

E-commerce in the Post-pandemic Period

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Abstract: The article focuses on the issue of the COVID-19 pandemic accelerating the introduction of e-commerce as consumers increasingly turned to online shopping. This article discusses the benefits of e-commerce, including accessibility, convenience, and efficiency. It recognizes potential drawbacks, such as limited seller interaction and security hazards. During the pandemic, online sales became crucial for business survival, prompting foreign companies and SMEs to enhance their online presence. Consumers prioritized safety by utilizing cashless payments. E-commerce is projected to continue growing post-pandemic. Its significance, highlighted by the pandemic, has reshaped consumer behavior and business strategies, underscoring the lasting impact of e-commerce in the digital era.

Keywords: E-commerce, COVID-19, pandemic, consumer behavior, online shopping, digital transformation, digital economy

E-commerce has played an important role in the lives of consumers since its inception and the advent of the internet. Businesses of various firms started to penetrate the net and sell online. Nowadays, it is hard to imagine a world without the use of online buying and selling tools [1].

But in 2020 and 2021, a coronavirus pandemic swept the Earth, serving as a catalyst of sorts for even more consumer adoption of remote shopping. In order to analyze the situation and draw conclusions about it, it is necessary to understand what e-commerce is and what characteristics it has. Electronic commerce (e-

commerce) is the trading of goods or services over the Internet when a buyer and seller can interact and conduct business transactions in an online environment [6].

The benefits of e-commerce include:

- **Accessibility:** customers can buy goods or services from anywhere in the world using a computer or mobile device;
- **Convenience:** customers can easily and quickly find the right product, compare prices, read reviews and place orders at their convenience;
- **Efficiency:** e-commerce can help merchants increase the efficiency of their operations, reduce advertising costs and expand their audience;
- **Automation:** electronic transactions can help automate many business processes, such as inventory management, or order and payment processing which can reduce managerial errors and improve operational efficiency;
- **Increase customer loyalty:** with the right e-commerce organization, customers can get a more convenient and personalized service, which helps to increase customer loyalty [4].

E-commerce has disadvantages, too, which are the following:

- **Limited opportunities to interact with the seller:** buyers may have difficulty communicating with the seller or getting the necessary assistance with the purchase;
- **Security hazards:** there are more threats on the Internet related to identity or credit card theft as well as PC hacking and other types of scams;
- **Difficulties in processing returns (canceling a purchase):** returns of goods or services can be complicated and costly, especially if the seller is located in another country;
- **Product quality problems:** customers may encounter poor quality goods or services, especially if the trader is located in another country [5].

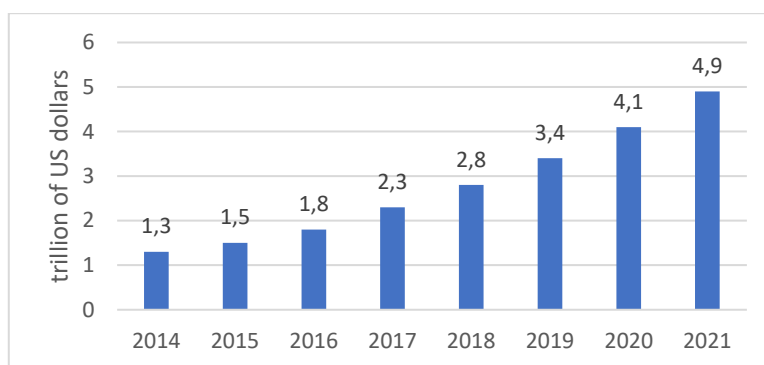
Online sales became especially important during the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people were forced to stay home and avoid going to stores [2]. Retail

store closures and travel restrictions led to increased demand for online shopping, and many consumers turned to e-commerce to buy goods and services.

At this time, many foreign companies began to more actively develop their online sales and move their business into the online environment (e.g., introducing delivery into the business model). Those who were already selling their products online began to improve their online services and their infrastructure to meet the growing demand. Consumers also began to pay more attention to the safety of online purchases and started to use more cashless payment methods to avoid contact with cash. Companies, in turn, have strengthened measures to protect personal data and online payment security to prevent fraud.

Moreover, e-commerce has become one of the ways for SMEs to survive the pandemic, allowing them to keep their business and connect with customers despite self-isolation. Overall, e-commerce has become a necessary and important part of many people's and companies' lives during the pandemic, and its importance is likely to continue to grow in the future. This is also the view of many experts, as depicted in Figure 1.

Fig. 1 Dynamics of growth of the global sales volume on the Internet



Source: Compiled by the author based on data from Statista; [Electronic resource] website. - <https://www.statista.com/statistics/379046/worldwide-retail-e-commerce-sales/> (accessed 17.03.2023)

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, many people and businesses that were previously not particularly interested in online shopping have begun to realize

that shopping through an online store is a convenient and safe way to buy everything you need for your home. In addition, many consumers are already accustomed to online shopping and will likely continue to use it after the pandemic [3]. Businesses have also learned that e-commerce can help them reach new markets and expand their business.

It is likely that after the pandemic, companies will continue to invest in more and more online products and developments, and those who have not yet managed to make their business omnichannel will try to catch up with the competition. It is also possible that we should wait for the development of new technologies and services that will make e-commerce even more convenient and safe for users.

However, it should be noted that offline shopping will not disappear. There is still a large segment of consumers who still prefer to shop at retail outlets. Perhaps in the future we will see greater integration of online and offline sales to provide consumers with the most convenient and flexible shopping experience possible.

In conclusion, it can be said that the years of self-isolation have had a significant impact on the development of e-commerce. Online commerce has become more in demand as consumers and companies realize that it is a safe and convenient way of shopping. Many companies quickly adapted to the new reality by developing their online services, products, infrastructure and communications. However, the growth of e-commerce has also led to new problems and challenges, such as an increase in online fraud and problems with shipping and logistics.

Overall, e-commerce has great potential and will continue to grow and develop in the future, with companies and consumers adapting to the new reality and looking for the most convenient and secure ways to shop, while developing their online shopping security skills in parallel.

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