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English I

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E-Retailing

Retail is one of the more visible market sectors on the World Wide Web. In retail, merchants sell products and services directly to a buyer. E-retail, also called e-tail, occurs when retailers use the World Wide Web to sell their products and services (Sanchez 16). E-retailers consistently challenge the old ways of conducting business as they bring new products and services to market. All e-retailers, however, operate in a similar way (17).

A customer (consumer) visits an online business at the World Wide Web equivalent of a showroom: the electronic storefront (Bodini 1). An electronic storefront, also called an online catalog, is the World Wide Web site where an e-retailer displays its products. It contains descriptions, graphics, and sometimes product reviews. After browsing through the merchandise, the customer makes a selection (Sanchez 17). This activates a second area of the store known as the shopping cart. The shopping cart is a software component on the World Wide Web that allows the customer to collect purchases. Items in the cart can be added, deleted, or even saved for a future visit (*Microsoft*).

When ready to complete the sale, the customer proceeds to the checkout. At this time, the customer enters personal and financial data through a secure Internet connection. The transaction and financial data automatically are verified at a banking World Wide Web site (*Microsoft*). If the bank approves the transaction, the customer receives an online confirmation notice of the purchase (Bodini 1).

Then, the e-retailer processes the order and sends it to the fulfillment center where it is packaged and shipped. Inventory systems are updated. Shipping information is posted on the World Wide Web, so the customer can track the order. The e-retailer notifies the bank of the shipment, and payment is sent via electronic channels to the e-retailer. The customer typically receives the order a few days after the purchase (*Microsoft*).

E-retailing presents a new way to shop. The store is open 24 hours a day (Sanchez 19). With a few clicks of the mouse, consumers can compare prices easily. The key rule for purchasing online is the same as for traditional purchases. That is, the best consumer is the best-informed consumer.

Works Cited

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