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Article

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RETAIL INNOVATION TECHNOLOGIES

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Commerce, as an important industry of any national economy, is a socially important complex of activities, which has to correspond to the general level of development and civilization of the community it serves. Considering this, the essential priorities commercial activity will turn to are represented by the increased power that consumers get through better informing, the assurance of a better connection between retail and innovation, more equitable and sustainable commercial relationships along the purchase chain, the improvement of retail services accessibility, the creation of a better work environment through the better correlation between employers' needs and employers' competences.

Retail is permanently adapting to the changing market conditions, remaining a high competitive sector. Modern buyer is hurried, more mobile, better informed; more concerned about health, environment, comfort and aesthetics issues, more demanding in terms of quality and level of customization. Population migration, urbanization, and ageing, its absolute decrease, the average households size reduction, are all demographic trends to which retail must provide an appropriate answer. Retail businesses operating costs tend to increase, while buyers are warier under the impact of the global financial crisis, which will put additional pressure on profit margins.

In these circumstances, innovation rising becomes, for retail companies too, the main lever to increase competitiveness. New store formats, new types of commercial technologies, new ways of selling, and new market strategies are emerging.

In the current climate, dominated by the ascending trends of entities activating in retail, competition, change within structural coordinates and of customers' exigencies regarding quality and opportunity, the technologies become an important tool for competitiveness growth. Hence, the article *Innovative information technologies and their impact on the performance of the entities which activate in the retail industry*, identifies the benefits (technical, economic, organizational and social) attained by those companies that effect their activities based on information technologies such as: computer networks, online sales, prices comparators, targeted online commercials.

The success of shopping centers depends on the degree to which they succeed in creating positive, unique and strong connections in consumers' mind, whom first will be determined to visit them, then to purchase from the shops inside and, in the end, to become loyal customers. The authors of the article *The relationship among image, satisfaction and loyalty – innovative factor of competitiveness for shopping centers*, bring to foreground the impact of innovative leverages used by commercial centers to frame in buyers' minds not just a favorable image (cognitive faithfulness), but also satisfaction (emotional faithfulness), individuals' intention to suggest and repurchase (conative faithfulness) and, finally revisit and repurchase (behavioral faithfulness).

The progress made by the information technologies and communication induced significant changes in buyers' shopping behavior who want to simultaneously use online and offline channels within the same shopping experience. The QR code (Quick Response) is one of the emerging technologies which can be implemented in commerce to adapt it to these changes. The authors of the article *Enhancing the shopping experience through QR codes: the perspective of Romanian users*, present the applicability and usefulness perceived by the users of this new technology (QR) which allows fast information transmission through mobile devices and users' access, at the right moment, to relevant and useful content within the shopping decision-making process.

The role of atmosphere in buying process develops and increases all the more as the qualitative differences between the purchased and consumed products are smaller. The use of innovating technologies to create the atmosphere during purchase process is focused, mainly, on the impact that a set of stimuli has on the shop's atmosphere, hence influencing consumer's behavior. Among the best known innovation technologies are: lights and colors used, volume and rhythm of music, perception of smell linked with shop's atmosphere. The paper *Consumers' perception on the use of innovative technologies in creating store atmosphere*, identifies the advantages of implementing innovative technologies within shops' ambiance and allows, thus, the understanding of the opportunity that such an investment provides in transforming shops in places that combine the useful (purchasing act) and the pleasant (entertainment, the shop as a show).

In terms of consumers' requirements, the innovation in clothes retail is critical for assuring the competitive advantage on a dynamic market. The purpose of the article *Innovation in retail: impact on creating a positive experience when buying fashion products*, is to underline the role of innovation in creating pleasant shopping experiences for apparel, footwear and accessories buyers, emphasizing: Internet and new information technologies impact on fashion products buyers; identification of positive and negative factors which influence gaining a pleasant shopping experience; consumers' tendency to inform themselves and communicate, on social networks, their opinions and experiences related to fashion products purchasing; knowledge of those reasons that form the foundation purchasing of apparel, footwear and accessories is based on as well as framing the profile of the ideal selling counselor in the fashion industry.

Considering consumers' exposure to a wide range of products, prices and promotional actions, the use of retail technologies allows an easy processing of information needed for the purchasing process, thus generating the improvement of consumption experience and saving the time allocated for acquisition. Therefore, the implementation of commercial/trade technologies in hypermarkets results in high level services provided to consumers, with a positive impact on sales volume, business profitability and corporate image. The research described in the paper *The impact of innovative commercial technologies on an economic university students' behavior*, is based on the premise that youth display a more pronounced tendency to use personal verification systems during shopping in supermarkets, and that students enrolled in economic universities are more aware of the importance and impact that modern technologies have on organizations' economic performance. Consequently, the paper uses the perspective of marketing research to approach the attitudes of Bucharest University of Economic Studies students towards the adoption of commercial innovative technologies in Romanian supermarkets and the influence of new technologies upon the intentional buying behavior.

The paper *Applying RFID technology in the retail industry – benefits and concerns from consumer's perspective*, provides a balanced view of RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) in retail, by introducing present and potential benefits and costs. The authors present the results of a survey which examined Hungarian consumers' attitude towards the potential threats of RFID and conclude that these attitudes are part of a psychological construct, summarizing the opinions and attitudes in respect to a general view of new information and communication technologies. The paper suggests a solution to the privacy problem of the currently used RFID applications, solution developed by the researchers from IoT Research Institute, Eszterházy Károly College in Hungary.

In the paper *Revival of high street retailing – the added value of shopping apps*, the authors emphasize the advantages of an innovative application that aims to establish a connection between e-commerce and commerce in physical stores, by the means of an on-line platform (a website) and a smartphone application. The purpose of the platform is to enhance the shopping experience of local stores customers, by bringing the stores located in the downtown or on the main commercial streets closer to smartphones and tablet PCs users.

The research results in the paper *Determinants of technology adoption in the retail trade industry - the case of SMEs in Spain*, indicate that the acquisition of technical and electronic equipment, as well as the development of new software is affected by two types of factors: manager's/owner's personal characteristics and business organizational characteristics. The authors conclude that the entrepreneurial motivation and manager's/owner's education, along with the development of employees' training activities and inter-company cooperation have a significant influence on the adoption of retail technologies.

Given the increasingly tough competition, retailers do their best to meet customers' needs as efficiently as possible. By increasing the degree of products availability, they enhance services quality, which is reflected positively not only in sales growth, but also in increased customer satisfaction. Otherwise, the problem of stockouts arises, which affects not only the consumers, but also retailers and their suppliers. Taking into consideration the fact that the reasons behind this situation usually occur within the last stages of supply chain, the paper *The effect of backroom size on retail product availability – operational and technological solutions*, investigates the effect of storehouse size on product availability, depending on the type of retail activity.

The study *Innovative solutions in traceability to improve the competitiveness of a local fruit and vegetable retailing system*, explores the information circuit among members of supply chain: producers, wholesalers, retailers and consumers. The authors investigate local distribution network of fruits and vegetables, to expose those processes hidden within traceability and to suggest innovations in retail system to improve its competitiveness.

In the current economic environment, characterized by fierce competition among market operators, in the context of globalization and expansion of large commercial networks, performing a modern trade which is also adapted to consumers' needs requires knowledge and use of the most efficient retail technologies.

Editor in Chief,

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