

Chapter 7

The Mediating Role of E-Consumer Informedness Between Digital Usability and Responsible E-Shopping: Post-COVID-19 Period

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to understand how pro-responsible e-shopping behaviour proceeded during the COVID-19 pandemic. Structural equation modelling is used in the study. A field survey with 618 e-shoppers is performed to test the survey model and hypotheses. In addition, complementary studies on mediating and moderating effects are employed. The results show interesting and important findings. The conceptual model is validated, where the mediating role of e-consumer informedness is highlighted between digital usability and responsible e-shopping, considering the specific context of COVID-19. In addition, the results of the control variables show mediating effects of income and age on the model trajectories. The chapter presents an original model that examines the relationship between digital usability, e-consumer informedness, and responsible e-shopping. In addition, the research considers a disruptive context like COVID-19 time, thus emphasizing the importance of contextual factors in sustainable procurement, where e-consumer informedness plays a prominent role.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-8574-3.ch007

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 is an infectious disease that emerged in China in December 2019 and quickly spread to other countries. It is already considered one of the global health challenges of the century (Barreto *et al.*, 2020). The strategies most relevant to stopping the spread of the virus were social isolation and restrictions on movement (Croda *et al.*, 2020).

Despite being a public health problem, the social, economic, cultural, and political impacts were incalculable. The pandemic is already considered a black swan event due to its surprising and unpredictable character and represents one of the most significant changes in the history of modern marketing (He & Harris, 2020; Winston, 2020).

In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic initiated an intense and rapid digital transformation of society (Iivari *et al.*, 2020), employing a profound and drastic lifestyle change, so the change in consumption habits is not surprising (Croda *et al.*, 2020; Pantano *et al.*, 2020; Sheth, 2020). Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic is also considered one of the most significant environmental changes in the history of modern marketing (He & Harris, 2020). But a dramatic shift in digital usage is anticipated (De *et al.*, 2020), including the risk of fraud and misuse of data in e-commerce transactions (Cruz-Cárdenas *et al.*, 2021) and irrational consumer behavior, especially when they perceive the possibility of scarcity (buying and accumulating supplies) (Yue-Qian *et al.*, 2021) because compulsive buying is usually associated with negative feelings (anxiety, stress, depression, low self-esteem, and high levels of materialism) (Tarka & Kukar-Kinney, 2022).

In fact, with digitization, there is a need for a reconceptualization of consumerism to improve consumer behavior (Kucuk, 2016). According to Sheth (2020), consumption is a habit that is highly related to a context. The Covid-19 pandemic was a specific context which had notable social and economic implications, with the crisis scenario forcibly changing consumer behaviour. This pandemic directly and indirectly affected lifestyles, purchasing power, desires, and general consumption of goods and services (Lato *et al.*, 2020; Mehta *et al.*, 2020; Sheth, 2020).

Therefore, research about the possible outcomes of the pandemic on digital consumption patterns is relevant to the study (Sağkaya & Ozansoy, 2022). Because the ongoing uncertainty caused by the pandemic can lead to transformative consumption patterns in the long term, mainly due to the massive and intense adoption of digital technology (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020; Sheth, 2020). Thus, the present research sheds new light on how pro-responsible e-shopping behavior proceeded during the covid 19 pandemic. Unfortunately, panic buying behavior was a reality during this period (Alfuqaha *et al.*, 2022), which may have led to excess consumption to accumulate the reserve of goods (Yue-Qian *et al.*, 2021), thus contributing to consumerism. Moreover, a pandemic like Covid19 can increase or decrease demand for specific products. Consequently, a realistic estimation of final customer demand becomes more difficult and more urgent to solve (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). Therefore, in the context of sustainability, there is especially an urgent need to explore how consumers have responded during the pandemic period (He & Harris, 2020).

To do so, this paper presents a literature review, hypotheses formulation, and research model. Then, in the methodology, the description of the sample, measurement scales, and statistical analysis are presented. The results show the main findings of the research, and conclusions refer to implications for the academy and practice.

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