Coping Strategies) and the relationship between them. Other themes illustrate the dependencies with this theme.

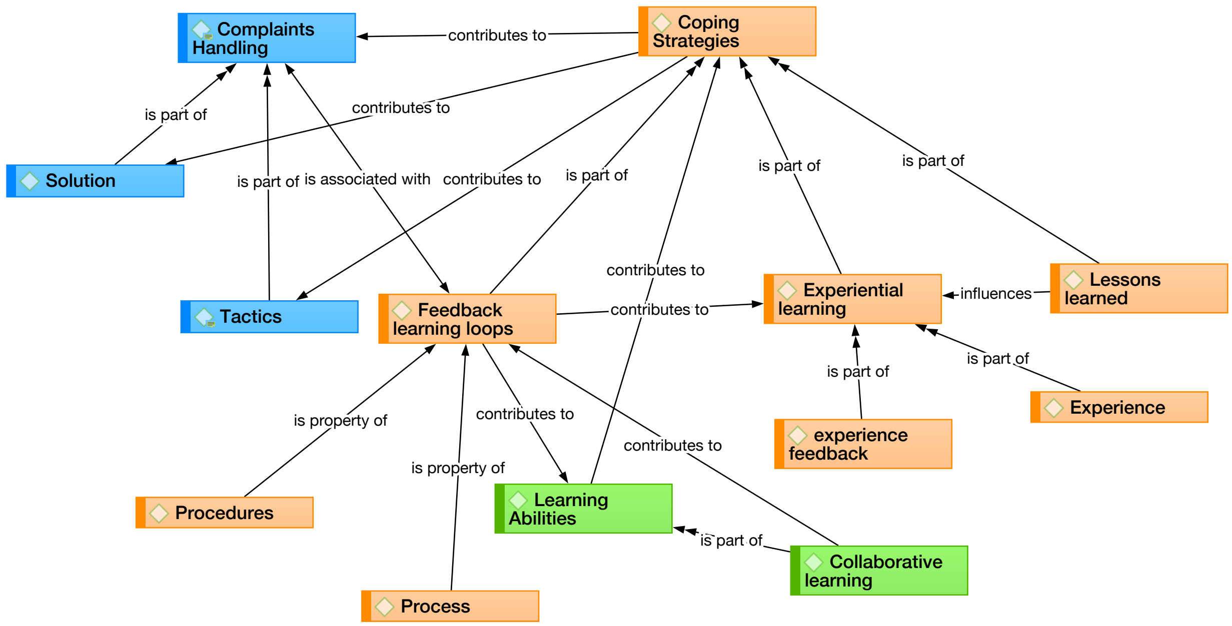

Figure 7. *The codes used for Theme 4 (Coping Strategies) and the relationship between them. Other themes illustrate the dependencies with this theme.*

Appendix I contains categories of Appendix I: Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 4: Coping Strategies. . These coping strategies directly influenced the manner of how online vendors handle complaints, which contributed to business results and the successful completion of the transaction on the eBay platform. Coping strategies related directly to experiential learning consisting of gained experience and to which feedback learning loops contribute. The experience of online vendors directly related to online auction successes, as acknowledged by Cui et al. (2008) and Ko and Kim (2015).

Online vendors who had more than 10 years of experience formed their values and beliefs how to deal with problem-solving issues such as making sure they handled shipping goods (internationally) and complaints optimally. Based on this experience, they were capable of formulating many rules and procedures what to do in certain situations and what not. These processes consisted of job-related tasks by leveraging online vendors' knowledge and expertise. Feedback learning was essential to stay in business aligned to each vendor's objectives and to cope with eBay policies and guidelines, which was in conformance with Vinther et al. (2017). Online vendors regarded these guidelines as buyer-oriented with sellers always having to cope with customer requests, fraudulent claims, refunds, shipping issues, and more.

As suggested by Argyris and Schön (1978), vendors were able to make organizational changes in their organizations which were situational. In this case study, these changes related to experiential learning and feedback by making mistakes and handling a variety of customer-centered problems. Through these learning mechanisms, vendors accumulated knowledge (tacit and explicit) to refine organizational processes and make trade-offs which were different for each vendor, as espoused by Pilemalm et al. (2014). The result was each vendor instituted their operations and complaints handling based on their experiences, lessons learned, and what each vendor encountered in practice dealing with customer requirements and business concerns.

Experienced vendors with more than 10 years in the online auction business were able to go beyond day-to-day routines, thinking about new ways to perform jobs and set-up new procedures for the size and price of item sales, shipping, handling complaints, fraudulent attempts, and handling various issues with eBay. Doing things differently related to the detection and correction of errors when confronted with issues and receiving feedback from customers, sellers, and eBay. In addition, these vendors were able to test their lessons learned to come up with new coping strategies (see Appendix I).

As a result, as implied by Argyris and Schön (1978), these vendors achieved a high degree of organizational learning.

Those vendors who had less than 10 years of experience did not formulate an abundance of rules, processes, and procedures to face the variety of customer complaints as encountered with vendors who gained comparably more experience as depicted in Appendix I. These vendors did not challenge their framework of operations and, according to my assessment, made various trade-offs to manage their employees in pre-existing conditions to find alternative coping strategies, as articulated by Argyris & Schön (1978) and Jaaron and Backhouse (2017). This pre-empted double-loop learning to happen, as it was not conducive to share the lessons learned to change work practices and adjust coping strategies accordingly. Knowledge sharing and experiencing feedback loops were essential for active learning efforts and reformulating coping strategies to revitalize an online auction business, which is customer-focused (Orsato et al., 2017).

Theme 5: Learning Abilities

Learning abilities are necessary to formulate coping strategies. Figure 8 concerns the illustration of the codes for this theme Figure 8. The codes used for Theme 5 (Learning Abilities) and the relationship between them. Other themes illustrate the dependencies with this theme. This theme consists of various modalities of learning abilities: (a) behavioral learning, collaborative learning, (b) proactive learning, and (c) adaptive learning. Especially adaptive learning abilities influenced complaints handling as collaborative learning related to feedback learning loops. The feedback-learning-loops code typify as learning abilities as a whole.

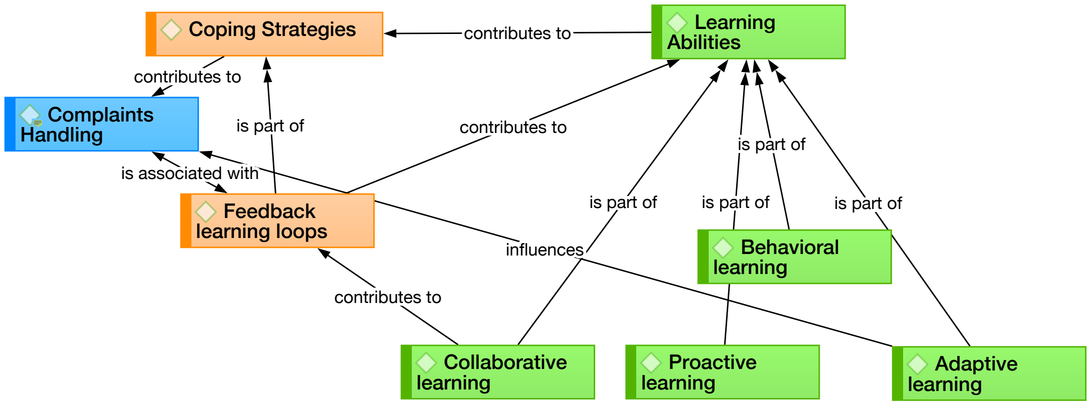

Figure 8. *The codes used for Theme 5 (Learning Abilities) and the relationship between them. Other themes illustrate the dependencies with this theme.*

Appendix J consists of relevant quotations from the interviews held which pertain to Theme 5 of learning abilities. The more experience online vendors had, the more lessons learned they experienced. The evidence from the interviews pointed to a high level of situated learning in combination with a low absorptive capacity from the market environment. Online vendors who had strict control over activities demonstrated limited learning with only single-loop learning abilities. Most experienced online vendors, as sellers, emphasized a great deal of selling were imperative for their ability to learn and find coping strategies within the context of his business operations. That knowledge was conducive to finding coping strategies and solutions for complaints handling purposes. This situation was particularly applicable to matching descriptions of listings and instances where (proactively) refunds were applicable. The objective was primarily to avoid problems with customers. Hence, the focus on aspects of the customer purview, such as the importance of feedback ratings on eBay. Also, these vendors were capable of interpreting the rules of the eBay online auction platform and meeting the standards of the online auction platform.

The following observations are noteworthy. Only those online vendors, who had a very long track record in trading on the eBay platform and also had gained experience on other online sites, were able to change their routines and processes very quickly based on acquired knowledge. When vendors felt making changes was necessary, they were able to adapt their organizations to circumstances in a very creative way. I encountered more instances of adaptive and behavioral learning instances than proactive learning occurrence (see Appendix J). Those online vendor organizations, which had fewer experience than 10 years, were more reliant on collaborative learning to increase their abilities to formulate coping strategies to handle customer complaints and solve customer complaints satisfactorily.

As discussed by Argyris and Schön (1978) as regards changes in organizational learning, online vendors with less experience who tried to improve their daily tasks and jobs would only make incremental changes to set-up their operations. These online vendors only improved their processes by single-loop learning activities. Those vendors who had more than 10 years of experience challenged their job tasks with double-loop learning abilities. Collaborative learning would stimulate less experienced vendors to induce more double-loop learning opportunities and bring about organizational change to increase performance levels. These performance levels highly depended on handling customer complaints and are directly related to feedback ratings (in the customer purview) and solutions and tactics to handle complaints.

I did not encounter any triple-loop learning abilities with all vendors because fundamentally any new process or procedures were absent, which is in accordance with the studies of Lozano (2014). These learning abilities go beyond adaptive learning attempts. Mental models of online vendors did not change fundamentally in the situational settings in this study, as explicated by Reynolds (2014) and McClory et al. (2017). Also, in all organizations whose managers participated in this study, any evidence for transformative learning occurrences were not present, which was in line with Heorhiadi et al. (2014) and Fillion et al. (2015). In addition, absent were plan-do-act quality cycles as suggested by Taylor et al. (2014) to promulgate single-loop learning activities or hardly any instance of proactive learning abilities except with experienced online vendors who were more than 10 years active in the online auction industry.

When typifying learning abilities to happen according to two dimensions (Argyris & Schön, 1978), single- and double-loop learning, the former was the norm with the latter dimension only occurring at instances where 10 years or more experience were present and vendors who had dealt with around more than 10,000 items of sales. As such, I encountered with less experienced vendors more action-oriented, routine, and incremental tasks, and concomitant decision-making processes with rigid mental models how eBay operated, which was in conformance to the findings of Argyris & Schön (1978) and Lee (2014). No variations of job tasks related to shipping, complaints handling, size of listings, or price policies took place, which was in accordance with the findings of Jaaron and Backhouse (2017). These organizations did not exhibit unusual behavior or attitudes to handle complaints, nor were innovative to tackle a variety of issues whch were related to reformulating coping strategies.

Also, no thinking out-of-the-box took place. No attempt to unfreeze or challenge organizational policies or processes occurred beyond the tested waters to handle and solve customer complaints, as discussed by Hislop et al. (2014). Behavioral learning is necessary to induce organizational learning (Senge, 1990). Specific instances of cognitive learning did not occur which seemed crucial to prove the efficacy of online vendors' operations by continuously reviewing and modifying ways to improve performance. Notwithstanding, cognitive learning was the result of predominantly adaptive learning occurrences with systemic thinking instances where creativity was a leading indicator which was in line with the results of Al-Raqadi et al. (2015).

Conforming to the findings of Secundo et al. (2017), I found many instances of entrepreneurial learning which sublimated in adaptive and behavioral learning abilities of online vendors. These learning abilities were mostly related to double-loop learning instances. Entrepreneurial learning was foremost of a situational learning nature.

According to Senge (1990), team learning and a shared mental model are prerequisites for learning opportunities. In this multiple case study, the underlying cause of the success of any learning attempt was situational learning. More experienced online vendors used situational learning to induce double-loop learning opportunities. This induction, combined with a high absorptive capacity resulted in their organization to an adaptation to a trade and customer environment, which necessitated changed behavior from the side of the online vendor. Their corresponding behavioral learning was to keep selling items competently on eBay and other (online auction) trading platforms by transferring knowledge in the organization. Experience and common sense induced by situational learning abilities depended on knowledge for sellers who had a unique value proposition. All participants gained their knowledge and experience in practice within a specific situational setting inside or outside the online auction platform industry.

Each online auction vendor reflected differently on the actions (s)he did because each organization had a particular way of organizational learning ability. A variety of types of reflections defined the extent to which each organization worked in terms of absorptive capacity (AC), as suggested by Argote and Guo (2016) and Gao et al. (2017).

The dynamic capabilities of each online vendor organization influenced the outcome of the level of AC, and thus, the way the organization was able to adapt to changing circumstances internally or externally. In line with the findings of Garavan et al. (2016), these capabilities contributed to the extent to which each organization learned and acquired and integrated knowledge among its members. I was unable to observe how absorptive capacity occurred over time. As illustrated by Love et al. (2016), detection took place of highly experienced vendors' exploratory and exploitative learning abilities, as illustrated in Appendix J. These were based on entrepreneurial learning abilities and had their root causes in situational learning and self-efficacy.

I could not find much evidence of an application of the co-evolutionary framework (CoEF) even though various occasions of feedback loops in the organizations for identifying coping strategies. Finding any evidence of how managers of online vendors induced double-loop learning by bringing about changes or variations within their organizations was not possible.

All online vendors seemed to be situated learners who were adaptive and were able to contribute to performance improvements and act upon their experience, which was in accordance with the literature (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Stoner & Cennamo, 2018). They used those tools and schemas as provided by their social environment for problem-solving, specifically the online auction platform (e.g., eBay). The creation of new knowledge regarding coping strategies, which influenced those strategies to handle customer complaints, came from these problem-solving activities within the cultural context of the online auction industry. Especially online auction vendors as entrepreneurs needed to understand the context and business environment. They had to deal with a variety of social relationships, such as sellers, customers, competitors, online auction management, auditors, and representatives of brands (e.g., Rolex). These relationships were the cause of so much conflict and discomfort from the beginning resulting in the induction of DLL. In this study, the relationship between the necessity to learn, the hypercompetitive environment of a technologically oriented online auction platform, and dealing with (eBay) management policies, was evident.

In addition, all vendors exhibited a high degree of self-efficacy where their success based on their motivation, beliefs, and learning intentions and orientation, as suggested by Cherian and Jacob (2013), Liñán and Fayolle (2015), and Newman et al. (2018). All online auction vendors set goals and wanted to achieve results on their platforms, aligned to their particular skills and dynamic capabilities. All online auction vendors had in common a mastery and vicarious experience, and an emotional state of willing to achieve. Especially those online auction vendors with the most experience (more than 10 years) acquired new skills and performed novel and innovative tasks to tackle a variety of problems including handling complaints by devising specific coping strategies for that induced by a high degree of adaptive and situational learning abilities.

Most online auction vendors in this multiple case study demonstrated their collaborative and behavioral learning abilities which rooted in work-based learning and workplace learning settings. Most organizations embedded their processes and procedures and influenced their complaints handling strategies based on single-loop learning.

In this study, I found no evidence of the application of the community of practice and the categorization-elaboration model. The latter model does not deal with SLL or DLL mechanisms.

Applications to Professional Practice

The emphasis of this study was not large online-auction vendors but small business owners who decided to attract and engage customers online in the luxury brand businesses of watches, bracelets, jewelry, and parts. Small business owners benefit from the results of this study. Trading on online vendor platforms can be daunting and have many caveats, especially for mom-and-pop business when trading on eBay's platform (Chen et al., 2017).

Trading on this platform requires compliance with many regulations related to customer feedback and customer expectations. Online auction vendors' successes depended on handling complaints effectively while maintaining their focus on the profitability of their business. The importance of operating the online auction platform depended mostly on learning abilities to (proactively) react to customers' expectations and demands while adhering to a variety of eBay's rules and settings. I did not find any evidence of strategic planning activities. One of the factors for this assessment was there was not much room for reinventing the business case or orientation of the online auction enterprise. Helpful would be to offer a (potential) customer base a unique customer value proposition which would not face much competition (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; Mauborgne & Kim, 2017). It is all about achieving a sufficient degree of competitive advantage to survive as an online vendor.

The reason for an appropriate business orientation of an online auction enterprise would be as follows. These online auction companies have to survive in a growing knowledge-based economy and to thrive in a socioeconomic environment which is increasingly unstable and competitive. Managers of online auction companies have to continuously improve their current business models through strategic planning exercises or reconstructionist strategies to stay ahead of the competition, which refers to sustainable innovation (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; Mauborgne & Kim, 2017). The latter strategies do not emphasize double-loop learning abilities.

Prospective online vendors have to be very knowledgeable about the products or services they want to offer online in an auction. Also, they have to be resilient to acknowledging fraudulent claims when dealing with customer complaints. Therefore, organizational learning is imperative for organizations to accumulate dynamic capabilities (Love et al., 2016). Online auction vendors should acquire or have the flexibility to adapt internally to face external opportunities and market forces. In addition, any learning effort should influence and improve one's memory, cognitive and associative learning abilities, mental maps, norms, and values (Mariano et al., 2016). Double-loop learning may take place to confront various changed induced by internal or external triggers o the organization successfully. Positively influencing this learning is a focus on long-term objectives and success. Only in this way, managers would be able to solve (intricate) problems or meet complex challenges by applying knowledge (Teece, 2014). Knowledge consists of everyday skills, knowledge bases, culture, and cognitive structures, and these factors determine the extent to which absorptive capacity takes place (Helfat & Peteraf, 2015).

The level of absorptive capacity (AC) determines the chance of double-loop learning (DLL) occurring in existing operations or may lead to the formulation of reconstructionist strategies akin to triple-loop learning (Gao et al., 2017). Acquisition and transfer of knowledge need to happen within an organization. As illustrated in this multiple case study, a conducive learning climate and the sharing and transmission of lessons learned are crucial, not only for incremental improvement efforts, but also for transformations of processes, procedures, and (job) tasks. For DLL to happen, a shift from single-loop learning (SLL) has to take place by finding mechanisms in the organization to enlarge the amount of AC by changing habits, rules, standard operating procedures or heuristics in the organization (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Jansson et al., 2015; Shokri-Ghasabeh & Chileshe, 2014; Wiewiora & Murphy, 2015). Double-loop learning abilities are one of the mechanisms how variation of processes, procedures, and guidelines can take place, which results in a shift from SLL to DLL (Van Den Bosch et al., 1999; Van Doorn et al., 2017). Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to mature as quickly as possible lest they get stuck.

In lieu of the co-evolutionary framework, attention should focus on the improvement and speeding up of the generation, adoption, adaptation, and diffusion of innovation especially in the technology industry which includes transactions on online auction platforms (Peeters et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2017; Van Doorn, et al., 2017; Van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007). How can (disruptive) improvements in how people perform their work routines and (business) processes happen? The result of this research was to find ways how people select, and develop concepts with the purpose of sharing, combining and recombining knowledge for discovering superior practices across an organization in terms of coping strategies and handling complaints by putting the customer in the center of all activities (Chen et al., 2017; Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; Mauborgne & Kim, 2017; Nguyen et al, 2016; Parguel et al., 2016).

Implications for Social Change

The world of online vendors shape industries with more effectively matching demand and supply in various markets. These vendors have different sizes, but even mom and pop stores have the ability to start businesses and can become profitable in the short run with the least amount of efforts (Chen et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2016). Customers can buy online products of any kind against prices not found in brick-and-mortar businesses. Thus, online vendor platforms can bring tangible improvements in the organization of businesses, personal lives, and even change society and cultures.

Complaints have a huge social impact as more people tend to buy and sell products and services online and through an online auction platform. Buyers can be more confident to interact on online auction platforms without being influenced by social facilitation phenomena, such as demonstrating better bidding behavior and stronger purchasing decisions (Ko & Kim, 2015). More people will engage in auction transactions, which provides an opportunity to improve their lives and economic conditions.

Vendors of online auction markets can reduce potential conflicts and resolutions between customers and themselves by using appropriate organizational learning strategies to reduce costs and increase profitability (Acklin, 2013; Wolff & Amaral, 2016). Online vendors may resolve complaints and dissatisfied customers by decreasing nonpositive feedback from buyers, decreasing customer disputes, and increasing seller ratings on the auction platform website or reputation platforms based on trust (Chen et al., 2017; Laitinen et al., 2016).

As a result of deploying the right strategies to manage complaints, vendors may improve customer satisfaction and enhance customer experiences to buy goods in their online markets. These strategies may benefit sales, and consequently, vendors may spend less time and reduce the costs of managing and resolving complaints (Nguyen et al., 2016). Online markets lower the cost of products and services for consumers by enabling information technologies and undergo (disruptive) innovation for lower operational costs to manage an online auction (Camisón & Villar-López, 2014). Online markets make it easier for consumers to do comparison shopping, increasing competitiveness for producers and services providers (Chen et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2016).

Online vendors do not have the overhead of having brick-and-mortar stores or a large sales force. Therefore, increased competition and the cost savings from electronic online sales transactions lower the cost of products and services for consumers. Expansion of online markets can provide access to products and services to consumers who otherwise have limited access. Poor neighborhoods and remote rural areas have a limited choice of stores and vendors. Also, people who have physical disabilities may have difficulties in traveling to stores. Online markets break down these physical barriers by providing equally convenient access to everyone. The delivery of goods and services without undesired effects of negative customer satisfaction will give rise to less frequent complaints which benefit the economy, advances the use of digital platforms, and stimulates innovation in any industry, the technology industry in particular.

Recommendations for Action

Online auction markets are very competitive, especially when online auction vendors offer prospective customers similar goods and services. To stand out from the competition, small business owners should reflect on their business orientation and devise ways to obtain business results which will be viable in the long term. The online auction industry is complex with customers being the central focus in complaints handling. The ability to solve problems around shipping, feedback ratings, deliveries, UTBs, refunds, customer service, and listing of goods and services on websites is vital for any online auction vendor's immediate success (Hsu et al., 2014; Nguyen et al., 2016). A more reconstructionist approach of implementing strategies would help the long-term viability of the business by doing tasks, devising processes, and procedures differently (Kim & Mauborgne, 2015; Mauborgne & Kim, 2017). For this reason, organizational learning is crucial where either out-of-the-box thinking is desirable or where contemplation of the current and future business model helps by applying double-loop correction mechanism (Argyris & Schön, 1978). In the end, it is all about creating unimitable dynamic capabilities and the propensity to be very flexible and adaptable concerning internal organizational changes and changes in the online auction marketplace (Acklin, 2013; Wolff & Amaral, 2016).

In order to build the right capabilities, online auction vendors should focus on organizational learning capabilities to initiate necessary changes to obtain efficacies in running job tasks, teamwork, and changing work processes. Organizational learning abilities should contribute to a learning organization where the customer purview is central. Learning abilities should stress the adaptiveness of the organization. The interactions between customers, organizational members (team members, task forces, project teams, and management), sellers and (eBay) platform members should induce those behavioral learning abilities which will induce coping strategies. These strategies deal with all sorts of customer complaints. In the end, it is all about finding the appropriate customer complaints handling strategy. The business of any online auction platform depends on the feedback any customer will receive. Online auction vendors significantly depend on influencing consumer behavior and building trust between the seller, buyer, and the (eBay) platform. Meeting customers' expectation is crucial as well as meeting customer demands irrespective whether the customer is right or wrong. These are issues which do not have anything to do with the technical set-up of the online auction platform. For this reason, it is imperative to guide customers in their shopping quests and reduce any transactional risks for them, and also to avoid (future) customer complaints and negative feedback ratings.

Hence, online auction vendors should build those processes, job tasks, and institute work conditions which are conducive for quality control of the total selling process including deliveries, shipments, reputation mechanisms, and complaints handling, especially for those online auction vendors who trade in in luxury goods (Parguel et al., 2016). The organizational learning environment should stifle linear thought and induce double-loop learning abilities, or members of the organization should be motivated to solve complex problems in team or project work without strict management control. The learning environment should able to change extant mental models for its members and create tacit knowledge employees would quickly transfer to explicit knowledge.

The extent to which organizational learning takes place influences the way organizational members learn and in turn, contributes to coping and complaints handling strategies. The reputation of online auction vendors highly reflects the way these sellers handle complaints as demonstrated by applied tactics and solutions for any imaginable customer related complaint or issue. Organizational learning opportunities should stress feedback loops and the sharing of experience amongst organizational members and management. Adaptive and behavior learning, feedback from any stakeholder, and the self-efficacy of any organizational member are factors which need stimulation and the attention of online auction management.

The future of any online auction business depends on innovation within the organization and the ability to adapt to a changing market environment. Organizational learning directly correlates with the absorptive capacity of the organization to receive change and adopt the necessary measures for correction policies; the role of double-loop learning abilities and the acquisition of new knowledge about (the operation of) the business are crucial in this respect. Designing strategies for handling customer complaints should become a proactive activity, and management of online vendors should stimulate situational learning within the organization. Finding the meaning and significance of handling complaints strategies helps the amount of motivation and self-efficacy of all stakeholders concerned.

The findings in this multiple case study contribute to the design of job tasks, HR training, and the attention management has to pay for the implications and importance of organizational efforts. The more experience online auction vendors have, the more business success and the more effective complaints handling strategies are, based on situational learning opportunities resulting in many occasions of lessons learned. Challenging continuously the way to work and face customers, sellers, and the management of (eBay) management helps in that respect. Managers of online auction vendors should build their business (orientation) around the learning organization (Senge, 1990) to ensure competently facing customers and building a customer-focused organization with associated team-working and process-based structures.

Recommendations for Further Research

This research had a focus of four online auction vendors and answered the research question from their perspective in a business-to-consumer (B2C) environment. Triangulation with the literature, especially Nguyen et al. (2016), and other available data, especially which was available online (e.g., YouTube videos concerning setting up eBay accounts), confirmed the conclusion of this study would be useful when dealing with online vendors who trade on platforms selling other items than jewelry and luxury goods, such as watches, buckles, and related parts. The strategies online vendors used should be part of mixed studies to augment quantitative models in online auction studies. As online vendors trade their items online across the globe, the results of this study remain worthwhile for online vendors who trade outside Los Angeles, CA, and in different segments of the industry. Online vendors in this study gave the researcher a data saturation on the findings, as discussed in the previous subsections. The orientation and the culture within each of the organization were not similar to each other. The results and the interpretation of the findings were valid and provided a basis for continued research.

I undertook an extensive study of all existing literature within the last 5 years and researched the area of online auction platform research, especially in a B2C environment. The results might not be the same when the research relates to a business-to-business (B2B) context. The focus of this study was the point of view of online vendors and their effective strategies to manage complaints to the best of their abilities.

The role of complaints in online auction research settings does not have a dominant role which has a direct impact on business results (Nguyen et al., 2016).

Further research could incorporate consumer behavior and the decision-making processes of the online vendor (Nguyen et al., 2016). This decision-making process could incorporate action research on how online vendors would handle complaints which go beyond a primarily reactionary mode of operation by focusing only on tactics and solutions benefiting the customer only. In this research, the efficiency and effectiveness of an online enterprise were not part of the research. Much more attention would require these businesses to outperform the market by innovative business models which would not depend on adaptation to current market conditions per se, or on satisfying customers based on customer satisfaction requirements (Tadelis, 2016; Vecchiato, 2017).

To improve the predictive behavior of consumers, putting models together is useful, but the role of the seller needs more attention in terms of qualitative aspects, not in quantitative aspects. As a consequence, the design of online platforms needs improvement in terms of behavioral factors of online vendors who have to handle complaints to effectuate higher auction results, notwithstanding the abundance of economic and mathematical models. Carter et al. (2017), Cui et al. (2008), and Nguyen et al. (2016) used mathematically based outcomes of online auctions which may provide guidance for future research.

Also, a subject for further research is in the area of prediction and monitoring of online auction systems which undermine trust (Kim & Peterson, 2017). A comprehensive insight into the implications of behavioral factors influencing online vendors when dealing with complaints, shipping problems, and returns, can be part of the research agenda (Kim & Peterson, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2016). As such, an integrative approach of bidding strategies of individuals should be on the research agenda based on research models of interactions of bidders in online auctions terms of consumer behavioral traits and online vendor behaviors (Nguyen et al., 2016; Zhou et al., 2016). A remarkable lack of consensus in the literature exists on how complaints influence the outcomes in online auctions (Nguyen et al., 2016; Zhou, Lu, & Wang, 2016).

This multiple case study made clear the differences in mindsets and practices between those online vendors having more than 10 years of experiences and having a smaller track record. Online auction vendors gathered experience and gained feedback on multiple occasions, which induced the creation of abundant coping strategies induced by foremost adaptive and behavioral learning experiences. Despite this assessment, I was not able to detect the requirements or conditions how shifts between single-loop and double-loop learning took place. In line with various authors (Haddad et al., 2016; Liepė & Sakalas, 2015; Senge, 1990), shifts in mindsets in individuals and the changes which occur in organizations and organizational learning are crucial. This topic would be an excellent subject for further research to induce higher-order learning opportunities (Berta et al., 2015; Damanpour, 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2017).

Another topic for further research is how absorptive capacity takes place and what factors induce (more) AC, such as education, team size, age of personnel, and industry. Absorptive capacity is hard to measure and determine (Martín-de Castro, 2015; Van Doorn et al., 2017). The determination of factors which make an online auction tick is practical, which goes beyond satisfying the customer at all costs and online vendors being dependent on only feedback ratings which depend on handling complaints. How and what could online vendors do to learn to do better in terms of learning (organizations)? How can they learn from future developments in the field of online auction and make a difference?

The influence of absorptive capacity should play a role in innovative efforts and the necessity to react in demanding online markets and with demanding customers. In this regard, what mechanisms bring new habits, rules, and standards operating procedures into existence (Damanpour, 2014; Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Van Doorn et al., 2017; Van Fenema & Keers, 2018). Learning retention and unlearning abilities play a role. On the other hand, the extent to which companies can attain a competitive advantage by just deploying resources or attaining capabilities without appropriate learning skills (Laursen & Salter, 2014).

It should be possible to include learning organizations, organizational learning, and absorptive capacity paradigms in strategic planning efforts when managers of enterprises leverage their competencies and resources in a way to pursue new opportunities in markets where they are inherently not able to outperform existing rivals in their respective marketplaces (Snoeren et al., 2015; Van Doorn et al., 2017). High-order learning (double-loop and triple-loop learning), and the generation and adaption to new knowledge should be part of an AC research effort (Damanpour, 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2017). Also, this AC is about the ability of individuals to filter, process, and assimilate new information at all (managerial) levels in an organization.

Future research also should incorporate organizational learning and learning organization elements as well as demographic and structural factors to illustrate how the categorization-elaboration model works in practice (Tröster et al., 2014). In this context, the role of dynamic capabilities regarding sensing, learning, and coordinating capabilities are still not well understood, especially the evolution of absorptive capacity over time and its role in inter-organizational cooperation and achievement (Lane et al., 2006; Van Fenema & Keers, 2018).

Research efforts should focus on the how occurrences of double-loop learning take place or what kind of mechanisms makes learning efforts advance from the individual level to the organizational level (Rauffet et al., 2014). As in this multiple case study, I indicated some occurrences of double-loop learning activities, but participants could not explain how they did this. A construct for this purpose should operationalize a better understanding of how double-loop learning can occur in practice (Lane et al., 2006; Van Den Bosch et al., 1999; Van Fenema & Keers, 2018).

In addition, Alqurashi (2016) noted some topics need more research on the nature of the relationship between self-efficacy (other than technology factor) and online learning regarding learning, interaction, and collaborative skills. In some models of entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy is a motivational antecedent of entrepreneurial intention which should have more attention in combination with organizational learning (Liñán & Fayolle, 2015; Newman et al., 2018; Shen, 2015). In this context, bottom-up approaches could improve organizational processes or renew strategies using other mechanisms than those of SLL, DLL, and TLL efforts as suggested by Mauborgne and Kim (2017) and McClory et al. (2017), which necessitates new research.

Last but not least, new research could cater to the development of new quantitative-oriented measurements to describe various constructs for incorporating complaints handling processes and associated theories and practices in consumer behavioral research as regards online auction research, as implied by Nguten et al. (2016) and Mathieu et al. (2017). Mixed methods would assist this endeavor in studying online auction outcomes much closer.

Reflections

The results of this multiple case study were surprising because I did not anticipate the outcomes of this research nor the role organizational learning played in achieving success for an online auction business and the critical success factors for running such an enterprise. Although many customers are now familiar with online auction platforms, the mechanisms and procedures of these platforms are complex and generate many problems for sellers and buyers alike. The industry is rapidly changing with the prospect of sellers offering an increased amount of goods and services online. Innovation within organizations is vital to surviving in this industry; the key to this is learning organizations.

All participants had interviews in a similar manner to generate comparable output. Also, I visited their operations various times and sought feedback on (intermediary) results and conclusions. These member-checking activities were crucial for a complete understanding and answering the research question. These meetings were useful to observe their operations and mannerisms personally while conducting business. The questions asked were fundamental in focusing the research effort. Only in this way, reduction of my bias was the result from formulating conclusions and recommendations. The original plan was to interview six participants for this multiple case study. Conducting interviews with four participants and an analysis of the implications in ATLAS.ti resulted in data saturation. Finding more participants was difficult because many small organizations were reluctant to participate in this study. In this specific business community, everyone knows each other. Many participants were afraid of the implications of the results which would come out of this study.

I did not preconceive the extent to which a learning organization could have in current small-scale operated mom-and-pop businesses. In these environments, online auction vendors are heavily dependent on situational learning and are conducive to self-efficacy of their founders. These vendors are not fully aware of the fact their future relies on the capabilities to face an increasing amount of competition for small vendors but also large-company participants on online auction platforms. These capabilities would influence the way they can innovate, adapt, and survive in this exciting world of online auctions on the Internet.

Conclusion

In this multiple case study, I observed the various strategies discovered which managers of online vendors used, shaped the structure of their operations and organization. This structuralist approach of planning and strategizing will not sustain a long-term viable competitive positioning. For online auction vendors to stay competitive, they require to build up those dynamic capabilities, and renew them, within their organizations which make them sense and respond to a changing environment. This environment is in flux because of changing customer demands and expectations, behavioral changes of customers on online auction platforms, adjustment of policies and applied technologies at eBay, and competitive forces in the marketplace.

The capabilities highly depended on the ability to apply knowledge for organizational learning to happen which will change processes and routines that become valuable over time. The essence of this multiple case study was to discover those strategies managers vendors in online auction markets used to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction. The customer purview theme aligned tightly to customer satisfaction. Adaptive and learning organizational strategies determined the extent to which online vendors were successful in devising coping strategies which contributed to formulating handling customer complaints. These strategies culminated in specific tactics and solutions for each online vendor in dealing with size and price of listings, (international) shipping, refunds, addressing eBay concerns, and fraudulent attempts of customers to obtain goods.

Without having experience and going through experiential feedback loops and leveraging their experience, managers of online auction vendors could not handle complaints in different ways than people expect. They predominantly used adaptive learning strategies and behavioral learning mechanisms to know what customers expect and how to satisfy customers. Most of the times, they refunded the transaction because customers had shipping problems or their orders did not conform to descriptions of orders as listed on the auction website. Less experienced online vendors lacked the flexibility and ingenuousness to solve problems and corrected errors in customer handling and complaints using only in the single-loop mode of operations. For those vendors with more than 10 years experience feedback mechanisms, and double-loop learning abilities contributed to multiple solutions in customer handling, solving (shipping) problems, size, and price of listings, and repositioning of the product portfolio on eBay but also other online platforms. A lack of innovation typifies this industry with most vendors reacting to complaints in standard ways than finding alternative solutions to handle complaints and the efficacy of the auctions.

Online vendors were generally not able to practice double-loop learning to generate and implement necessary improvement and changes to stand out in a very competitive environment when trading on online platforms like eBay. Organizational learning was a precursor for the level of required change to adapt business models and operations and maintain a competitive advantage where the customer was the center of operations. In this context, acquiring knowledge and the ability to refine mental mindsets were essential to change organizations and make team members work together.

Concluding, the more experienced an online vendor was, the more eclectic and effective these strategies were and the higher the level of absorptive capacity in the organization was. Each vendor's strategies were different and distinguishable from the other. In the end, the strategies had one result in common, which was perfect feedback ratings on the online auction website. Despite this assessment, double-loop learning (DLL) abilities were the source of highly effective operations and unimitable value for the online auction vendor and its customers. In the organizations where DLL occurred, organizational inertia was not occurring because learned experience and lessons learned remained in the organization. As such, the level of absorptive capacity was high. Organizations were more stagnant, and management control was more visible in single-loop learning oriented organizations.

Ultimately, all online vendors learned to design strategies for handling customer complaints by being situated learners by discovering those tools and schemas as provided by their social environment for problem-solving, prescribed explicitly by the online auction platform itself. In this way, online auction vendors found a meaning and significance of handling complaints strategies. The implication was only online auction vendors who were well experienced did not follow the standard and formal rules of the online auction platform due to DLL efforts and their acquired in-depth knowledge of the online vendor auction industry, an industry where learning is more based on informal learning practices. They excelled in demonstrating a high degree of self-efficacy based on their motivation and beliefs which resulted in the acquisition of new stills and the discovery of novel and innovative tasks to tackle a variety of problems rooted in adaptive and situational learning abilities.

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation

Letter of Cooperation from a Research Partner

Online Vendor Name
xx, Los Angeles, CA yyyy

xx March 2019

Dear Mr. Mousavi,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled "Managing Customer Complaints at Online Auction Markets" within our company and its organization(s). I am giving you permission to contact any manager or person to be interviewed and obtain data (from them) for your studies. Furthermore, I am aware that your research will not consist of any program evaluation or are related to intervention studies.

As part of this study, I authorize you to collect data and paper-based and electronic information, seek feedback from any persons you will interview, and provide any feedback to persons and interviewees involved within our organization. Any personnel will not supervise your research. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities may consist of providing you access to our administrative offices and conference rooms. These facilities include interview rooms and our administration building to exchange information with our customer support personnel and meet up with our supervisors. However, we reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in Proquest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,
Authorization Official
c /o Online Vendor Name,

Appendix B: Invitation Letter

Dear xxxx,

My name is Mohammad Mousavi, and I am a doctoral researcher at Walden University.

I would like to invite you to participate in my case study research in the online auction industry. The research is based on conducting interviews and collecting additional information.

The background of this research is that companies spend much time trying to resolve customer complaints. These complaints may affect sales that you as an online vendor generate that may impact the profitability of your businesses. Complaints may pertain to the delivery and quality of ordered goods appropriately, or dissatisfaction of customers.

The purpose of my research is to explore effective strategies that managers of vendors in online auction markets use to manage customer complaints to improve customer satisfaction.

Participation in this study would only take a limited amount of your time (1-2 hours). Furthermore, the data that you would like to provide to me is made confidential, and your company and person will be unrecognizable to others when the research study is published. If you consent to be part of this research, you may retract your decision at any time to contribute to these research efforts.

I am happy to provide you with additional information on my research topic. I will contact you during the next days personally. I look forward to receiving your response.

With best regards,

Mohammad Mousavi

Walden University

+1 (xxx) yyy-zzzz

xyz@waldenu.edu

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

I am applying the following Interview Protocol after Izard-Carroll (2016). An Interview Protocol informs participants of the step-by-step order of events to take place during the interview. While every effort will be made to follow the protocol as written, unforeseen circumstances or developments during the interview may warrant altering the protocol in some manner. If the questions are not answered, the researcher may ask if you agree to a second interview to finish the questions, or follow-up on some of the questions answered in the first interview.

Before the interview, the researcher will

- provide the participant with a copy of the interview protocol, consent form, and interview questions and confirm each document was read and understood;
- schedule time, place, and date with the interviewee; and
- answer preliminary concerns and questions of the participant.

During the interview, the researcher will

- obtain a signed consent form, if not already obtained in advance;
- confirm if the participant agrees to be recorded;
- remind the participant involvement is voluntary;
- remind the participant they may back out at any time;
- advise participant the researcher will take notes in a journal;
- remind participant responses are confidential;
- address any concerns regarding the consent form; and

- ask the interview questions that were provided in advance.

After the interview, the researcher will

- thank the participant for taking part in the interview;
- transcribe the data and conduct a second interview for member checking purposes;
- send the transcript to the participant for review;
- send a summary of themes identified in analysis and make updates based on participant feedback (member checking);
- schedule a second interview for follow-up (if necessary);
- receive affirmation from the participant regarding the accuracy of the transcription and accuracy of data interpretation (via e-mail or telephone);
- convert the paper documents to digital format;
- save the files to a thumb drive and lock in a safe for 5 years; and
- destroy the data after 5 years.

After publication, the researcher will

- send the participant a summary of the findings and an electronic copy of the completed study if requested; and
- advise the participant of the publication.

Appendix D: Interview Questions

The interview questions are:

1. How would you describe your experience from the start up to this date at the eBay platform for conducting your business that relates to complaints and customer satisfaction?
2. What type(s) of complaints do you receive most frequently?
3. What specific strategies or approaches have you used and were effective to address these complaints?
4. On a typical day, what do you do to manage these complaints? Please make sure you can recall specific details you did what, when, where, how, for whom.
5. What do you intend to accomplish by managing these complaints?
6. How, if at all, are you changing your approaches and strategies to manage customer complaints?
7. How have these complaints influenced your behavior dealing with eBay and/or your customers?
8. How do you assess the effectiveness of your strategies for handling customers' complaints?
9. What other issues, subjects of interests, comments, or suggestions have we not discussed regarding your strategies for complaint management?

Appendix E: Agreement Document

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Name of Signer: Mohammad Mousavi, Walden University

During the course of my activity in collecting data for my research on "Managing Customer Complaints at Online Auction Markets", I will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

- I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
- I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
- I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
- I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
- I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after the termination of the job that I will perform.
- I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

- I will only access or use systems or devices I am officially authorized to access, and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature: Date:

Appendix F: Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 1: Business Orientation

Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 1: Business Orientation

Participant	Quotations	Code
A1	Most sellers aren't professional, and so they see complaints as an emotional experience. [eBay's] whole marketing and policies are pro-buyer, not pro-seller. The secret is accommodating customers describing everything properly. The buyer is always right. So eBay is a problem. You have to conform with eBay's management team and accommodate all your customers much more than you will have to in any other site. You are gonna have a lot more refunds on eBay than you do any other site, but that is part of your business model - that is my advice. Because they are seller, they are buyer oriented, and they are 25 years old. They do not know shit from anything they are reading a script; they just do not want complaining customers.	Business Model
B1	There is a direct correlation of customer complaints to the revenue. Satisfied customer satisfaction is the bloodline of our companies. So I would say it is really very important because without them definitely the company is not gonna be here. I mean we were able to manage like customer complaints, that is why we were able to like maintain ever since we started. I think we have maintained a top rate of plus status. And we would only get that status if again.	Business Model
C1	Just treat your customer the way you like to be treated. Just be transparent to the customer. What I am doing is you know give me a hundred percent not to lose that customer. I gain more customers because of the way I handle my customer; my customer likes how I know how I solve the problem.	Business Model
D1	Customer satisfaction is the bread and butter for our company. Capabilities of the business are first we are honest with our customers.	Business Model
A1	At least 25 percent of the buyers want a refund and complain about non-receipts before it arrives. [eBay] just does not want complaining customers.	Complaints
B1	On a daily basis, it is going to be more of where the customer is expecting something a merchandise that's not really very reflective of like the pictures that they see on the listings. So complaints like you make amendments in your listings, and you make amendments on maybe your pictures. I mean, it is a process. […] Customers not receiving their items in a timely manner. Manage like customer complaints that's why we were able to like maintain ever since we started. I think we have maintained a top rate of plus status.	Complaints
C1	Most of the time you know it's late shipment because they think that because we have two days processing time for the watches we have to put our watches to the winder for at least 36-48 hours because not all the customers reading the description they just basically buy the watch and then they think that they are going to get it two days after. [Customers] 're complaining about the shipping.	Complaints
D1	So every day when you get complains, you learn how to deal with them. Another thing is [listings] did not match the description. So each customer you learn something from them. And then especially if it is like it is the really big complaint or big issue you have to learn that it does not happen again.	Complaints
B1	If [customers] complain that means it could either lead to like a return which is, of course, a loss on revenues. So yes there is a direct correlation of customer complaints to the revenue.	Business Results
C1	If you satisfy a customer for sure, they are going to go back, and for my company, I am not [for a] one time sale because I want to keep my customer you know just so for example word of mouth. They can tell it to their friends or relatives.	Business Results

Participant	Quotations	Code
D1	When [customers] say that it does not matter description [of the listing] … it is going to affect your annual sales report. Customer satisfaction is the bread and butter of every e-commerce company.	Business Results
A1	Once you go over the 20 dollar threshold of shipping fees, you are not going to sell that item going to be half the value of the item you are selling. If the item costs twenty-five dollars and it costs forty dollars to ship the damn thing the buyer is not going to buy it. [Managing these returns:] just return for a refund.	Shipping / Requirement
B1	Late shipment and all that customer defect customer complaints, you need to be on a certain bracket just to maintain that level [of customer satisfaction].	Shipping / Requirement

Appendix G: Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 2: Customer Purview

Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 2: Customer Purview

Participant	Quotations	Code
A1	It goes without saying keep the customer happy. The secret is accommodating customers describing everything properly. [eBay is] buyer oriented. You avoid complaints by accommodating your customer	Customer Satisfaction
B1	We can please everyone. So in terms of like maybe there are like those hard customers that you really cannot please. I mean you cannot do anything about it but in terms of like controllables at least. So once [buyers] received the item I mean the pictures we place everything we try to be transparent in the picture.	Customer Satisfaction
C1	It is very important because if you satisfy a customer for sure, they are going to go back and for my company I am not one. So the customer is […] thinking that he will receive the package right away; so he … message[s] us you know a lot of passwords already, but I did, and you know I still message him back professionally […] right away […]. Basically, what I am doing with my customer is simple. I treat them the way I like to be treated. I do not' receive a lot of negative feedback.	Customer Satisfaction
D1	Customer satisfaction is the bread and butter for our company. Because if the customer does not get satisfied that they are going to return their merchandise back.	Customer Satisfaction
A1	[eBay] want[s] customers happy. They do not want customers to say, oh, do not buy on eBay. You cannot get your money back.	Customer Expectation
B1	So I called the customer naturally. I mean she was upset she was you know very disappointed. But again that brought me back to like offering an option to her. It is you know we give them options like if they find item too small we offer them like something like a bigger watch to address their concerns. So we call the customer again as I said we offer either option that we have. I mean if you do not satisfy your customers most likely they are gonna go to the competitors. I mean it falls through it or expectation, or it is not what they were expecting so especially again it is only like like you know words and pictures. If they see it in like actual I mean it is not something they were expecting at all. On a daily basis, it is going to be more of where the customer is expecting something a merchandise that's not really very reflective of like the pictures that they see on the listings.	Customer Expectation
C1	Just be transparent to the customer. It is being honest, especially in this industry. But if I ship the item already, so they can track their [watch] you know they can check their watches.	Customer Expectation
D1	Capabilities of the business are first; we are honest with our customers. Then [customers] 're going to send it back to us, and then we check everything A to Z and then [we] talk […] to the customer[s]. Once you are honest with a customer they would feel your sincerity at the same time, they would you would gain their trust; I mean even if you like there is something wrong.	Customer Expectation

Appendix H: Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 3: Complaints Handling

Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 3: Complaints Handling

Participant	Quotations	Code
A1	I just raised the price, and I am more thorough about tracking. That is what I; that is how I react; the buyer is always right; I am sorry about this; I am sorry about that - What can you do; that is what I do; well you want to be a pain in the ass: Here is your refund. So you get a raise at the price of that item by 14 percent or 10 percent; if you then list it on eBay and then you lower the price on elsewhere where you do not have to pay those fees but list and go everywhere. [eBay] just do not want complaining customers. All those tools that I mentioned that is being pro-buyer, you know your policies. That means no complaints, refund: Everything You Always refund before you have to refund - You will never have complaints from customers. If they had a lot of complaints about a certain item, drop them for 6 months and then reintroduce them. {To the customer:] Just send it back and get your refund when it arrives. At least 25 percent of the buyers want a refund. At the end of eight days, if the customer has not received that the customer gets a refund. Just return for a refund. Just change it to half the price or do not sell it; [When receiving too much complaints,] just change it to half the price or do not sell it. You sell something else and then even then after a three month or four months your statistics [at eBay] look good. Here is your refund: […] bye bye [to the customer when complaing]; Next. That is what I do. I do not dwell on this stuff. If [sellers] ‘re restricted by eBay for noncompliance compliance, they quickly remove their account reenter their item in another email address and continue business. If a customer wants a refund after two weeks and he is in Spain, it is going to take three or four weeks to get there first class mail or Brazil.	Solution
B1	It is you know we give them options like if they find item too small we offer them like something like a bigger watch to address their concerns. So it is mainly giving options through them. As much as possible […] you are just making really sure that you give them solutions as opposed to like you like fighting fire with fire.	Solution
C1	So if I think that you know for example he is a man and then you know I know he is mad, already I would ask my co-worker, a lady co-worker, to call them. So what I did is you know social media, and then they can follow that. I can post it. But if I ship the item already so they can track their you know, they can check their watches. Nowadays, social media is very important.	Solution
D1	[When there is a complaint on a matching description of a listing,] we tried to explain to the customer that […] whatever that we listed that is exactly the item that we sent it.	Solution
A1	[eBay] wants the mass population saying it is great on eBay: you get your money and I got my refund. I am going on the Internet because of the statistics that eBay presents; see most sellers do not think long long term. I raised the price by the way [on a listing on eBau]. By the way, you should not send anything to certain countries first class it will not get there like South America. Forget about returns, forget about restricting returns because [customers] 're paying to PayPal and a credit card always is pro-buyer, and they will always return that money and reverse some money on that card; so you avoid complaints by accommodating your customer. So here is another problem after you master all that, big problem: If you sell anything between one dollar and fifty dollars, more and more buyers are international, more and more 5 percent now up to almost half of what you sell goes overseas. If it is one item and a lot of complaints, I drop it from listing or change the images or change a price to [a] description. Just change it to half the price or do not sell it. I found out that you ship for 13 dollars because all my art and jewelry	Tactics

Participant	Quotations	Code
	items are small and fit in a six by seven padded envelope. Once you go over the 20 dollar threshold of shipping fees, you are not going to sell that item going to be half the value of the item you are selling.	
B1	Since we have their contact information and we make sure that we contact them like at the most available time we address it immediately. I mean there is like a sense of urgency into it. So we call the customer again as I said we offer either option that we have. But ... I mean the last resort being, of course, having them refunded for the item. But yeah I mean it is just a matter of like giving them options. We try to be very transparent in the listings and all that try to capture all like like the pictures. We do minimal editing and all that just to make sure that of course, those things are not going to happen. It is a strategy as well in a way. Like when you make changes in a listing when you make changes on pictures because I mean online sales that's about it it is just like you know your listings and a picture. That is it. That speaks to the customer.	Tactics
C1	For example, the watch, especially our watches the selling is pretty on the watch, so I usually tell them on the condition of the bad it is not you know it is 80% or something. Just be honest. It is being honest, especially in this industry.	Tactics
D1	I can think of because once you are honest with a customer, they would feel your sincerity at the same time they would you would gain their trust. So I think that is what we are doing that is like our best strategy: to be honest with our customer.	Tactics

Appendix I: Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 4: Coping Strategies

Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 4: Coping Strategies

Participant	Quotations	Code
A1	You would not have twenty-five hundred other listings current on that Buckle. Why are you throwing me off and maintaining all these other listings so the same exact merchandise? You know what their answer was: we have to have a complaint about our listings before we can react on it. So each of those 2500 listings would have to have four or five or six complaints in a certain time window in order for them to respond. It depends on the circumstances that the complaint; if it is a volume of complaints and it is a different complaint of each one you know ... I am always changing; I am very flexible and not personally involved. So most of the stuff I have were sold was sold by a relay Rolex authorized relay authorized Rolex retail store before [eBay managers] were born; so they do not have any idea what whether it is authentic or not. [These managers] have no clue about what happened in the 70s and they have no clue. Have to live with this level of ignorance all the time.	Feedback Learning Loops
B1	Something that could be replicated […] like the big inventory that we have […] that caters to like every type of customer […] other companies are replicating that because we see them listing the same items … I shared with either my colleagues here they would give feedback I would give feedback. As I have said, it is like we have an open door policy here. I mean we have shared best practices just to make sure that each one would replicate those best practices as well. I mean it is a form of like continuous improvement. So complaints like you make amendments in your listings, and you make amendments on maybe your pictures. I mean, it is a process.	Feedback Learning Loops
C1	I guess there are changes that are going to be made especially if we see it like a trend on a particular defect or a particular customer complaint and we do some tweaks, or we do some adjustments just to make sure that we could address those complaints or defects. I just opened the store probably October, but I have 90 positive feedback right now. And then my, I am a top seller right now too.	Feedback Learning Loops
D1	Yes, ... yes [we have changed the direction of our business]. It is like we tried to look for other merchandise that we have that other people do not have. And we tried to change the […] handling time to two days to one day handling time and then but mostly we tried […] to look for things that other sellers do not have. And of course, the prices to rise has to be competitive. So each customer you learn something from them. And then especially if it is like it is the really big complaint or big issue you have to learn that it does not happen again. If you get it every day yet, then you learn how to deal with different people the way that you talk. You will realize that what are the correct words that you have to use for the customer because each customer is different. So every day when you get complains, you learn how to deal with them. Now we are more careful we look at everything we make sure that everything is okay. A to Z we always check winding the watch. Yes, we did a lot of revisions already from the time that I started working.	Feedback Learning Loops
A1	You would not have 2500 other listings current on that Buckle. Why are you throwing me off and maintaining all these other listings so the same exact merchandise? You know what their answer was: we have to have a complaint about our listings before we can react to it. So each of those 2500 listings would have to have four or five or six complaints in a certain time window in order for them to respond. Duh? That makes them ... Now you know how their restrictions work.[…] So what did I do. This happened to me twice. I brought to their attention they said well maybe you should go list them, so I listed them and then the same thing and Oh you relisted them, and we told you not to. Well, you told me I could relist him. Oh, we do not. I am sorry. You go to a Rolex dealer and have him. Something I am	Experiential Learning

Participant	Quotations	Code
	doing is wrong with my listing very wrong. […] If [eBay] 's taken advantage of that one listing I am less I am not listing it properly; it is not eBay. Sellers have to be articulate about that [… not] argumentative [but], factual. You know that is what sellers do not do they complain, and they do not go anywhere they do not reinvent themselves and do anything. You see, most sellers are not professional, and so they see complaints as an emotional experience. I am going on the Internet because of the statistics that eBay presents, see most sellers do not think long term, and they do not think like a business model of high volume business. That inexperienced seller scratches his head and go "where you want to do" is an idiot. If it is one item that's causing all these complaints or a feud and I pull them.	
B1	I mean historically speaking I mean that is like at least the majority of the complaints that we are getting.	Experiential Learning
C1	Every complaint you learn something you know, and it is different. Different type of people you know, especially on eBay. What I am doing is I took on this ... I tried to educate my customer. Just treat your customer the way you like to be treated. Just be transparent to the customer. Just be honest. It is being honest, especially in this industry. Basically, what I am doing with my customer is simple. I treat them the way I like to be treated. That is a compliment too. So that is it.	Experiential Learning
D1	Yes, sometimes I talk to other owners and ask them. I have this situation. Have you experienced this? And sometimes they say that I experienced the same situation before. This is what you can do this and that. If we are having an issue with one customer, we tried. I always ask him what are we going to do. What is your suggestion? What is the best strategy? What can we do to fix this? Yes, yes, definitely. Always try to talk to other people for their opinion.... .	Experiential Learning
A1	I had 70 listings of a strap and a buckle a logo buckle on the strap. A1 [00:18:25] Variations, and that is 660 listings. Now there are twenty-five hundred listings on eBay twenty-five hundred. But each listing looks like shit. The images look like shit. The bands they put on it looked like shit. You know, and I have these beautiful images and reasonable prices. I saw the band with a buckle board associated with the model Rolex model, and they sell. So I said I have 1 percent of the listing to 30 percent of the business on Logo buckles on eBay. I would stay with the same email address, so my credibility is way up there. All you have to be a little careful. But that is not a complaint of mine that's an expectation of eBay's buyers. Never be argumentative. They just watch the facts here it is and here is your money. That is it. That is how you handle customers. If you do that you are not going to have a problem with eBay. And make sure your listing describes the item well, and you are very clear about your policies. Forget about return; forget about restricting returns. After you master all that, big problem: If you sell anything between $1.50 more and more and more buyers are international, more and more 5 % now up to almost half of what you sell goes overseas.	Lessons Learned
A1	Now, why am I know it all? Well, I am an old guy […] I have been on eBay since 1998. I have sold 9500 vintage watches sales. I have been screwed. Blue tattooed. I have been restricted and pulled off, and I never changed my email address for 20 years. Holy shit, [… I have got] more credibility than that damn crook and [my] jewelry store has been here 20 years. So you provide all the facts [eBay] need[s] so that each case they are informed and that neither the seller or the buyer is taken advantage of. More often than not on shipping a nonreceipt, it is the transit authority that's causing a problem. They have to be more willing to refund on eBay then you do other sites. If you are not, you are not going to do well on eBay. So eBay has its weaknesses, an immature script... You have to be logical about the complaints that the complaints are about a certain object and a certain aspect of the object you look at that. I am always accommodating the seller. I have an idea of what something is	Experience

Participant	Quotations	Code
	and what it should be. I do not dwell on this stuff; have to live with this level of ignorance all the time.	
B1	I had is really like in terms of like product training but in terms of like you know customer dealings I mean I happened to work with like the customer service industry for more than 13 years which I think helped me like handling you know customer satisfaction in this company. I have been in the company for more than 2 years.	Experience
C1	learned my oh my experience from my past. [Experience is …] probably 5 to 6 years ... [in] watches and jewelry. You know it is not from eBay, or you know because I used to work in a jewelry company.	Experience
D1	I have been doing eBay for like when they started I started 2016 so […] 3 years experience at eBay. I got into this business 3 years ago.	Experience
A1	But once yes once a complaint is registered because anonymously your funds are being held one hundred percent of the time so on the face of it 80 percent of the listers on eBay complain about refunds on shipping, but they should complain about their own incompetence and not following through on tracking and providing information to eBay. [eBay's] Scripted management team: you have to be very careful with and and and conform to the rules and regulations. I am sure none of your sellers introduce [investigating complaints] as a problem. I am sure none of them do. So without boring you on how to sell on eBay and how to list it and everything everybody knows that. So eBay is pro-buyer you just have to remember that so everybody gets a positive feedback. Aall [eBay] employees are trained to smile at these morons [sellers]. You just smile at them and give them money back. Customers complain by item only, by listing; that question is germane to a listing, a specific one out of one hundred and sixty listings. You always do that. But the real proof of whether it is whether that price is right, descriptions right. And if the item is should be up there at all is the customer reaction. So I look at the customer reaction to tell me what to sell. So you make sure that listing is, uh, specific specifically changed to. Conform with. You must do that. You always do that in any business.	Experience Feedback
B1	I shared with either my colleagues here they would give feedback I would give feedback. As I have said, it is like we have an open door policy here.	Experience Feedback
C1	Nowadays, social media is very important. So if I ask them only if you can give me good feedback on it. And then you know I get another customer from that customer. So basically what I change is you know the feature of the watches. For the example of the bridge's one watch. They know exactly what they are getting, so it is less complaint. I do not receive a lot of negative feedback.	Experience Feedback
D1	If they complain about certain things and then we can offer something different like for example if they say that oh the watch does not match the description and then we say that oh we can take the watch back and we can double check it to make sure it measures the description and then we're going to send that return shipping label at the customer, and then they're going to send it back to us, and then we check everything A to Z and then talk […] to the customer. We always tried to be honest with our customers that we all. We do not like it because it is gonna backfire to us if we say that something is if we say that this is original and it is not original that is going to backfire for us. So I think that is what we are doing that is like our best strategy, to be honest with our customer.	Experience Feedback

Appendix J: Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 5: Learning Abilities

Selected Quotations Organized by Code for Theme 5: Learning Abilities

Participant	Quotations	Code
A1	Pull them off eBay and restrict me. Please do not sell reproductions; only they are not reproductions. If they were. You would not have 2500 other listings current on that Buckle. Why are you throwing me off and maintaining all these other listings so the same exact merchandise? You know what their answer was: we have to have a complaint about our listings before we can react to it. A smooth running buy and sell agenda. So what did I do? This happened to me twice. I brought to their attention they said well maybe you should go list them, so I listed them and then the same thing and Oh you relisted them, and we told you not to. Well, you told me I could relist him. Oh, we do not. I am sorry. You go to a Rolex dealer and have him authenticate. You have to be professional, know whom you are doing business with [, with eBay]. Now why am I know it all: […] I have sold 9500 vintage watches sales. [eBay knows] he has stuff looks so professional, so complaints about what I have let us say. Oh, that is a reproduction buckle. It is no good. He should not sell on eBay or whatever. And they get 5, 6, 8 complaints. So, the 22-year-old [at eBay] looks at complaints about me. I had 70 listings of a strap and a buckle a logo buckle on the strap. Variations and that is 660 listings. Now there are 2500 listings on eBay. But each listing looks like shit. The images look like shit. The bands they put on it looked like shit. You know, and I have these beautiful images and reasonable prices. I saw the band with a buckle board associated with the model Rolex model, and they sell. So I said I have 1 percent of the listing to 30 percent of the business on Logo buckles on eBay. You know I go to a Rolex dealer. They have not sold this merchandise that I have for 30 years. Most of the dealers, uh clerks are 30 years old. So most of the stuff I have were sold was sold by a relay Rolex authorized relay authorized Rolex retail store before they were born. But that is part of doing business on eBay. Sellers will not take the time. All they want to do is act like a housewife. I do not like this, like a moron. No. If I if I lose and I refund the money, and that happens too much on an item either drop the item off eBay or change a price or do something. It is partially my fault.	Adaptive Learning
C1	Every complaint you learn something you know, and it is different. Different type of people you know, especially on eBay. Some people there is friend money. For example, two thousand dollars but they are expecting a new watch for that amount. But some people they know that if they purchase that you know a low that that low. They are not expecting you know like a brand new watch. So what. What I am doing is I took on this ... tried to educate my customer. You know this is a vintage watch and that .. This is not a you know it is a vintage watch that close to a collector's item. So they know that. Oh, it is gonna benefit me later on because even though I purchased this watch and then the look is not that you know not that good, but it is a collector's item.	Adaptive Learning
D1	But what we do is we try to be more accurate. We try to be more like we make sure that we double check everything from our end because whatever that is on the picture that is exactly what we want to sell. So we adjust from our end not that we change the company policy to the customers or anything like that from our end, we try to be more careful and to be more specific.	Adaptive Learning
A1	You know that is what sellers do not do: they complain, and they do not go anywhere, they do not reinvent themselves and do anything; they just like a housewife. I have been screwed. Blue tattooed. Customers will just not read comprehend they might be in a foreign language or might simply have a sub temperature IQ or they just read too fast or too busy they do not understand and	Behavioral Learning

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	they misinterpret the description so they order it and it is not what they want it. I will be happy to refund him once he picks it up or if the postal authorities return it and I receive it then I will refund. [Mostly a] lister being an ignorant moron complaints…. you do not know how to do business what you do is you never leave a nasty message.	
B1	[Concerning strategies for complaint management:] …I mean as a cliche we can please everyone. So in terms of like maybe there are like those hard customers that you really cannot please. I mean you cannot do anything about it but in terms of like controllables at least. Those are the things that we could do on our end. Again those options and all that but sometimes at the end of the day, you really cannot please everyone. […] in terms of like you know customer dealings I mean I happened to work with like the customer service industry for more than 13 years which I think helped me like handling you know customer satisfaction in this company so in terms of like immersion or training I guess I had like a 13 year solid experience like in doing customer satisfaction.	Behavioral Learning
D1	[Changing your direction of your business:] Yes, ... yes... it is like we tried to look for other merchandise that we have that other people do not have. And we tried to change the handling time to two days to one day handling time and then but mostly we tried to look for things that other sellers do not have. And of course, the prices to rise has to be competitive.	Behavioral Learning
A1	Now, why am I know it all…. Well, I am an old guy. I have been on eBay since 1998. I have sold 9500 vintage watches sales. It depends on the circumstances that the complaint; if it is a volume of complaints and it is a different complain of each one you know ... I am always changing; I am very flexible and not personally involved. I am doing plenty of business on the items that Rolex restricted and did not restrict on all their other sellers the same item same merchandise same stuff. But the real proof of whether it is whether that price is right, descriptions right. And if the item is should be up there at all is the customer reaction. So I look at the customer reaction to tell me what to sell; … You see most sellers are not professional and so they see complaints as an emotional experience like. Like again that housewife. I would stay with the same email address, so my credibility is way up there.	Proactive Learning
B1	I shared with either my colleagues here they would give feedback I would give feedback. As I have said, it is like we have an open door policy here. I mean we have shared best practices just to make sure that each one would replicate those best practices as well. We like to do brainstorming as a team so we could like make address this and we even involve of course the owner if that is needed.	Collaborative Learning
C1	I am working with the other sellers too on eBay. So I asked for [another person's] idea to know how to solve it. You know how they handle you know that because the eBay has a different kind of customer you know. […] I would ask my co-worker a lady co-worker to call them.	Collaborative Learning
D1	Yes, sometimes I talk to other owners and ask them. I have this situation. Have you experienced this? And sometimes they say that I experienced the same situation before. This is what you can do this and that. Yes. I talked to other sellers…. Like for example if we are having an issue with one customer we tried. I always ask [my colleague] what are we going to do. What is your suggestion? What is the best strategy? What can we do to fix this? Yes, yes, definitely. Always try to talk to other people for their opinion...	Collaborative Learning