

# Development of the Framework for UK Fashion Retail Businesses with No Online Presence in Pandemic

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**Abstract:** The objective of the study is to development of the framework for UK retail fashion business with no online business presence in pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic hits the overall economy due to closure of stores and fear of social distancing. Due to lockdowns and physical stores closure, retail fashion businesses with no online presence faced the major drawback in sales and asked for the Government support in order to get the business operation running. In order to get rid of this issue in future, retail fashion business with no online presence or with ineffective presence needs to work on the ecommerce presence. Study suggests that, companies should develop their presence on the basis of digital capabilities, better supply chain partnerships and customer relationship management. Cost effectiveness, better remarketing strategies and less exposure to external factors such as lockdowns are the key advantages of having online presence. Along with that research figured that, fashion business with poor online presence must work on the user experience through better branding of platforms, smooth transactions, better delivery options and act according to the market trends and analysis.

**Keywords:** online presence, ecommerce, UK fashion retail businesses, digital capabilities, ecommerce in pandemic.

## 1. Introduction

### A. Background of the Study

The pandemic has put stress on the worldwide economy, which devises the economic functions that confer a state's sustainability and the whole world (The World Bank, 2020). Business reforms are varied throughout the pandemic to recover their strategic plans before the pandemic to sustain their businesses (Accenture, 2020). The pandemic COVID-19 paralyzed the economies and the financial markets as the national health systems collapsed (Kannappan, 2020).

Moreover, like so many sectors of the economy, the most affected sector is resulted to be the fashion industry that is conferred to be significantly impacted by the COVID-19 (Nsenduluka, 2020). Before the COVID-19, the fashion industry was already transforming with the factors that included digitalization and sustainability that affected the industry practices (Rao et al., 2020). The fashion industry's strategic influence was correspondingly well planned for the year 2020, but due to the Covid-19, the industry persuaded drastic impacts (O'Connor, 2020). Likewise, the pandemic's impact revealed

great stress on well-pertained brands like H&M, Primark, Debenhams and most of the brands inclined their retails up to 70% off (BBC News, 2021). Furthermore, the reshaping of consumer behavior is likely determined by the impact of COVID-19 (Hasbullah et al., 2020). For reducing the spread of the virus, countries restricted all social aspects that were derived through personal interaction (Brydges et al., 2021, European Union, 2021). This conferred the inference of online presence to be inclined, and almost all of the social activities were rendered through the usage of e-commerce (Neger and Uddin, 2020). E-commerce had been inclined as a predominant determinant derived during the COVID-19 pandemic for the retail stores (Gonda et al., 2020).

The online presence of the retailers that did not confer the management of online stores varied the temporary solutions in which selling their product online was key, induced through social media platforms in product posting and product pickup delivery services (Frau Toebben, 2020). Relatively, the inclination of purchase behavior was also derived towards the e-commerce platform (Koch et al., 2020). This inclination was concerned due to the brands that conferred a solid online presence. Likewise, the brands that did not confer the online presence before the pandemic were abided by the "play catch up" (Brydges et al., 2021). Furthermore, in Australia, the renowned fashion designer stated that "from new safety procedures to a groundswell of support for local brands, the fashion retail will be forever changed by COVID-19" (Nsenduluka, 2020). Likewise, a German online platform brand acquired many new partners in the quarter of 2020 that expanded its offer relatively (Zalando, 2020). Moreover, the company expanded its technical solutions to enhance the online platform and existence that enabled the partners to incline with the online platform more and the customer accumulation to be enhanced. The fashion industry's growth has rapidly paced during the last decade, which determines the online existence of the industry is relatively concurrent.

Moreover, to correspond with the competitive edge, fashion brands are likely respondent to customer behaviour rapidly (Cachon and Swinney, 2011). Through, they are emphasized to conspire the online presence at an extended rate. Furthermore,

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the customers' purchase intention is considered one of the critical factors that diversify the need for the online platform by the fashion retail businesses. It is essential for fashion retail businesses to entail the customer intentions, as the changes in the environment correspond with the customers' engagement on the online platform (Mason *et al.*, 2020).

### *B. Scope of the Project*

This project expresses how important the framework's development would allow fashion retailers to have an online presence and why this is mandatory during a pandemic. Moreover, the current project describes how e-commerce makes the fashion retailing business effective, focusing on the UK's fashion industry. The study will also determine the causes or reasons why the fashion retail businesses were reluctant to utilize the online resources and what measures made them think about overcoming this barrier posed by having no or limited presence online.

### *C. Aim and Objective*

The current project aims to identify and develop a comprehensive understanding and conceptualization of the need to have an online presence for fashion retailers in the UK. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many financial casualties were faced by the business communities worldwide, and a substantial amount of evidence is present, which indicates that only those businesses excelled which already had an online presence. This study aims to draw retailers' attention in the fashion industry towards the significance of using pathways provided by e-commerce for the positive financial growth of the business. The pandemic caused a complete stoppage to purchase products for the retailers that could not announce their presence on any platform online. This paper's main objective is to assess the advantages and disadvantages of doing business online and monitor the effectiveness of going online for business. Devising an online system of selling is found to be highly critical in the fashion industry. Furthermore, the study aims to emphasize how cost-effectiveness can be improved through online retailing and how it provides the freedom to business people to operate from different places according to their feasibility.

### *D. Research Questions*

1. Why do some companies not have a good or even no effective online presence at all?
2. What are the potentials advantages and disadvantages of going online for a potential e-commerce business?
3. What are the efficient and effective ways to develop the e-commerce pathway for the retail business?

## **2. Literature Review**

### *A. Effective Role of E-Commerce during COVID-19 Pandemic*

The value of e-commerce platforms that promote virtual experiences and provide informative and insightful product details that customers may consider to be economic benefits has been established in the literature (Gao *et al.*, 2020). As a result, businesses are raising sales revenue by leveraging current

customers, attracting new ones, creating social groups, and ensuring continuity with legacy programs, particularly during pandemics (Elrhim and Elsayed, 2020). In reality, due to the lack of in-person interaction, Covid-19 has disrupted and changed the market environment. Managers have been forced to operate online supplies. During the pandemic, e-commerce enables physical distancing but also allowing access to the whole product range. While e-commerce used to be mainly focused on high-tech products, toys, and books for many customer segments, it is now mainly focusing on goods that are vital to the affordability of a vast portion of the populace, such as groceries, medicine, and other essentials (Pandey and Pal, 2020).

Additionally, the advantages of E-Commerce were apparent long before the COVID-19 pandemic. Between store closures and an increase in internet buying, e-Commerce now provides a way to sustain the market and achieve a strategic advantage that would outlast the epidemic (Tran, 2021). E-Commerce is assisting companies in meeting their market goals at the press of a button, whether they are trying to complement in-person purchases, increase their consumer base, or improve the buying experience for current clients (Guo *et al.*, 2020). During the COVID-19 crisis, the revenue and market value of global e-commerce companies like Amazon, Alibaba, Rakuten, Zalando, and ASOS have been affected adversely. The impact of the COVID-19 was likely interpreted based on cumulative infections and deaths effective on the daily returns of e-commerce platforms to the global financial markets. The interpretation of the results revealed that the e-commerce companies had a positive daily return in the global financial market (Elrhim and Elsayed, 2020).

Similarly, Santoso (2017) conducted a study regarding the effectiveness of e-commerce during COVID-19 and how it can help prosper the community. The study has identified that e-commerce is such a platform that allows consumers to engage in different shopping processes without going to physical stores. Hence, it concluded that e-commerce is a highly sustainable process because it helps to conduct shopping activities at home and decreases the expansion of COVID-19 as well. Besides, Kannappan (2020) also identified that the role of e-commerce during the pandemic is highly essential as it not only focuses on increasing sales but also economic growth. There should be different strategies for increasing the effectiveness of this platform through measurable processes, flexible and cost-effective. The study concluded that the fashion brands should work like ants to be quite smart in their work and produce both economic and sales profit as well.

### *B. COVID-19 Pandemic and the UK*

The global COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant economic effect on the United Kingdom. Travel, financial markets, employment, a variety of sectors, and shipping have all suffered as a result (UK, 2020). Furthermore, SMEs also account for 50 percent of overall sales produced by UK companies and 44 percent of the country's labor force. The COVID-19 crisis has had a massive impact on SME results across the United Kingdom. It is worth noting that there are

differences between industries in the United Kingdom. Logistics, manufacturing, and agriculture are the most adversely impacted sectors (over 90% of surveyed SMEs in these sectors record sales reductions), while scientific, finance and insurance, and education SMEs are the least affected (Albonico *et al.*, 2020).

Moreover, to survive the effects of the coronavirus pandemic lockdowns, small business people in the United Kingdom said they had to change the course of their businesses. Similarly, during the pandemic, new COVID-19 policies required merchants and shoppers around the country to choose card purchases or e-wallets over cash to restrict communication and prevent virus spread. As a result, between 2000 and 2020, cash use dropped by 38.1 percent, and the UK is expected to be cashless by 2026 (Nicola *et al.*, 2020). Likewise, Due to the recent UK Government policies relating to people working from home, SMEs have had to expand their use of technology and tools to promote online meetings, knowledge sharing, and encourage workers to carry out their day-to-day duties (Papadopoulos *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the UK also highlighted with the relevancy of factors associated as psychological, social, political, and economic determined that the economic stability of the UK concurred as the baseline of 2025 adults were determined in the first month while 1406 followed in the next month which revealed the retention rate of 69.4% (McBride *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, Keogh-Brown *et al.* (2020) studied the impact of covid-19 in the economy with the variance of direct disease effects, which were also highlighted with the associating factor of public actions and associated policies. The indicating factors of Covid-19 effects were revealed in the context of clinical attacks (48%), fatality ratio (1.5%), and economic burden of £39.6 billion. It revealed the imposing effect on the economic cost of the UK, which was determined to be unprecedented, and the retaliation constrained in the public actions had an implicit effect on the economic cost based on the closure of businesses. Further on, the impact of Covid-19 in the context of UK constrained in the economic shift also affected the ethnic and native migrant inequalities with sufficed concurrency, which revealed that the minority ethnic communities residing in the UK prompted extensive job loss, income loss as well as financial hardship (Hu, 2020). Besides, Sayyida *et al.* (2021) conducted a study on e-commerce business during the COVID-19 pandemic and identified that UK had been the third-largest e-commerce market after the US and China. The study has identified that in 2019 the number of online consumers reached around 79.8% in the UK. 27.5% of purchases in the UK were made from online stores in the year 2020, with an increase of 5.7% compared with the previous year. Hence, it has been concluded that e-commerce platform has helped the UK citizens to engage in shopping processes in a relatively easy manner.

### C. 2.3 Advantages/Merits of E-commerce

E-commerce offers many advantages to both seller and buyer. For example, getting free of the constraints of a physical

store often means being free of the constraints of shelf space. It enables e-commerce companies to “stock” a large number of products. Since physical constraints do not bind them, e-commerce companies can ramp up more quickly than physical stores (Ismawati and Setiawan, 2020). Of course, as one grows up, logistics becomes more difficult. However, with the right third-party logistics supplier, one can scale up their logistics (Alazai, 2020). Customers would be able to waste less time searching for their desired products. They can quickly search through a large number of things at once and purchase what they want. Customers can discover products sold in physical shops far away from them or not available in their area as they shop online (Kumar, 2019). Sellers do not need to spend much money to advertise their products. There are many inexpensive and fast ways to sell online in the world of e-commerce. E-commerce marketplaces are visual platforms where vendors can showcase their goods (Taher, 2021). The ability for retailers to offer convenience to consumers is a significant benefit of e-commerce for businesses. One of the advantages is that the product and facilities are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. As a result, the seller can sell the item at any time and in any place (Ingaldi and Ulewicz, 2018). Ecommerce marketplaces have a more efficient distribution and delivery mechanism. It ensures that the buyer’s order will be fulfilled quickly. Product returns management is another benefit that can be done quickly, with customers having the option of receiving a refund or a substitute (Nisar and Prabhakar, 2017). UPI, cash on delivery, card on delivery, net banking, EMIs on credit or debit cards, and pay-later credit are all options available on e-commerce marketplaces (Işoraité and Miniotiené, 2018).

Further on, e-commerce adoption is likely conserved as an essential tool for competitive advantage, enhancing the business-to-business relationship and inclining the organizational technology environment for SMEs (Hamad *et al.*, 2018). According to Hua *et al.* (2019), different e-commerce initiatives can develop consumers loyalty and increase brand performance. This study has identified that the use of effective initiatives can help the brand develop their loyalty programs and thus their performances. The brands should work on their asset allocation strategies and their financial resources for enhancing these e-commerce initiatives. Similarly, Jimenez *et al.* (2019) conducted a study on identifying the advantages of e-commerce compared with retail businesses. The study has identified a significant advantage that there is no need for employees in the retail business, and thus it helps in saving cost. Also, e-commerce in today’s world can provide enhanced information through using different social media platforms with various innovative factors.

### D. Disadvantages/Demerits of E-commerce

Although e-commerce benefits consumers, businesses, society, and the country as a whole, there are still specific points of concern that need to be discussed. Firstly, the most significant disadvantage in e-commerce is the issue of security. Even though data security has improved significantly, people are still hesitant to provide personal and financial information. Certain websites cannot perform authorized purchases. The fear

of giving out credit card details and the possibility of losing one's identity are limiting e-commerce growth (Vadwala and Vadwala, 2017).

Furthermore, people are apprehensive about working in a paperless, faceless electronic environment. Any corporate organizations that do not have a physical presence and people are unaware of whom they are transacting businesses. This factor encourages customers to shop in physical shops (Sharma *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, to buy goods, people must depend on electronic images. It is possible that when the goods are shipped, they will not fit the electronic images. Finally, it does not meet the buyers' requirements. People avoid internet shopping due to a lack of "touch and feel" (Oláh *et al.*, 2019). Likewise, integrating electronic and conventional industries is difficult. Technological infrastructure can be costly, and massive expenditures are needed to keep up with rapidly evolving technologies. More funds must be allocated to technical development (Faraoni *et al.*, 2019). The cyber rules that regulate e-commerce purchases are hazy and differ from one country to the next. People are hesitant to enter into electronic contracts because of these legal concerns (Tolstoy *et al.*, 2021).

Similarly, Kosobutskaya *et al.* (2019) identified different disadvantages of e-commerce in which the results have showed that the low number of regular consumers are the major disadvantage on this platform. It does not allow replacing the traditional trade efficiently or effectively because its methods are quite different from the traditional way. Besides, Lingyu *et al.* (2019) identified various advantages or disadvantages in every shopping mode, so e-commerce has any disadvantage. So, online stores should not follow the pre-defined trend and effectively considers their adaption to engage in the e-commerce market.

#### *E. Barriers/Obstacles of Effective e-commerce Retail Businesses in the UK*

The modern business era has made businesses change drastically as technological abundance is conducted in different strategic forms. M-commerce is a part of e-commerce mainly comprehended by SMEs in the UK, but it is also minimal. It determines the barriers that are likely conferred towards the adoption of m-commerce in the UK. The most effective barrier that is considered is the barrier of perceived risk, which iterates the opinionated concept of adoption and significantly affects effective e-commerce adoption overall (Rana *et al.*, 2019). Likewise, Xiaoxiangyu and Bakht (2018) also determine different attributes and barriers that compress the effective retail businesses to extend in the UK. The relativity of e-commerce platforms provides businesses to engage with customers and provide satisfactory services to the customers. Likely the hindrance that is conferred in the adoption of e-commerce is likely contrived with administrative management as well as financial and security barriers.

Furthermore, a case study derived for the Saudis residing in the UK determines the environmental factor that resonates with the e-commerce adoption, which conserves the consumer's behavior to a composite extent. Trust and security are

undoubtedly among the barriers that hinder e-commerce adoption to a relevant extent. On this behalf, the study concluded that the environmental factors engage the consumer behavior of the UK with contrived affection in which security and trust elements are present (Alshehri and Meziane, 2018).

#### *F. Pathway to Effective E-commerce Retail Businesses*

E-commerce retailers can save money on inventory by using a just-in-time (JIT) scheme, which improves a company's ability to generate and predict demand accurately. It also aids in the maintenance of extensive inventories or costly store showrooms using new IT services. It can assist with marketing via numerous social media sites (Kumar *et al.*, 2018). Likewise, (Gaudenzi *et al.*, 2021) determines the concurrency of alternate solutions be inclined to the e-commerce businesses, mainly fashion industry determines the variance of e-supply chain configuration is required for a well-postulated e-commerce strategy. As the study discovers the fashion industry in the context of Italian companies, it reveals that for a composite pathway for an effective e-commerce strategy to propagate, specific key capabilities should be taken in accord—namely, relationship governance, digital capabilities, and well-defined e-CRM (customer relationship management). The emphasis on the e-commerce business is likely inclined with the business's variance that contrives the pathway to take adequate measures. These practical measures are likely defined through various means of factors like the Internet, collaborative business information, business transactions, and new systems. As mobile phone adoption has commenced significantly globally, it likely conserves the changes in the e-commerce market. For a well-conserved strategic pathway for an e-commerce business to boom, the business is likely conserved to adopt structured mannered functioning and integrate internal information resources to optimize the potential of the ERP systems (Lal and Chavan, 2019). Besides, Lee and Xu (2020) stated that most consumers identified lack of touch or feel the product has been the main problem in e-commerce and online shopping. A virtual fitting room (VFR) can be integrated with this e-commerce process to get in-store experiences in the online store. Although VFRs had been available, they had not been applied in fashion retailers due to the accuracy of consumer dissatisfaction. Hence, fashion retailers can significantly use this technology to increase online sales and reduce the number of return products. Similarly, Martínez-Navarro *et al.* (2019) conducted a study on virtual reality and its effect on e-commerce and focuses on VR formats and devices for developing the e-commerce. The study has used different factors that include a sense of presence, purchase intention, and brand recall for studying the e-commerce industry. The results have identified that the consumers' purchase intention varied for using VR devices and their format. Hence, this study has shown that online retailers should focus on two processes: emotions and a sense of presence. The second factor is the pleasure enhanced by the virtual environment and the brand recall as well.

### *G. Potential of Effective E-commerce Retail Business in the UK*

The effective e-commerce retail businesses in the UK are developed through the online channels comprised by a business and likely integrated with the offline channel prosper the true potential of the e-commerce business to a relative extent. For instance, the top luxury brands comprise the integration of offline and online business models to comprehend the business's true potential. The integration of offline (physical) and online channels is likely driven by the market competencies rather than the companies' strategies. It emphasizes the implementation of e-commerce in the UK and the international market of luxury fashion brands through which the marketers can develop the market competency to lead the benchmarking performance of the business to a deliberate extent (Guercini et al., 2020). Furthermore, in the grocery e-commerce market, the UK comprises one of the leading industries that comprise an estimated value of £11.4 Billion in 2018, which is likely inclined with the variance of technological development. The grocery retailers have significantly invested in the online infrastructure, which abides the consistency of home-delivery networks and enables the customers to transparency their purchases and confide them with the sustainability of the environmental risks. It also provides concurrency in the consumers' behavior, through which the market dynamics comprise the interchange in the functionality of e-commerce propensity. The case study of Yorkshire and Humber provides the effectiveness of e-commerce, defined with the measure of localized infrastructure to support the stability of e-commerce (Hood et al., 2020). Likewise, in the context of the UK retail economy contrived in the grocery market, the expansion of e-commerce is likely growing on a geographical scale, which suffices the UK as one of the leading countries in e-commerce. Geographic expansion is likely a practical measure that derives the consistency of e-commerce activities. The geographic expansion as a factor that develops e-commerce sales is likely afflicted with the social norms and the social class in the geographical sector. Likely, the geographical expansion promotes the online presence that provides the business with compatible expansion and the consumers to have suitability with the services provided to them through the businesses' online presence (Kirby-Hawkins et al., 2019).

### **3. Methodology**

The research problem is the lack of online presence in the fashion retail industry of the UK during COVID-19. The problem aimed to be solved by studying various models regarding the topic and finding a suitable model that can be implemented in the target population to solve the problem. Besides, proper strategies and recommendations will be discussed regarding its implementation. Moreover, the secondary data has provided in-depth information regarding the online presence in e-commerce based on the fashion business. The secondary data is based on such data or information collected from other sources rather than the primary user (Hox and Boeije, 2005). Secondary data in this research can be

identified as extracting information from prior research related to the current topic. Besides, this research has provided few advantages that include putting relatively little effort and is economical. The researcher can identify deficiencies and gaps and their effective strategies to fulfill them. In addition, content analysis methodology has been identified as a technique to study a broad range of texts and frameworks to generate effective strategies and to implement that information (Macnamara, 2005).

#### *A. Data Analysis Approach*

The current study has effectively applied content analysis methodology to examine the objectives and generate the results. This technique has been identified as a complex approach as it aims to study and exploit and analyse different words or textual data. The content analysis helped study the message within the content and then drawing sustainable conclusions from it. Also, the purpose of this technique was achieved as the researcher has gone through different prior researches from the internet sources (Bamwesigye and Hlavackova, 2019). According to Núñez Collado et al. (2019), content analysis was quite helpful as it helped the researcher identify meaningful information that adheres to the naturalistic paradigm. Besides, the literature has been identified by entering keywords related to the topic, and materials were accessed. For instance, for quickly accessing the prior researches, the keywords used were online presence and e-commerce. As it is a popular methodology for studying a multiplicity of disciplines, it has been found suitable for this study. Additionally, this methodology was highly implemented in different social sciences and humanities literature that includes history, communications, and political science. The basic concept was to pull out relevant theoretical frameworks from those researches that can effectively reflect the online presence in e-commerce.

Although prior researches have been included in conducting the content analysis, selecting those researches was specific. The content analysis included those researches that had effective conceptual and strategic models regarding the online presence of fashion retail business. Also, few of those researches were based in the UK so that the researcher could easily understand the current scenario of online presence in the country. In addition, the outcome of this research was identifying a proper theoretical framework that can be implemented in the UK setting regarding the online presence of fashion retail businesses.

### **4. Disclosure of Frameworks**

The discussion related to different frameworks contrived for the adoption of e-commerce constrain different settings, strategies, and factors for this aspect discussion related to a different framework that helps in the perpetuation of e-commerce need to be discussed to contempt the ideal framework for the situation conferred for the fashion retail businesses in the UK, where they compose no prior online presence.

The framework focused by Taheri (2012) for e-commerce adoptions for the emphasizing consideration of online presence

is constrained with a multitude of factors that coerce e-commerce to an extent. The Technology, Organization, Environment (TOE) framework has been highlighted as the initial framework that prospers the adoption of e-commerce and proves the applicability of e-commerce to commence relative online presence that extents the market penetration of a business. The technology organization environment framework also highlights the aspects that provide concurrency in the context of information security IS in terms of electronic fund transfers (EFT), enterprise resource planning (ERP), and electronic data interchange (EDI) (Zhu and Kraemer, 2005). Furthermore, the TOE framework was constructed by Tornatzky and Klein (1982), determined to highlight the influential factors that pertain to the idea of adoption and innovation. The technological context of the framework likely relates to both (external and internal) factors. In contrast, the factors constrained in the organizational context are determined as the nature of the firm, the abundance of strategic competency, and the accumulation of the firm's resources. Likewise, in the environmental context, the inclined factors are determined as external and internal effecting elements towards an organization.

Additionally, the emphasis of the TOE framework is determined by Abed (2020) as it afflicts in the context of adopting innovation (Baker, 2012) varied with the competency of environmental constraints. TOE is determined as a robust framework in e-commerce adoption and development as it compels theoretical basis, comprehensive empirical support, and relatively provides concurrency in the innovation abundance.

Furthermore, the framework discussed by Levy *et al.* (2005) determines e-commerce as a strategic viewpoint that can comprise the product expansion and prosper the SMEs to iterate relative market competency in terms of product/market expansion. This framework is considered attributable to those that contrive market expansion and relatively growth. The framework derived for this constitute is determined as Ansoff's framework in which (four) strategies are varied for determining e-commerce as a strategy. The four components of the framework are market penetration, product development, market development, and diversification. These components are devised in the market, and product segmentation varied as present and new (Golubova, 2012).

Furthermore, Triandini *et al.* (2017) developed a framework for adopting e-commerce developed through the Delphi method. As Delphi method provides the consistency of building consensus based on the judgment of experts contrived on a particular topic. The construction of the framework for e-commerce adoption devised is constrained through four phases. The first phase identified the adoption relative benefits of adoption, likely constrained functionality, and non-functionality of the e-commerce platform. The second phase provided maturity models determined based on e-commerce benefits. The third phase provided the mapping of the e-commerce platform constrained with the benefits relative to the achievement indicators, and finally, in the fourth phase, the construct of the framework through the Delphi method is highlighted. The framework provided constraints related to the

advantageous adoption of e-commerce based on the functionalities and non-functionalities of the e-commerce platform.

Furthermore, Choi *et al.* (1997) highlighted the framework in which the dimensionality of e-commerce is considered but not in e-commerce adoption. However, it emphasizes the digitalization of the business, which can propel the business with the configuration of extending the business retention factors such as customers, revenue. The dimensions considered for the e-commerce applicability are product, process, and delivery method varied in the business. Moreover, the framework provides the dimensionality illustrated in a cubic, which provides the dimensions of the e-commerce applicability to be explicable.

Furthermore, Wells and Gobeli (2003) determined a framework that focuses on the strategic inference of the e-business/commerce. The practicality of the framework is devised in eight distinct areas, which prosper the business to commence its strategy with relative particularity. The eight distinct areas are derived as a universal set, range, richness, range intersection richness, reach, reach intersection range, reach intersection richness, reach intersection range intersection richness. These eight distinctions are derived in a Venn diagram which postulates the strategic framework for e-businesses. This strategic framework prospers the businesses to encompass towards complacent pursuit and adoption of e-business through which the directions of the business are varied with relative clarity.

Furthermore, Heikinniemi (2019) also contrived a framework for the strategic construct to ordain the online presence through e-commerce. The construct of the framework was varied through best practices in e-commerce confided from relevant literature. The framework constituted upon modeling, platform, and conflict evasion, which were prioritized as critical elements (stages) in defining the best practices varied for the composition of e-commerce strategy. Moreover, the first stage comprises the modeling variance that comprises the practices to be effective in the context of e-commerce; relatively, the strategies, business model, revenue and commercial models, Omni-channels as well as ecosystems contrive the businesses to expand their formation in the market as well as product expansion derived in the context of e-commerce propensity. Platform derived as a stage also constrains the expansion of e-commerce in the digital era. The factors that affect the platform are contrived as the platform infrastructure, platform branding, fulfilment options, customer journey. Lastly, the stage of conflict evasion derives from the factors that prosper the consumer behaviour towards the business or brand. The factors determined in the conflict evasion stage are communication and promotion, split offerings, price management, and data sharing. Moreover, the framework stage determines the concurrency of e-commerce adoption by stabilizing the business model with the best practices contrived from the earlier literature, derived as the factors in the stages.

Furthermore, Kapurubandara (2009) discussed the framework regarding the e-transformation of SMEs in which the barriers contrived in the setting are determined. The

framework is defined in terms of contextualizing the barriers afflicted with the contempt of adoption of e-commerce. The framework provides dominant barriers that are confiscated in the context of the adoption of e-commerce. The framework is based on stages that define the e-transformation journey to procure the advances in e-commerce. The framework provides a set roadmap through which the businesses comprehend their e-commerce strategies. The framework provided insight based on barriers and the perceptions contrived in the consent of e-commerce products and services. Moreover, the framework also determined the variance of internal and external factors that are composite as the barriers of e-commerce. Thus, this identification of the barriers determined the framework to be effective in terms of strategic attribution.

#### *A. Implementable Framework in the UK*

The framework that is implementable in the UK context to suffice the online presence of the fashion retail brands. Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) is considered the most optimal framework that will provide consistency in the UK's online presence of fashion retail brands. The technology-organization-environment framework covers all the elements procured for the implementation of e-commerce and sustainable business. The UK is well-developed, but the businesses that still do not encompass online presence are contrived to have various factors that have retained the businesses in terms of achieving it. Thus, the implementation of the TOE framework, suited best, as it covers three proportionate dimensionalities to encounter the current scenario.

TOE is a theoretical framework applied in a multitude related to e-commerce adoption and escalation of organizational performance constrained with the factors of the environment as a wand. According to Abed (2020), the framework classifies the technology in the consent of improvisation of technological characteristics that affect the organizational adoption of innovative strategies complacent with the market requirement. Furthermore, the organizational context of the framework provides consistency in the organizational characteristics that are reflective with the online presence, relatively. Likewise, in the environmental context of the framework, the environmental factors through which the certainty of elements determine the availability of technological constructs that can be implemented with the variances coincided in the internal environment and factors constrained in the external environment.

The technological, organizational, as well as environmental elements of the framework are discussed invariant studies (Ramdani *et al.*, 2013, Sila, 2013) that proclaim the framework to be highlighted in the context of e-commerce prevalence as well as determining the constraints that are considered as barriers in terms of exempting towards a better online presence, relatively. Rahayu and Day (2015) mention that the TOE framework provides a place, to begin with and is determined as a meta-framework inclined in specific ways with varying degrees of specificity. In the UK context, as one of the major countries in the world that are considered expanding consistently, some tendencies devise some of the retail businesses, specifically fashion retail brands, with no presence

or low-level presence during the COVID-19. The highlighting factors are deemed to be enormous. In the essence of TOE, the factors are determined to be devised in the context of technology, organization, and environment. Likewise, but in the situation of COVID-19, the factors are highlighted with many inferences; the environmental factor is determined to be one of the most influential, affected factors that conserves the online presence of the fashion retail brands. Rowe *et al.* (2012) also determine factors attributed in the TOE framework, in the consent of e-commerce adoption and relatively prevalence with specific strategies. Likewise, in the context of the current situation, the emphasis of the technological context can be exclaimed as the IT (information technology) and IS (information security) usage and relevant attributes such as attitude towards e-commerce, which contempt the attribute of the customers as well as the organizational strategic notion, relatively. Furthermore, in the context of organizational context, the factors that highlight the contingency are determined as occupied strategies, strategic orientation according to the environment and the situation. The businesses have been constrained during the COVID-19 and were forced to revise their strategies towards e-commerce.

Furthermore, the emphasis of the TOE framework is highlighted with relative significance based on the elements the framework covers. The framework allows the researcher to expand their comprehension to understand the feasibilities and diligences in TOE. This perpetuates the framework to understand the aspects with particular clarity. An online presence can be determined by three contextualization perspectives devised by the TOE framework relevant to particular aspects of e-commerce implementation. The explanatory power of the TOE likely exclaims the other frameworks in terms of dimensionality, as most of the framework composed conspire only single dimension, through which the certainty of aspects is not fulfilled, relatively.

Moreover, the technological context discussed in the emphasized situation, which preempts the online presence of the fashion retail brands in the UK, can be varied to the certainty that most of the brands did not comprehend the technological resources to afflict with the COVID-19. The cost, technological resources, and compatibility with the environment relatively affect the constraint of influence in a particular setting. Likely, the compatibility refers to the notion that pertains to the technological infrastructure in terms of abiding with specific challenges and adoption and prevalence of the business presence in the online market, relatively (Chiu *et al.*, 2017). The compatibility element likely resonates with the effective consent of opting for the technological advancement required to escalate an online presence. Furthermore, in the organizational context, the contempt with the business is determined in its opted strategies. If the business does not plan out a counter-intuitive strategy to tackle particular challenges, then the business has to encompass relative strategic notions to exclaim the online presence to an extent (Oliveira and Martins, 2010). Likewise, the strategic inference as determined in the organizational context also highlights the factors of resource compatibility relative to technological resources. The resources

that are contrived in the context of the organization are likely, financial and human. Financial resources can be one of the factors contrived in the organizational context that retains the strategic constraint of abiding online presence. Environmental attributing factors can be determined as internal and external factors (Abdulhakeem *et al.*, 2017). The inclination of the factors constrained in the externality is considered contrived pressure from customers, pressure from the competitors, and the external factor of legal and formulated law afflictions that contrive the business to sustain its relative growth the marketplace. The external environmental factors of the UK fashion brands are the affliction of COVID-19 sufficing the comprehensive strategy to be taken according to the situation, likely, that retained the business from conspiring attributed strategies for the factors curated due to COVID-19.

Conclusively, the factors inflicting the fashion retail business are likely attributed in the environment, organizational, and technological context partially, as each element is considered crucial in confiding with the presence of dimensionalities. The TOE framework determined the determinants factor with appropriate segmentation that attributes the resilience from online presence during the COVID-19. Thus, the dimensionality contrived through Technology-Organization-Environment determines the certainty of disadvantageous strategies that the businesses could not comprehend.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### A. Conclusion

The current study aimed to study the phenomenon resilient to the online presence of fashion retail business in the e-commerce marketplace due to Covid-19 in the UK context. The study deems to highlight the factors constrained as a barrier to the UK's online presence of fashion retail brands. The study discussed various frameworks to identify the factor resonating with the attributed resilience in the online presence. The factors were determined as technological and non-technological, which were highlighted by applying technology, organization, environment framework (TOE). The emphasis of the TOE framework has been derived in various studies related to the adoption of e-commerce and concerns related to an online presence in the marketplace. The results implicated the TOE framework to be significant in terms of contextual notion related to the resilient factor in the online presence of UK fashion retail brands during the outbreak of COVID-19.

### B. Managerial Recommendation

The emphasized opportunities that can be constructed through a pandemic situation can be enhanced by creating e-commerce opportunities, which can incline consumers' behavioral intention towards the online marketplace. Most of the fashion retail businesses have comprised upon the certainty of bankruptcy during the Covid-19 outbreak, varied on the results the emphasis of such businesses should be focused on curating a well stabilized online shopping experience that can cater to the needs of the consumer and the fulfilment of consumer services can be concerned. Thus, the retail businesses

are recommended to invest profoundly in e-commerce, and fashion retailers should abide by the construct related to the ease of use in the context of technology which varies the concerns of accessibility and convenience. With the bulk investment in e-commerce, strategies should also be concerned with evolving the overall business strategies and online business strategies. The consumers' behavioural aspects are likely to increase towards e-commerce, while e-commerce would also prove as an alternative shopping trend during the pandemic and post-pandemic phases relevantly.

Furthermore, the fashion retail businesses can incorporate omnichannel opportunities in the context of (BOPIS) "Buy Online and Pick up in Store" where the consumer has an opportunity to buy online (channel) and later on pick up from the retail store. The BOPIS service provides the consumer with specific benefits, as savings are constrained in shipping costs, leisurely shopping experience, unified gratification, and verifying the seller and the product. Likewise, the BOPIS service also benefits the retailers as increased store sales, valued online presence, and the certainty that the consumer buys an additional product from the store when collecting their BOPIS order. Also, to cope with the behavioural change in the consumers, the brands are recommended to encourage the customers by motivating them about the effectiveness of the online shopping experience, which can construct awareness to confer omnichannel behaviour. Also, to shape the omnichannel with precise accumulation, the tendency should be considered to incorporate future application reforms in terms of various revenue models integrated to exempt the consideration of bankruptcy.

Furthermore, as the on-person experience is restricted, the brands can cultivate virtual experiences to attenuate the consumers' attention. It can be conducted through various social media platforms, such as Instagram, Snapchat, and Pinterest, where most consumers interact with the application. Virtual exhibitions can be conducted to make an online presence, which is likely the primary concern of the fashion industry. As different concurrent brands imposed events during the pandemic to cultivate their online presence, Rebecca Minkoff introduced their new collection through a live stream on Instagram (Ilchi, 2020). Furthermore, the retailers can iterate their supply chain strategies and distribution methods to reflect consumers' concerns actively. Fashion retailers can diversify their geographical allocation to their suppliers. If the suppliers concentrated on a single geographical location and the specific area is heavily affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, the risk is

Additionally, the retailers can focus on a variant in-store experience for the consumer after the siege of Covid-19 has been lifted. The retailers should focus on the safety protocols to assure the consumer's safety and the business, as the consumers will still be affected by the concern of the outrageous outbreak of Covid-19. The fashion retail brands should emphasize social campaigns related to the outbreak concerning social distancing, wearing masks across age groups. Furthermore, in terms of post-pandemic preparations, the retailers should incline with the accompanied trends to accelerate their online presence and brand encouragement in the market.



In governmental implication, the policymakers should support e-commerce and ratify the necessary acts and related drafts. The policymakers should help enhance IT infrastructures and curate specific processes for a successful e-commerce implementation and presence. Moreover, concerned with the variance of IT infrastructures, the retailers should focus on specific opportunities relevant to data utilization, emerging technologies, and critical system integration with potential partners. The aspects that should also be concentrated are customer experience, purchase decisions, analytics, market trends, and emerging technology trends. As technology is the primary aspect of advancement in any field, the focus should also be on the business's augmented ecosystem.

### C. Limitations and Future Research

The conducted study was propelled with various limitations, as UK fashion retail brands were only focused during the Covid-19 outbreak. It limits the focus of the study was on a well-developed country where the minority of the businesses comprised with hindrance in the online presence. This element elevated the contingency that the historical construct was not able to be implemented with certainty. The second limitation of the research was determined as the development of a framework to attenuate the factors impacting the online presence of UK brands. Which limited the study to measure the factors that can be considered in a singular framework overall. In the TOE framework, the limitation was considered, as the study deemed to reflect the phenomenon impacting the online presence. The frameworks prospered the factors on many different levels and are considered incommensurate measures reflective to time. It determined that the comparison of factors be complicated. The limitation of the study can be recognized as the implemented methodology, which was considered content analysis.

As a future research direction, the researcher can implement other constructive frameworks in identifying the barriers contemplated in the online presence and the adoption of e-commerce. Moreover, the researcher can study the impact of Covid-19 in the environmental context. Future researchers can expand the research within developing and emerging countries and extend the research in different retail business contexts. In the context of applied methodology, future research can incorporate qualitative or quantitative research methodologies to probe the research objective and identify the hidden facts and factors that were not able to be identified in the current study.

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