Editorial Preface

Technology and Innovation:
A Half-Century of Internet-Enabled Change

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Over the past half century, information, and communication technologies (ICT) have reshaped the ways in which we access, process and exchange information. While many individuals are accomplished users of ICT and heavily reliant – even dependent – on the Internet for performing everyday routine activities, our knowledge of Internet user behaviour is often based on the aspects that affect us directly, and on information available in the public domain (such as media reports, blogs, vlogs and social commentary). The Western 'world view' underscores much of the existing literature relating to our awareness and understanding of ICT. Consequently, the North American view of ICT usage has been internalised, propagating an incomplete or somewhat culturally biased view of ICT developments, framed through the Anglo-centric lens.

Making sense of developments in ICT and the subsequent user behaviour is an incredibly complex task. Rapid technological evolution makes it difficult to obtain a reliable overview of the changes taking place and the knock-on effects brought about by constant innovation. There is also a tendency in existing literature to disregard detail by oversimplifying ICT usage and by 'glossing over' user behaviour at a local level. For example, contrary to the popular assumption in the Western mind-set, the 'Big Tech' companies GAFAM – Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft – are *not* regarded as the epitome of technological progress in certain countries, as will be demonstrated in this special issue. Moreover, the Western (consumerist) view of commoditising Big Data and the promotion of narcissistic individualism via social networks is clearly at loggerheads with the standards, norms and beliefs of certain other civilisations. In an attempt to produce a more balanced view of the ways in which the Internet is 'consumed', this special issue draws on the work of scholars worldwide, shifting along a linguistic continuum to avoid framing and interpreting the realities of non-Anglophone countries through an Anglo-Euro-centric lens.

By sourcing information from different national contexts, this special issue sets out to remove the predisposition of the North American research lens (as identified by Emery and Trist, 1960) which suppresses socio-technical differences in our understanding of the consumption of Internet technologies. Like the industrial revolution (which took around 70 years to complete), the digital

revolution is likely to be similarly lengthy. During recent decades, great transformations have taken place – and continue to take place. Across the globe, adoption and usage of Internet-enabled devices has been uneven and often unpredictable. The existing theories of technology readiness and technology acceptance are no longer relevant to explain the current changes taking place. In the early decades of the 21st century, notions of technology diffusion and technology usage are attracting heightened attention among scholars and practitioners, as we try to grasp a sense of the ways in which individuals engage, dismiss or rely upon ICT. The papers in this special issue trace the key milestones in Internet-enabled change and the ramifications for users and stakeholders.

The first study ('The Rhetoric and Realities of Internet Technologies on Trade Union Marketing: Marketing, Communications, Resistance') explores Internet usage in the context of Trade Unions (TU), seen as longstanding institutions that have developed over centuries in many different national contexts. While TU have adopted the Internet, they are largely portrayed in an idealised light as if the Web should automatically be expected to radically transform and improve processes, communities and relations. The study calls in to question this idealistic presentation of TU, probing the notion of technological determinism, and highlighting the risk that technologies will continue to operate at a macro, rather than a micro individual level, and be more dominated by managerial and commercial motives, which encroach on legitimate TU representation and resistance rather than TU interests.

The second study ('The Influence of Geolocated Mobile Coupons on Customer Behaviour') looks at the under-researched topic regarding the implementation of mobile coupons and their redemption in retail stores, when integrating the location dimension. The study responds to calls for new research into customer attitudes, by exploring how product and retail managers can offer mobile coupon opportunities to increase coupon redemption among potential customers using smartphones, in the light of increasing privacy issues. Using the theory of planned behavior, the findings show that geolocation is a relevant variable in mobile advertising, having positive impact on behavioral intention and thus increasing the likelihood of coupon redemption.

The next study ('Empirical Study of Telemedicine Readiness in the Healthcare Sector in Developing Countries') explores the use of Telemedicine technologies in developing countries for delivering healthcare services. The study puts forward a model to assess Telemedicine Readiness in Libya from the perspective of healthcare providers. The findings show how the level of Telemedicine Readiness is influenced by various health-specific organisational factors including organisational capabilities and resources, which subsequently have an impact on the implementation of such technology including healthcare providers' human resources, IT infrastructure, perceived ease of use and healthcare providers' prospective.

The following study ('The Long Game ~ Technological Innovation and the Transformation of Business Performance') explores the use of Big Data in two British retail companies that innovatively exploited the data generated by new Internet technologies to improve business performance. The findings underscore how benefits can be generated when people think creatively about exploiting new technologies, rather than merely adopting them; and that 'universal benefits' will occur only when the hype has subsided. The study reveals that there is opportunity to create sustainable competitive advantage through the application of innovative technologies – providing that the social, technological and human challenges of managing technology are appreciated and managed.

The final study ('Scientific online communication: The strategic landscape of ResearchGate users') takes a look at the interrelations of scientists' online communications and their real academic achievements using the case of ResearchGate (RG). The objectives are to ascertain the range of communication practices of RG users, and define the influence of institutional factors and demographic characteristics on the users' network activity. From the sample composed using a Web Scraping approach, cluster analysis reveals three groups of RG users according to these practices ('representation' and 'exchange'). The study found that neither age nor status influences the network activity. On the other hand, ranking demonstrated the influence of institutional factors, thus contributing to the understanding of how a scientist should use the advantages of the network in his/her professional activity, and how to overcome institutional limits which inhibit academic advancement.