# Guest editorial: Building resilience in retail for the post COVID world – marketing and operations perspectives

This special issue features a selection of the best papers presented at the 6th Colloquium on European Research in Retailing (CERR), where academics discussed the challenges retailers faced in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic and the aftermath of the numerous disruptions. The Colloquium took place at the Sophia Antipolis campus, near Nice, of the SKEMA Business School on July 15th to July 17th and was chaired by Prof. Xavier Brusset together with Professor Marta Frasquet from Valencia University. At this edition of the Colloquium, as it took place less than a year after the preceding one in Valencia, expectations about the number of submissions were low. Yet, perhaps because participants were spurred by the possibility of meeting in person or because the topic was enticing, 53 papers were presented over two days, covering a wide array of retailing topics relevant to professionals and academics. Austrians and French academics were present on site in numbers and quality. As this was a hybrid event, slightly more than half of the participants were following or presenting their work online.

The turmoil that has followed the pandemic has brought on a considerable number of changes in consumers' and retailers' attitudes and behaviours. New trends have been started, new retail formats and new services have been invented. Traditional visions of consumer attitudes about how, what and where to buy have had to be discarded or completely revisited. Retailers who understood how to transform themselves and were agile enough to do so have been able to prosper. On one hand, such trends as consumer adoption of the mobile channel, the search for environmentally safe products and services have all been exacerbated over the last two years. On the other hand, the new needs and the disruptions in the supply chains able to provide for them have led to extensive inventory problems throughout the retail industry, from garments, to cars, to electronic products and food.

In this special issue, the articles can be separated into three major areas. In the first, scholars looked into the changing nature of consumers' attitudes towards retail. The research is of an observatory nature and tries to understand the changing consumption patterns and the emergence of the mobile channel (or m-channel). In Azuma *et al.* (2022), UNIQLO's strategy to aggregate disparate consumer segments so as to hold onto a large slide of the "big-middle" retail market. Bezes (2022) shows how the image of the retailer and its online and mobile channels all contribute to the overall customer satisfaction, especially if the images of all channels are congruent. Risberg and Jafari (2022) find that the sales mix between channels influences the last-mile delivery practices and consumer experience. In particular, retail chains with large physical stores offering remote services in some way are competing with their own network.

In the second, the focus of study is mobile shopping. Since this new channel became of age, retailers have been trying to harness its power. In this category, we find a study into the motivations behind mobile shopping (De Canio *et al.*, 2022). Another looks into the way a mobile app can enhance perceived shopping value (Flacandji and Vlad, 2022). As a way to showcase products, show rooming has its smartphone-addict fans as shown in Chimborazo-

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Azogue *et al.* (2022). In Sinemus and Zielke (2022), the perceived usefulness of an app will increase if online and off-line incentives are combined.

The third investigates the emergence of how best to enhance omnichannel experience and performance. Augmented Reality is viewed as an enhancing decision-making quality in consumers in Sengupta and Cao (2022). Even as the pandemic was changing consumer behaviour, experiments in various strategies still invariably show that delivery and customer service issues are single most important factors influencing consumer satisfaction (Cocco and De Juan-Vigaray, 2022). Eriksson *et al.* (2022), presents the dynamic capabilities needed to achieve true omnichannel performance by type of good, with a special emphasis on groceries. In the same way, Mrutzek-Hartmann *et al.* (2022) finds that specific bundles of transformation resources and capabilities will condition the success of omnichannel strategies. Salvietti *et al.* (2022) builds upon previous literature in omnichannel retailing to present a research agenda and a framework synthetising the theoretical foundations of omnichannel retail.

One contribution escapes easy classification. Robertson *et al.* (2022) explains how digitally mature small- and medium-sized enterprises will exhibit organisational resilience in particular with regard to their specific position in the market and the corresponding management of their vulnerabilities.

In conclusion, these contributions show that retail management has yet to find the best ways to resolve the challenges posed by the pandemic and at the same time the wide range of topics with which both researchers and practitioners are grappling. The findings are both far-reaching and fragmentary. They show in-depth understanding of the issues faced by retailers but also how further effort is required to make such niche findings applicable to wider settings. It is encouraging to see that scholars and practitioners are working hand in hand towards building higher resilience and better understanding of consumer expectations in terms of service. The research reported in this issue shows how fast research is able to address known challenges, even if in a fragmentary way. It is expected to do as well as new challenges surface. We have yet to devise ways to understand or better prepare for the unknown challenges: the unknown unknowns.

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**About the author**

Xavier Brusset holds a PhD in Management Science from the Louvain Catholic University and a Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches from Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense university. He has been teaching logistics and supply chain management at the Toulouse Business School, ESSCA and now SKEMA since 2009. His research focusses on the relationship between the supply chain partners and the impact of information on their behaviour. He studies the influence of abnormal weather on consumer sales, and the possible uses of Blockchain in the supply chain. His findings have been published in academic journals. He edited and co-authored a textbook about business cases in distribution as well as contributed chapters in scholarly books. Previously, Xavier also worked in financial markets and created in Argentina a web-based platform of information sharing and logistic services between shippers and carriers (WebLogistix). Every year, he organises or co-organises a Colloquium on European Research in Retailing (CERR). He is a recognised expert assessing the European Union in its research project funding. He is on the editorial board of the journal *Logistics Research*.

Xavier Brusset a un doctorat en sciences de gestion de l'université catholique de Louvain et une Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches (HDR) de l'université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense. Il enseigne la logistique et le supply chain management depuis 2009 d'abord à l'ESSCA, puis à Toulouse Business School et maintenant à SKEMA. Sa recherche est centrée sur l'étude des relations entre partenaires de la supply chain, l'influence de l'asymétrie d'informations et leurs comportements. Il étudie d'une part l'influence de la météo sur les ventes de produits et services, et d'autre part l'utilisation de la Blockchain dans les supply chains. Ses recherches ont fait l'objet de publications dans des revues scientifiques internationalement reconnues. Il a édité et co-écrit un manuel de cas en distribution et a aussi contribué à des ouvrages académiques avec des chaptitres. Tous les ans, il organise ou co-organise un Colloque Européen sur la Recherche en Distribution (Retailing). Il est expert près la commission européenne pour l'évaluation des projets de recherches européens. Il siège au comité éditorial de la revue Logistics Research.