
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Milena Head is an Associate Professor of Information Systems and the Associate Dean at the DeGroote School of Business, McMaster University, Canada. She was the Co-Chair for the 8th World Congress on the Management of Electronic Business. Specialising in electronic business and human-computer interaction, she has published over 65 papers in academic journals, books and conferences. She has published in journals such as *Information and Management*, *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, *Interacting with Computers*, and *Group Decision and Negotiation*, among others. She has been an invited speaker at numerous international events and she currently consults on electronic commerce strategy and web usability.

The internet has redefined how businesses relate to each other and their customers, as well as how customers relate to each other and to the public and private sectors. Internationally, companies of all sizes need to consider the creative use of electronic business to find new markets, improve market share and reduce costs, while strengthening customer and business partner services. More and more, effective employment of electronic business is becoming a necessity for survival in today's competitive landscape.

In July 2007, the 8th World Congress on the Management of Electronic Business was held in Toronto, Canada. This Congress provided a unique forum for researchers and practitioners to come together to present, discuss, and review recent, ground-breaking research results on the deployment and use of information technologies and services for electronic business. By providing a forum for healthy dialogue and discussion, this conference informed electronic business practice, helped to establish research directions and facilitated future research collaborations.

This special issue of the *Int. J. Electronic Business* includes some selected papers from the 8th World Congress on the Management of Electronic Business. The papers included in this issue have been modified or extended from their original versions in accordance with reviewers' comments. The four papers selected for this special issue cover a broad range of electronic business issues, from understanding consumer website design preferences, to predicting mobile e-commerce industry structures, to exploring e-business external drivers and multi-channel service models. To summarise:

Maureen E. Hupfer and Brian Detlor challenge the traditional definition of gender in their paper 'Sex, gender and self-concept: predicting web shopping site design preferences'. They show that past studies that focused on male-female differences in website design preferences may not be providing a complete and accurate picture. Their empirical work shows the value of measuring self-concept traits that are associated with gender identity rather than solely focusing on gender delineation by biological sex. As such, web designers should consider personalising their sites by individual differences that arise from self-concept rather than by sex differences.

Ron Sperling, with his co-authors Luuk P.A. Simons and Harry Bouwman, examines the challenges that firms face when designing their multi-channel mix in their paper 'Multi-channel service concept definition and prototyping'. While consumers are increasingly becoming multi-channel shoppers, time pressures and ill-structured design processes often hinder effective services provided by organisations. The authors propose a design approach to generate a concise prototype of an organisation's service that is suitable for the collective efforts of engineers and marketers.

David J. Wright focuses on the future of the mobile e-commerce industry in his paper 'The interworking of emerging wireless access technologies and its impact on the evolution of the mobile e-commerce industry'. He examines key wireless access technologies and stresses the need for users and network operators to interconnect among themselves. By analysing the types of interconnections, various models for the future of mobile e-commerce industry structures are proposed and compared.

Mark de Reuver and his colleagues, Harry Bouwman and Ian MacInnes, in their paper 'Business models dynamics for start-ups and innovating e-businesses' examine the external drivers that most influence e-business model dynamics. Through their longitudinal analysis, they conclude that technology and market forces play a more important role than regulation and that the impact of external drivers is most prominent during the service development phase of start-ups.

The World Congress on the Management of Electronic Business seeks to address the challenges and opportunities of the electronic economy through sharing of research and management issues. We hope that this issue of the *International Journal of Electronic Business* will provide a foretaste of the insights that were shared at this event and will help to further 'e'-understanding for practitioner and academic audiences.

Acknowledgements

The guest editor of this Special Issue of the *International Journal of Electronic Business* would like to thank the authors, reviewers and Editor-in-Chief of IJEB, Dr. Eldon Y. Li, for their impressive commitment and efforts.