
Guest editorial: The new age of retailing: rethink, reconnect, revive

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This special issue presents a collection of outstanding papers presented at the 7th Colloquium on European Research in Retailing (CERR). During this event, scholars discussed the challenges of digitalization for all aspects of retailing including marketing, distribution channels, operations and consumer behavior.

The colloquium was held in Zagreb (Croatia) on September 8 to 10, hosted by the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Zagreb and organized by Dr Kristina Petljak together with the CERR Advisory Board: Xavier Brusset (Director of the Center for Analytics and Management Science, Skema Business School), Marta Frassetto (Department of Marketing and Market Research), Herbert Kotzab (Director of the Crowley Center for Transportation and Logistics, University of North Florida) and Christoph Teller (Institute of Retailing, Sales and Marketing, Johannes Kepler University).

In total, 43 papers were presented at the 7th Colloquium, ranging from shopper behavior to innovation and technology in retailing to international/global retailing to multi-/omni-channel marketing and operations. Retail researchers from 12 countries presented their cutting-edge research at this event.

Since the first CERR in 2012, CERR and the *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management (IJRDM)* have collaborated to publish outstanding papers from the various editions of the colloquium. We are very grateful for the collaboration with the *IJRDM*, which ensures that the CERR community can disseminate its ideas to the global academic community in retail research. A special thanks goes to its Editor in Chief, Professor Neil Towers, who has been an unwavering supporter of CERR since its inception.

With this special issue, we certainly hope to contribute towards further expanding the high scientific standing of both the CERR and the *IJRDM*. This special issue includes the 15 best papers that deal with the transformation of retail channels in the digital era. The papers can be grouped into four different topics: (1) (online) shopper/consumer behavior, (2) digitalization in retailing, (3) online shopping experience and (4) sustainable retail operations.

The four papers in the (online) shopper/consumer behavior cluster cover a wide range of topics, from the dynamics of experiential stores and motivations in luxury fashion retailing to the implementation of health and safety policies and the impact of product information failures in mobile shopping.

In their paper “Reviving the experiential store: the effect of scarcity and perceived novelty in driving word-of-mouth”, Denise Pape and Waldemar Toporowski address the critical link between experiential stores, perceived novelty and word-of-mouth (WoM) generation. By emphasizing the role of scarce products, the research highlights their potential to enhance the novelty aspect of experiential stores, thereby fostering positive WoM outcomes. Furthermore, the inclusion of Need for Uniqueness (NFU) as a personality variable reveals a communication dilemma in which high NFU individuals engage more in electronic WoM but less in interpersonal WoM, depending on specific circumstances.

The paper “Why buy used? Motivators and barriers for re-commerce luxury fashion” by Karun Tangri and Hong Yu provides insights into consumer behavior related to re-commerce in the luxury fashion sector by introducing motivators and barriers that have not been extensively studied. Their study shows that economic reasons, originality and self-extension significantly motivate positive attitudes toward re-commerce. Interestingly, superstitious beliefs also emerge as a statistically significant motivator.



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Megan Phillips and Jessica Vredenburg discuss how retailers can implement effective health and safety policies in the future in their paper “Hygiene theater: an important risk reduction signal for the future of retailing”. The study shows that the positive effects of hygiene theater can be diluted in crowded retail environments and reveals a positive and direct impact of hygiene visibility on approach responses, attributed to reduced perceived risk and increased psychological comfort as society navigates the new normal.

The paper “Product Information Failures (PIFs) on websites and their impact on mobile shopping behavior” by Sarah Amsl, Iain Watson, Christoph Teller and Steve Wood addresses the negative consequences of inaccurate product information on retail websites, with a particular focus on the mobile commerce channel. The paper also examines the impact of the cause and duration of a PIF, changes in expectations of the retailer following a PIF and how prior mobile shopping experience influences the impact of PIFs. The results show that the perceived severity of PIFs is higher when key information is missing, and PIFs attributed to the retailer lead to higher recovery expectations. In addition, experienced mobile shoppers perceive PIFs as less severe than inexperienced shoppers.

The papers within the “Digitalization in Retailing” cluster explore various facets of digitalization in the retail sector, covering topics such as consumer behavior, technology integration and retail strategies.

In their paper “Aspects driving customers’ intention to use automated purchasing processes”, Jan-Lukas Selter, Anne Fota, Katja Wagner and Hanna Schramm-Klein explore the underutilization of smart devices in private households. Their findings reveal a declining usage intention for automated shopping processes, with trust and behavioral control mediating the impact of automation on intention to use. The results also show the significant importance of trust and behavioral control in establishing automated shopping processes and highlight the role of inherent novelty seeking as a moderating factor.

Ana Valeria Calvo, Ana Dolores Franco and Marta Frasset, in their paper “The role of artificial intelligence in improving the omnichannel customer experience”, provide insights into the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) systems on the omnichannel customer experience (OCE). The results show that the implementation of AI systems in the omnichannel experience influences the relevance of certain OCE dimensions such as personalization, consistency and flexibility, which are understood as experiential elements of OCE. In addition, dimensions such as integration and connectivity are perceived as internal retailer capabilities that support the omnichannel strategy.

In their paper, “Self-recovery after self-service technology failures: do motivations and self-efficacy matter?”, Yen Ting Chiu, Dung Minh Nguyen and Katharina Maria Hofer provide valuable insights for retailers to develop effective strategies to promote self-recovery among retail kiosk users, who have experienced self-service technology (SST) failures. Their findings highlight the direct impact of intrinsic motivation and identified regulation on self-recovery intention, with external regulation influencing intention through attitude. Furthermore, the study shows that the relationship between intrinsic motivation and self-recovery intention is moderated by self-efficacy.

Five papers in the online shopping experience cluster explore the complex dynamics between technology, consumer behavior and retail strategies.

The paper “Presenting products on websites – the importance of information quality criteria for online shoppers” by Sarah Amsl, Ian Watson, Christoph Teller and Steve Wood makes a significant contribution to understanding the success of online retail success. Their research underscores the critical role of product information quality (PIQ) in shaping consumer purchase decisions and retailer sales by identifying quantifiable PIQ criteria, assessing their effects and evaluating the moderating role of product involvement.

Theresia Mennekes, Tobias Röding, Gerhard Wagner and Hanna Schramm-Klein examine in their paper “Do customers evaluate the competence of SME retailers and retail

chains differently in the context of online product presentations?” how consumers perceive quality differences within online product presentations in shopping platforms, especially between retail chains and SME retailers. Their results show that customers are more forgiving of inaccuracies from retail chains than from SME retailers, and the perceived competence of the retailer mediates the impact of quality on consumers’ purchase intentions.

In “The design of retailers’ online review systems – a systematic literature review and future research agenda,” Doan Thao Tram Pham, Sascha Steinmann and Birger Jensen present a welcome first comprehensive review of the current literature on online reviews. They identify eight design features of online review systems that retailers can control and that have received varying degrees of attention in the existing literature. In particular, the paper highlights the need to further explore the interactions between these design features, as they represent a critical gap to be explored in future research.

Simone Aiolfi explores the perception and intention to use voice-activated smart speakers among actual and potential users in the paper titled “How shopping habits change with artificial intelligence: smart speakers’ usage intention.” This research shows that users’ positive attitudes and intentions to use smart speakers are influenced by the perceived usefulness and ease of use, task technology fit and perceived enjoyment, shedding light on both the utilitarian and hedonic benefits associated with these devices.

Karine Picot-Coupey, Younes Bouragba, Isabelle Collin Lachaud, Martina Gallarza and Yacine Ouazzani, in their paper “Live Streaming Shopping (LSS) as a new retail format”, explore the characteristics of LSS and analyze the motivations of both consumers and retailers for choosing it. Their findings suggest that LSS is a unique, multifaceted, hybrid retail format and touchpoint within an omnichannel strategy, with a distinctive retail mix that sets it apart from other formats. The recent growth of such shopping using both influencers and livestream shopping events, particularly coming from Chinese actors, makes such research particularly welcome.

Sustainable operations

The paper titled “Importance and conditions of effectiveness of CSR communications in franchise networks,” by Hanene Oueslati, Saloua Bennaghmouch-Maire, Martine Deparis and Marie-Catherine Paquier, examines the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication through social media within franchise networks. The findings show that while CSR communication is crucial in franchise networks, its effectiveness depends on several conditions that can enhance credibility and avoid negative effects. Practical implications highlight the complexity of CSR communication in franchise networks, emphasizing the integration of franchisees and understanding customer expectations for successful CSR communication.

In their paper “Measuring consumer perceptions of home-delivery convenience – the case of cargo bikes”, Jean-Eric Pelet, Basma Taieb and Rami Alkhudary address the lack of explicit research on consumer perceptions of the convenience of last-mile delivery via cargo bikes (CB) in the context of e-commerce home delivery (HD). The study identifies four dimensions of HD convenience (time, use, execution and acquisition) and develops the Home-Delivery Convenience via Cargo Bike (HDCCB) scale. This piece is welcome when taking into account the increasing restrictions on combustion engine delivery modes such as vans and motorbikes.

Along the same line, particularly suited to our time, is the study by Roya Tat, Jafar Heydari and Tanja Mlinar titled “Supply chain coordination: Application of consignment and zero wholesale price contracts under customized cap-and-trade and consumers’ environmental awareness”. This article focuses on achieving sustainable coordination of a green supply chain by taking into account government incentives, legislation and consumer

environmental awareness. Using a game-theoretical decision model, the authors propose a consignment and zero wholesale price contracts to establish an optimal sustainability level based on an optimal carbon credit system. This approach results in a Pareto improvement for both channel members, increasing profits while also promoting sustainability and reducing carbon emission credit requirements.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who have been instrumental in the successful completion of this special issue. This includes the authors for their invaluable contributions, the reviewers who dedicated time and effort to the special issue and the inaugural colloquium for their diligent efforts and constructive feedback. We also extend our appreciation to all those who have contributed to the continued success of CERR.

As the papers presented here illustrate, the evolution of retailing is relentless, reflecting an ever-turning wheel of retailing. In the midst of technological advancements, the fundamental goal of retailing remains the same – to provide consumers with optimal value and an unparalleled shopping experience, with an emphasis on reconnecting with consumers and reviving the link between them and products and their manufacturers. We anticipate that our curated collection of papers will act as a stimulus, motivating fellow researchers to further explore the themes of the new age of retailing outlined in this special issue.

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