Editorial
For the Special Issue on ‘Personal Aspects of E-Business’


Introduction
The unprecedented or even unbelievable ups and downs of E-business, which includes E-commerce, in the past several years have made thousands of organisations around the world think about how they can sell their physical or digital goods, or services in this E-business world. Even with the ‘dotcom burst’, technology advancements and the subsequent application innovations for the E-business environment continue to flourish, making the Internet-based business paradigm an increasing reality. Central to this rapid emergence of E-business is how one, be it an individual, or an organisation can succeed in this new business platform. Given the huge degree of diversity of people involved in doing E-business around the globe, understanding the ‘personal aspects’ of E-business, thus becomes of utmost importance for both researchers and practitioners in developing successful Web sites and the corresponding E-business strategies. These personal aspects may come from differences in demographic profiles, relationship/network building practices and societal norms, business practices, environments and cultural backgrounds. The main purpose of this special issue is to publish excellent research studies that have addressed some of the above aspects and have provided findings and insights for advancing our understanding of the issues.

Papers in the Special Issue
Eighteen papers have been submitted to the special issue. Each paper was reviewed by at least two reviewers. Based on the reviews, eight of them were invited for ‘revise and resubmit’. Four papers were finally accepted for publication in this special issue. These papers address critical issues of the topic, and focus variously on the impact of personality traits on product information presentation effectiveness, on social facilitation effects on the interaction between participants in an Internet, online auction, environment on techniques for supporting personalised document–category management in an E-business environment, and on tools for measuring how an individual develops perceived easiness and usefulness of a Web site.

The first paper begins with an argument that online consumers’ characteristics plays an important role when designing how product information is presented in E-commerce environments. In particular, online consumers’ personality traits impact effectiveness of the presentation of product information on E-commerce sites and the extent to which the various E-commerce environments are effective. In their article, ‘Personality traits and effectiveness of presentation of product information in E-business systems’, Jahng, Jain and Ramanmurthy propose and empirically validate relationships among online consumers’ personality traits, product information presentation richness and on-line consumer behaviour in E-commerce environments. By employing a series of controlled laboratory experiments, they have found empirical evidence to show that effectiveness of product information presentation varies by online consumers’ psychological types, and that rich product information presentation significantly influences the online buying behaviour of intuitive types and feeling types, rather than sensing and thinking types.

The second paper focuses on, how computer mediated communication may affect the behaviour of participants in online auctions. The paper, entitled ‘Online auctions, messaging, communication and social facilitation: a simulation and experimental evidence’ by Rafaeli and Noy, attempts to measure social facilitation effects under the Internet conditions of online or virtual presence. The key research question is: Does social facilitation apply to online auctions, and if so, how can it influence the design of online settings? Using an interactive experiment with a simulated, Java-based Internet Dutch auction Web site, three hypotheses derived from social facilitation theory were tested. Their findings indicate the usefulness of the social facilitation theory in explaining and/or predicting the participants’ behaviour. Under the condition of higher virtual presence, participants not only improve their results and stay longer in the auction, but also indicate their preference for auction arrangements. Their findings also provide practical implications for technology and Internet site developers.

The third paper tackles another important personal aspect of E-business: personalisation of Web pages. In their paper entitled, ‘Managing document categories in
E-commerce environments: an evolution-base approach’, Wei, Hu and Dong, explore and examine an evolution-based approach for supporting user-centric document–category management in E-commerce environments. By applying appropriate artificial intelligence techniques, the authors designed and implemented the category evolution (CE) technique to support personalised document–category management by taking into account categories previously established by the user. Through an empirical evaluation with another document–category management technique, namely category discovery-based technique, their evaluation results suggest that CE exhibits satisfactory effectiveness and reasonable robustness in different scenarios and achieved a performance level better than that recorded by the benchmark technique. Their positive findings substantiate our knowledge in techniques that support personalisation in automated document–category management.

The fourth paper, entitled, ‘The development of two tools for measuring the easiness & usefulness of transactional Web sites’ and authored by Aladwani, focuses on tools to measure how an individual develops perceived easiness and usefulness of a Web site, an area which has been well-researched in technology acceptance/adoption research in general, but not the case in the E-business environment. As stated by the author, ‘the goal of the present investigation is to develop two multi-item instruments to measure perceived easiness and usefulness of transactional Web site from the perspective of Web users. The proposed instruments would be valuable to researchers and practitioners interested in designing, implementing, and managing Web sites’. The instruments validated in the study provide a useful tool for future research to investigate the nature of the relationship between Web site easiness and/or Web site usefulness and users’ actual buying behaviours.

Each of the above papers in some way creates knowledge for us to understand more about the issues relevant to personal aspects of E-business. Though they have not covered all key topics in this research area, for instance, the cultural aspects of individual users in the E-business environment, the findings from the studies are definitely useful for both researchers and practitioners to advance their work in the area. I hope, and I trust, that you will enjoy reading these articles.

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