Preface

In recent years, progresses in technology have made available a large amount of technical innovations for improving retail process, while the demand of innovative services is increasing more than in the past. As a consequence, this innovative force pushes retailers to innovate to successfully compete.

As a result, many interactive systems have been introduced in traditional points of sale, such as self-service technologies, touch screen displays, mobile applications for mobile devices (i.e. virtual catalogues for smart phones), intelligent shopping trolleys fixed and portable RFID (Radio Frequency Identification), etc. (Demirkan & Spohrer, 2014; Rese, Schreiber, & Baier, 2014). For instance, groceries and department stores have introduced self-service technologies equipped with RFID systems for self-checkouts; stores for electronics have introduced interactive touch-screen displays for providing information on products and related prices, promotions, and location within the store; others have introduced applications for mobile phones for supporting consumers to find stores, items, creating a wish list, etc.; a few retailers also created completely new virtual stores based on ubiquitous computing, such as the Spanish Pickbe, which allows consumers to access its products directly from mobile while they are located in a certain area (such as a certain metro stop). Another consistent part of retailers had not introduced yet technological innovations in their stores (Pantano & Viassone, 2014). The main advantages for consumers related to such innovation lie in the possibility to achieve constantly updated information on available products and service, which consumers can access through entertaining, high interactive, and user-friendly interfaces (Bodhani, 2012; Chattaramental, 2012; Oh, Teo, & Sambamurthy, 2013; Wang, 2012; Papagiannidis, Pantano, See-to, & Bourlakis, 2013). As a consequence, stores look more appealing and attractive providing consumers with a new and exciting shopping experience (Demirkan & Spohrer, 2014).

Similarly, these technologies may provide retailers with information on consumers’ behaviour and preferences, useful for managing data, predicting market trends, developing customized services and advertising campaign, reducing cost of personnel (for example moving some services traditionally executed by salesforce to the automatic system) (Evans, 2011; Pantano, 2014).

However, critical issues may arise while innovating, due to the difficulties of retailers to define efficient management strategies for successfully absorbing the innovative technologies. In fact, retailers tend to outsource the Research and Development function. As a consequence, they are usually the adopters of innovations produced by other manufacturing companies through expensive and dynamic strategies (Pantano, 2014). Introducing innovation within the points of sale also involves some risks, concerning the high level of uncertainty emerging from consumers’ effective usage of the technology, monetary investment (costs), time consuming, complexity of the process, risk of obsolescence of technology, and the changes in the store layout and atmosphere (Alkemade & Suurs, 2012; Pantano et al., 2013).
For these reasons, current retailers show a consistent heterogeneity in innovating strategies. Despite these restraining conditions (i.e. risks related to consumers’ acceptance, monetary investment, risks of fast obsolescence of the technology, etc.), the wave of innovative technologies available for improving selling goods is making available many interactive and innovative systems. In particular, these systems are able to support both consumers while shopping and retailers for achieving fast and update information on market trends, selling process, and creating new adaptable and direct marketing strategies.

This book intends to provide useful insight into technology and innovation management for retailing, by taking advantage from the most recent researches in this sector, in order to provide a framework for understanding the phenomenon and guidelines for identifying the best technologies for enhancing the retail process, and the best strategies to manage such technologies (in terms of introduction, adoption, acceptance, etc.).

Hence, it provides an integrative view able to support both practitioners (retailers and developers) and scholars with different backgrounds but all interested in understanding (1) how consumers accept and interact with new technologies, (2) developers design new usable, interactive, and efficient interfaces and systems, (3) how marketers and managers define more successful strategies based on a better usage of the technology, and (4) how the technology changes the interactions and the perception of all the actors involved in the process (e.g. consumers, frontend employees, and retailers), etc.

**THE CHALLENGES**

Hence, the retail scenario enriched with novel technologies poses new questions to both scholars and practitioners:

- To what extent will a continuous innovation in retailing be feasible and financially sustainable?
- Will the role of physical seller be totally replaced by more realistic interfaces?
- How can the capacity of absorbing technological innovations by retailers be measured and increased?
- Will the advanced technologies modify the meaning of shopping as social experience?
- When should a retailer be pioneer or simply an adopter?
- How can the impact of these technologies on retailing be measured?

Therefore, innovation and technology management, traditionally related to industrial engineering topics, can be successfully integrated for the definition of new successful retail strategies, while the challenges they solicit a way for adequate understanding of the new competitive scenario.

The studies collected in this book aim at answering to some of these questions, by proposing on one hand the retailers’ management strategies and on the other one the consumers’ standpoint, with emphasis on the effect of the technology-enriched retail scenario on their experience.
TARGET AUDIENCE

The book should provide an integrative view of the emerging innovative scenario in retailing. Due to its focus on current hot topics for scholars and practitioners, the book would be an important tool for both retailers and developers, and for scholars of several fields such as Economics, Management, Psychology, Industrial Engineering, Sociology, and Computer Science.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into 3 sections and 14 chapters.

The first section focuses on the influence of new technologies on store design and atmosphere. In particular, four chapters are included in this section showing to what extent the advanced technologies can change the store atmosphere by enriching the traditional (physical) points of sale with new digital and exciting environments and innovative interactive tools. The description and analysis proposed are then supported by meaningful examples. In addition, this section proposes the usage of these technologies also in the design of new efficient stores.

The first chapter describes the new retail environments after the introduction of advanced technologies, with emphasis on the digital signage and multichannel development effects on the store atmosphere for fashion retailers, by presenting some evidences from UK market.

The following chapter investigates the use of cloud computing for new store design by outlining to what extent new technologies might successfully involve consumers in the design process and in the final service co-creation by starting from an experiment taking place in a university laboratory.

The third chapter focuses on a particular technology, the merchant virtual universe, which reproduces virtually a real shopping mall. The research analyses the realistic online experience, with emphasis on the feeling of immersion in the new retail environment by outlining the fundamental role of immersion, realism, and sense of presence on consumers’ satisfaction.

The fourth chapter aims at illustrating the usage of neuroimaging for deeply understanding the effect of certain marketing stimuli within a point of sale, with emphasis on the cognitive and emotional aspects of consumers involved in the evaluation of products available within the store.

The second section focuses on consumers and employees’ acceptance of advanced technologies within the point of sale. The chapters included in this section provide an overview of consumers and employees’ response in terms of adoption and acceptance, decision-making process, and store/channel choice.

The first chapter included in this section focuses on consumers’ acceptance of mobile coupon. Starting from the Technology Acceptance Theory and Innovation Diffusion Theory, it outlines the determinants in terms of perception variables and individual characteristics.

Chapter 6 focuses on apparel stores, with emphasis on employee’s behavior after the introduction of advanced technologies able to support their work, by measuring the determinants of technology adoption.

Chapter 7 investigates the emerging phenomenon of omnichannel shopping, based on the usage of online and offline channels (i.e. magazines, friends, physical store, etc.) by consumer for achieving information able to support the shopping experience. In particular, this chapter analyses the usage of multiple channels during shopping process.
The following chapter focuses on consumers’ acceptance of a new technology consisting of an interactive application for mobile phone that allows to scan the codes available in the printed catalogue to access to 3D virtual reconstruction of products and interact with them from their own mobile. This app enhances the shopping experience and represents a promising research area for further improvements.

The last section of the current book is based on innovation management and innovative strategies, by offering a collection of chapters investigating the possible strategy for successfully adopting innovations in retail settings. The presented findings contribute to the body of innovation and technology management for retailing and broaden the understanding of adoption dynamics in general. In particular, they offer a management perspective of the introduction of technological innovations in retail settings by emphasizing the innovative force characterizing the sector and the possible strategies for creating new services within the financial sustainability standpoint.

The first chapter included in this section outlines to what extent the service excellence is one of the key elements for retailers for differentiating in the digital environment, starting from a laboratory experiment based on mobile application and related tablet computers.

The following chapter proposes an investigation of current strategies of retailers who adopted innovative retail channel strategies, by analysing 127 retailers between 2011 and 2014. Similarly, the subsequent chapter focuses on the topics of market orientation, innovation and their reciprocal relationships with business success in retail industry with emphasis on the difference between radical and incremental innovation for profitably strategies.

Chapter 12 investigates the expected outcomes from innovating in fashion retail by considering innovation maturity models, absorptive capacity, and dynamic capabilities.

The following chapter analyses the financial sustainability of innovating in retail settings by taking into account the case of Croatian groceries. One of the outcomes shows to what extent there is a long payback period after the adoption of new technological innovations.

The last chapter included in the book explores the role of corporate marketing strategies and brand management in retail industry with emphasis on the fashion sector.

The book aims at integrating previous findings that mainly focused on consumers and technology by adding also an innovation management and corporate perspective. This publication is intended to provide a comprehensive vision of the current competitive scenario in retailing and to propose management strategies for successfully competing.

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REFERENCES


