Retail Futures

The ubiquitous presence of (mobile) technology has dramatically changed our daily lives and will continue to do so in the future. It has affected many domains of society. Retailing and shopping is no exception. Shifts in shopping behaviour and new technologically driven shopping experiences present new strategic and operational challenges for retail management. However, new technology also generates new opportunities for increasing profits and/or improving service delivery. The availability of person(al) information creates a new playing field for the interaction between retailers and their customers.

Despite the recent interest of academia in the potential and problems of new technology in retailing and shopping behaviour, current knowledge is still limited and highly fragmented. This book, with contributions from leading, mainly European, scholars on this topic is a timely and welcome addition to the literature which reduces the gap in our knowledge. Particularly interesting are the thought-provoking chapters on the future of retailing and new ethical issues that emerge.

I think this book is critical reading for everyone interested in retailing and technology. The balance between theory, empirical findings, showcases and reflection makes it a highly valuable source of information for academics and practitioners alike.

Professor Soora Rasouli, Co-editor Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Professor of Urban Planning, Technical University of Eindhoven

This book is a timely, invaluable resource for academic researchers, students and practitioners trying to come to terms with rapid changes in the retail technological landscape. Writing about future technology is notoriously difficult and material becomes dated very quickly, but this book navigates the reader confidently through the minefield with case studies and evidence-based evaluations of technological progress and consumer responses. This book is an excellent contribution to contemporary thinking and presents a coherent, convincing exposition of how technology is changing the world of retailing and shopper behaviour. It has an accessible style that makes it a good read for the general as well as the specialist reader. I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in how technological changes will affect retailing and shopping.

Professor Charles Dennis, Professor of Consumer Behaviour, Departmental Research Leader, Middlesex University London

Retail Futures: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of the Digital Transformation

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To Matteo

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Preface

For decades, we tried to imagine the future of retailing from different points-of-view. In 2001, for the movie *Minority Report,* Steven Spielberg (in cooperation with MIT) imagined a new store where the shopping assistants were only virtual on virtual assistants (replacing human employees with avatars). In which scenario, they recognized each consumer through the retina scanner and suggested new products to buy accordingly. More recently, in 2017 James Patterson hypothesized 'The Store' (The Store, Random House) as an online retail giant able to control the life of American consumers, by influencing not just their preferences as customers but also those in their private lives.

More realistically, scholars predicted the future of retailing as the consequence of massive developments in technology (Grewal, Noble, Roggeveen, & Nordfalt, 2020; Inman & Nikolova, 2017; Pantano, Priporas, & Stylos, 2018), increasing usage of big data analytics (Bradlow et al., 2017), artificial intelligence (Davenport, Guha, Grewal, & Bressgott, 2020; Shankar, 2018) and changes in the retail services (Tezuka, Nada, Yamasaki, & Kuroda, 2019; Wirtz et al., 2018). Conversely, other authors tried to understand the extent to which we (as consumers) are willing to accept and use these technologies (Bertacchini et al., 2017; De Bellis & Johar, 2020; Evanschitzky, Iyer, Kenning, & Schutte, 2015), and the extent to which retailers are able to adopt them to create more pleasant and rewarding shopping experiences (Pantano & Vannucci, 2019; Van de Sanden, Willems, & Brengman, 2019).

However, studies only provide a fragmented understanding of the theory basis and practice for providing a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon. Thus, the following questions are still open:

(1) *How will we shop in the future?*
(2) *What are the challenges of competing in the new scenario?*
(3) *What should we expect from consumers and retailers point of view?*

The aim of this book is to provide new approaches to retailing prompted by the increasing impact of technology and innovation. This is carried out in order to support scholars, students and practitioners to take advantages from the technology-based innovations through a more comprehensive perspective. To this end, this book provides a strong collection of theories, empirical evidence and

case study applications synthesizing the emerging studies on the innovation and technology management for retailing.

In particular, this book is organized in four main sections: (1) theoretical and technological background; (2) changes in retail management and strategies; (3) changes in consumer experience, behaviour and decision-making and (4) future challenges and direction. The first section includes three chapters investigating how technology supports retailers, the increasing adoption of robots for delivering retail services and the technology currently in use in retailing agglomerations. The second section comprises four chapters on how the technology changes retail management and strategy by focussing on digital signage, frontlines' role, responses to fake reviews and on the shift towards the omnichannel retailing. The third section embraces three chapters on changes in consumer behaviour, by investigating the extent to which the new technologies changed the online shopping behaviour, the e-retail experiences and the decision-making process. Finally, the fourth section includes three chapters on the consequences of artificial intelligence adoption in retail services, with emphasis on the ethical challenges and privacy concerns.

This collection of chapters does not expect to be exhaustive. Instead, it provides a foundation for your critical reflection and investigation of the phenomenon. It also provides some useful tools to better understand the emerging complexity within the retail sector. Tools that hopefully help you begin to answer two broad questions. What will the future of retail look like? And more importantly, is it a future you are comfortable with?

Enjoy reading

Eleonora Pantano

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