

## Guest Editorial Preface

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# Rewiring E-Commerce in a Post-Pandemic New Normal: Frameworks for Business Re-Engineering of the E-Commerce Post COVID-19

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### INTRODUCTION

The breakout of COVID-19 has had irreversible and scathing impact on both business and society. The outbreak of COVID-19 has forced many businesses to shutdown permanently, along with a significant decline in supply chain and demand – in the process leading to an unprecedented disruption in most industry sectors (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020; Seetharaman, 2020). However, in spite of the negativities, online shopping is seeing unprecedented growth during the times of COVID-19 (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). A study by Kim (2020a) on the impact on COVID-19 on consumers indicated that a decent percentage (37%) of US adults have seriously considered to transition towards e-commerce and online shopping mode since the outbreak of the pandemic. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020, 52% of the global consumers have started avoiding retail stores and crowded areas, with 32% avoiding the traditional brick-and-mortar stores till they receive vaccination (Bhatti et al., 2020). As a result, the impact of e-commerce has significantly gone up during this time. Additionally, since online shopping and e-commerce denoted a relatively safe mode of shopping during the pandemic, this trend is likely to continue in the post-pandemic times, with the online shopping experience likely to be more positive in nature (Kim 2020b; Lin & Lekhawipat, 2014).

Therefore, the Post-COVID-19 world will require a lot of looking into the pre-COVID-19 traditional business practices. Even the emerging trends of e-commerce in the last decade ending 2020 will require looking into from different periscope. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the consumer shift from traditional brick-and-mortar models to e-commerce platforms. This has prompted the managers to devise innovative techniques to facilitate the interactions between the consumers and firms (Tran, 2021). The trend exhibits that the same will be the case post-pandemic future. Furthermore, it is expected that the organizations would significantly change the way organizations look at their online businesses, including the traditionally offline ones – from strategic investments to redesigning of their supply chains, including last-mile delivery and reverse logistics.

The Special Issue addresses the issues related to e-commerce during the post-pandemic of COVID-19. With the global pandemic significantly changing the face of how businesses and consumers operate, it has become imperative to discuss and disseminate information regarding how organizations function in this new normal era, thereby contributing to the iteration in e-commerce. The special issues try to capture a broad spectrum of themes associated with the topic – ranging from the role of digital markets and apps in effectively serving consumer needs to the role of blockchain technology in addressing the issues faced in the new normal times. The studies also offer a mix of qualitative and quantitative approach towards understanding the concept.

## BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ACCEPTED PAPERS

The first paper, titled “How Do Digital Market Platform Hosts Exercise Control Over Sellers? Digital Market Platform Sellers Control”, discusses how digital markets hosts exercise control over sellers. In this paper, the authors, through analyzing three case studies, proposes that similar to controllers in other contexts, digital market hosts do utilize a mix of formal and informal control mechanisms, yet their seller control portfolios also differ importantly from control portfolios in other contexts. This paper, along with presenting the finding from the three case studies, also consider questions arising from the findings, and provides a useful foundation for further research which can consider why digital markets entail challenges that give rise to novel control portfolios.

In the second paper, which is titled “Promoting SMEs in Pacific Island Countries Through Effective Marketing Strategies: A Systematic Literature Review and a Future Research Agenda”, the authors conduct one of the first systematic review of the different marketing strategies used for promoting SMEs in Pacific Island Countries (PICs). Literature published in high-ranked management journals was reviewed in this area using PRISMA guidelines published between 2000 to 2020. The study identifies three major marketing communication strategies useful for SMEs in the PICs: digital marketing strategies, market orientation strategies and experience based marketing strategies. Further, this study includes a detailed future research agenda under these three major themes.

During the lockdown, e-commerce firms expanded at a breakneck rate. Thus, it became crucial for e-commerce companies to analyze the buying behavior pattern of e-consumers during this phase. Third paper, titled “Antecedents of Buying Behavior Patterns of E-Consumers: Lessons Learnt From the COVID-19 Pandemic”, analyzes the changing buying behavior of consumers towards online shopping. The proposed model represents the buying behavior pattern of e-consumers during COVID-19 pandemic which may help e-commerce companies to acquire new consumers and retain the existing ones.

The fourth paper, titled “Impact of Interactivity on Bookkeeping Application Adoption Intention in the New Normal: A Consumption Values Perspective”, aims to examine the effects of interactivity on users’ adoption intention via perceived consumption values in the bookkeeping application context after post-pandemic. The study also investigates the moderating effect of users’ involvement on the association between interactivity and perceived values. The results indicated that application interactivity enhances users’ perceived consumption values (functional, emotional, social, conditional, and epistemic), in turn adoption intention. Moreover, users’ involvement positively moderates that association between application interactivity and consumption values. The findings of the study suggest bookkeeping application service providers that which specific interactivity features they should emphasize for enhancing users’ adoption intention. The study enriches interactivity, consumption values, and users’ behavioral intention literature.

The global pandemic of COVID-19, coupled with social distancing and minimal contacts, has instilled a lot of apprehension among the consumers even regarding online purchases, the fifth paper, titled “Fear of Coronavirus on Continuance Intention to Use Food Delivery Apps”, tries to shed some light on this issue. The objective of this research is to explore the determinants impacting the Indian consumers’ continuance intention (CI) to use food delivery app (FDA) during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study develops a conceptual framework which integrates technology acceptance model (TAM) and expectation confirmation model (ECM), with fear of Coronavirus (FOC) and health anxiety (HA). The findings of the study revealed that FOC is the most significant determinant, and HA, satisfaction (SAT), perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU) and confirmation (CON) have significant impact (directly/indirectly) on users’ CI to use FDAs at the time of Coronavirus pandemic. The new normal which includes social distancing, self-protection etc. has created new buying habits. The policymakers, start-ups etc. can gain considerable insights from this research.

The sixth paper, titled “Blockchain Technology in Fashion Industry: Virtual Proximity to Business”, illustrates an overview of how big data is transforming the service industry, especially the fashion and design sector, (ii) to present various mechanisms adopted in the service industry. The study aims to investigate a model that fits through EXT-TAM and uses additional attributes of Blockchain Technology with a special reference to fashion apparel. The findings of this study depict

a model, where perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, and attitude are the major constructs and present a win-win scenario for both the customer and the organization.

The seventh and the final paper in the special issue discusses the role of blockchain in online purchase. The paper is titled “Purchase Behavior of Generation Z for New-Brand Beauty Products: Exploring the Role of Blockchain”, and the purpose of this study is to explore how the purchase behaviour of generation Z consumers is impacted in buying non-branded beauty products when it is authenticated through blockchain technology. Using qualitative study procedures, the authors explored the challenges faced by generation Z consumers while purchasing beauty products online and how blockchain can possibly address the issues. The findings of the study reveal that Generation Z consumers don’t feel competent enough to purchase non-branded goods online in the absence of extrinsic motivations. Also, consumers are expected to buy non-branded beauty products through e-commerce portals if the authenticity of the complete product details can be traced and verified using blockchain mechanisms.

## **RESEARCH WAY FORWARD**

The special issue paves the way forward for researchers working in understanding the dynamic nature of e-commerce platforms. While the shift of businesses on e-commerce platforms was rapid during COVID 19, the post COVID era gives firms time to invest in resources- both tactical and technological. The new normal for e-commerce platforms and businesses would be to use and exploit technologies like blockchain, big data analytics and artificial intelligence. On the other hand, the consumers are have adapted to the culture of technology advancements. The gradual yet permanent shift has made them technologically more mature. The Special Issue also emphasizes that it is important to answer three critical questions in the post COVID 19 era.

**RQ 1:** How can consumers be made accustomed with new age technology to get a seamless service experience?

**RQ 2:** What strategies are adopted by e-marketplaces to understand the reformed preferences of consumers in order to improve consumer satisfaction and customer loyalty?

**RQ 3:** How can digital platforms be redesigned to match the new expectations of consumers?

To answer these questions, the future studies need to understand and practice the principles of Whetten (1989) in understanding the process and transition. The change needs to be understood using longitudinal data and action research. The future also lies in exploring analytical and multi-theoretical perspectives of e-marketplaces in the near future.

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*Journal of Electronic Commerce in Organizations (JECO)*