

MANAGING E-COMMERCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS

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***Abstract:** For years, the question we are asking every day, how we can encourage the faster development of Internet commerce? In early 2020, we got the answer: a global pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Large and small entrepreneurs are now mainly focused on sales through web stores and digital channels where they record an increasing number of customers every day. The initiative's work focuses on seven areas identified as critical to e-commerce's development: E-commerce strategy; ICT infrastructure; Payment solutions; Trade logistics and facilitation; Legal frameworks; Skills development; Financing SMEs. Countries should redouble their efforts in these areas to turn the digital opportunities brought by the pandemic into development gains. Although the situation is far from perfect, which is expected in extraordinary conditions like these, e-commerce has continued to grow very noticeably since the beginning of the pandemic and is growing faster.*

***Keywords:** E-commerce, SARS-CoV-2 virus, security*

INTRODUCTION

The Internet and modern information and communication technologies (ICT) have greatly changed the way organizations conduct their daily business. They are an unavoidable element in all aspects of life (education, education, entertainment, etc.). They are also an extremely important factor for e-commerce and e-commerce development. It is impossible to imagine modern e-commerce without the Internet and ICT (Karabasevic et al., 2021; Jaukovic Jovic et al., 2020a; Sijakovic & Vukotic,

2020; Jaukovic Jovic et al., 2020b; Stanujkic & Karabasevic, 2018; Karabasevic et al., 2018).

Global pandemics have marked the last decades, SARS in 2003, H5N1 in 2006, and H1N1 in 2009, each of which has impacted business activities and economic growth (Chung, 2015). The SARS-CoV-2 virus caused a decline in the Chinese industry by 13.5% of production and a drop in sales by about 20.5% in the first two months of 2020, while the American stock market lost billions of dollars (Pesek, 2020).

Infectious disease pandemics can force business activities into a new reality that seriously affects business. Companies and their management do not have clear instructions on how to respond effectively to the challenge.

As a result of the impact of SARS-CoV-2, consumers have increasingly turned to online shopping; and companies were expected to be innovative in seeking alternative forms of supply that raise interest in facilitation between businesses and consumers.

Previous research has identified the importance of e-commerce platforms that facilitate virtual interactions and include informative and insightful product information (Chandna & Salimath, 2018; Li et al., 2020; Karabašević et al., 2020; Stanujkic et al., 2019) that consumers might see as economic benefits (Zhang et al., 2017). So businesses can increase sales revenue as e-commerce platforms help exploit existing consumers, attract new ones, build social groups, and ensure compatibility with legacy systems (Lee et al., 2018), especially during pandemics (Nielsen, 2020).

SARS-CoV-2 has disrupted and changed companies' business environment due to the reduction of personal contact but has significantly improved digital communication and e-commerce. Rather than a cause for concern, SARS-CoV-2 appears to be a catalyst for the pandemic that testifies to companies' efficiency and how to manage their business activities more sustainably.

E-COMMERCE development

Coronavirus impacts the whole e-commerce world; it has changed the nature of business. According to research, 52% of consumers avoiding to go brick and mortar shopping and crowded areas. Furthermore, 36% avoiding brick and mortar shopping until they get the coronavirus vaccine.

Coronavirus effects different on different products' nature means the impact of COVID-19 on several products is very high and on some product less impact (Andrienko, 2020). The overall sale of e-commerce increases because of this virus (Table 1); people avoid going out, keeping social

distance, and buying from home, working from home. Walmart's e-commerce increases 74%, e.g., the media usage also increased in this time. Facebook and Google update their features to connect more people in a single time, such as Facebook introducing messenger for 44 people competing to Zoom. Similarly, Google also launched an updated version (Davis & Toney, 2020).

Table 1. The top ten retail of e-commerce in a pandemic

Sr. no.	Retail website	Millions
1	Amazon.com	4059M
2	Ebay.com	1227M
3	Rakuten.co.jp	804M
4	Samsung.com	648M
5	Walmart.com	614M
6	Appel.com	562M
7	Aliexpress.com	532M
8	Etsy.com	395M
9	Homedepot.com	292M
10	Allegro.pl	272M

Source: Andrienko, 2020.

Mostly buying products during a pandemic are toilet paper, disposable gloves, freezer, bidet, kettlebells, bread machine, paint by numbers, puzzle, peloton, coloring book, air purifier, treadmill, stationary bike, yoga mat, refrigerator, an exercise ball, and exercise equipment (Andrienko, 2020). E-commerce has increased the buyers in developed countries even in developing countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, and Pakistan. In Pakistan, e-commerce was started in the 2000s but very poor; just 3% of the whole population was buying online (Bhatti, 2018; Bhatti et al., 2018; Bhatti et al., 2019; Rehman, 2018). In the pandemic, it is reported that e-commerce in Pakistan is increasing by 10% in the daily record and 15% rise in internet users. 30-40% surge the demands of products. For quick service, food panda is launched to provide easiness to people. It is good to hope for Pakistan in e-commerce that e-commerce the trend is moving upward (Niazi et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on every aspect of life, including how people shop for their necessities and their not-so-necessities.

With online retail sales estimated to reach an eye-watering \$6.5 trillion by 2023, the e-commerce sector was already booming. But since the

outbreak, online shopping has been catapulted into complete overdrive. Even the largest retailers on the planet are struggling to keep up with the unprecedented consumer demand—but what exactly are people buying?

To answer this question, retail intelligence firm Stackline analyzed e-commerce sales across the U.S. and compiled a list of the fastest growing and declining e-commerce categories (March 2020 vs. March 2019) with surprising results.

Restaurant, travel, and luxury product sales are up to decrease. Healthcare, FMGC, online services, and everyday product sales – increase significantly because people stay at home and load up to make it through the lockdown.

During the 2003 SARS epidemic, China faced serious limitations in traditional sales. It pushed the digitization process. Chinese Alibaba grew 50%. Taobao has become the #1 e-commerce platform in the world. Ever since then, e-commerce has continued growing. COVID-19 pandemic limits offline sales much more, and we expect continuous e-commerce expansion to move even faster.

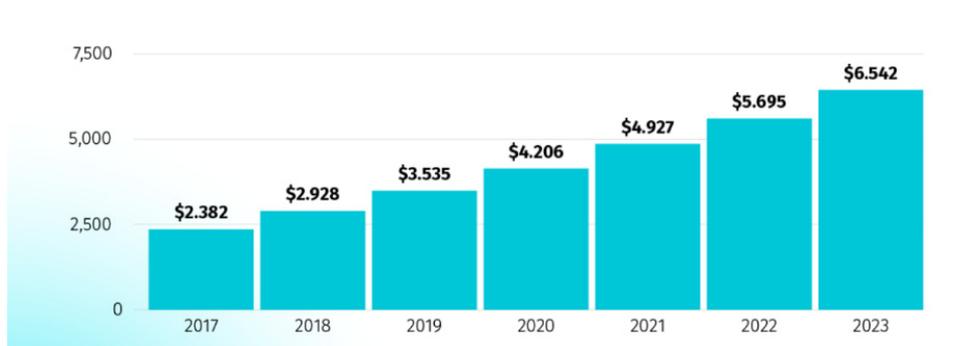


Figure 1. Global Ecommerce sales growth from 2017 to 2023

Source: emarketer.com

THE SECURITY OF E-COMMERCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

As the digital services are increasing rapidly, the issue of security is also emerging. There are several techniques and model that are developed to secure different E-Commerce model, but these are not enough and not providing proper security to our online selling, purchasing and other activities.

Therefore it is required to be developing a secure E-Commerce the model, which can be used to deal with existing issues in this field. This innovative model must have below given facilities such as:

• **Switch to Updated HTTPS**

It is a fact that HTTPS is becoming the standard in online security. Still, different sites are using existing

HTTP protocols. Therefore, they are disabling to see negative consequences (Kaushik et al., 2020).

• **Pick the Right E-Commerce Platform**

Most E-Commerce shops are using a platform such as Magento and Shopify. Protection has been considered a big reason for this. The top factors that merchants consider when picking an E-Commerce platform include convenience, robust functionality, and the fact that they are much more secure (Kaushik et al., 2020).

• **Alert with Security Plug-Ins**

It is a gift for E-Commerce merchants as they are running their sites on different platforms. Plugins prevent to avoid the sites hacked by hackers. In addition to this, a real-time view of traffic is provided by this security method (Kaushik et al., 2020).

• **Keep Your Admin Panel Air-Tight**

There are multiple angles hackers can use to get to your site. The least difficult is by accessing the Admin Panel. All it takes is one weak password for hackers to start playing around your admin panel and find the information they're looking for—and even lock you out of your own site (Kaushik et al., 2020).

• **Always Back-Up of Data**

Our financial data are essential or confidential. Therefore, it is essential to have a backup of this data regularly (Kaushik et al., 2020).

RECOMMENDATION OF E-COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT

For an e-commerce site to achieve a successful business in extraordinary circumstances and continue with them, it is necessary to improve online business constantly.

- Maintaining interaction with customers and listening to their interests. Informing the customer about the products, delivery deadlines, possible delays, courier services with which the company cooperates.

- Humanize the relationship with customers so that the company develops a trust relationship and retains customers even after the pandemic.

- Create a marketing plan in which the SEO role of the company's website and social media channels will play a key role.

- Update the Google My Business page and information on social media profiles if there have been changes in the company's address or business hours.

- Place interesting, original, and useful content for consumers, which will help the company's SEO efforts take a good place in search engines.

- Inform clients about the status of the company's business. Given the resentment that reigns over the numerous layoffs, customers will appreciate it if they manage to retain all the workers, even in crisis times (<https://digitalcircleweb.com/seo-zurnal/uticaj-korona-virusa-na-e-commerce-sajtove-i-seo-u-srbiji/>).

- Virtual live shop

- Personalized offer

- 360° view - better understanding of clients and their needs; a smarter onboarding process, increased cross-selling and sales at later stages, and more efficient customer retention.

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that the year 2020 is a big change in online trade, contributed by the SARS-CoV-2 virus pandemic. Many online stores open every day, and the existing companies had to respond quickly to the crisis caused by the pandemic. More serious sales growth required serious preparation, which they had to realize in a short period of time. Companies that had developed processes, a good web shop and an efficient team managed to skip several online store growth years. Companies have got what they want, and that's customers - it's now up to companies and everyone else involved in e-commerce to keep those customers by improving their business daily.

The past year has brought one very positive thing; it has taught us that we can change habits and that something we could not understand before is becoming our normalcy. Shopping online has become a necessity first, and then our normality.

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