Guest Editorial Preface

Special Issue: Role of Electronic Word of Mouth in Online Markets

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In this digital era, the role of feedback or reviews provided by the purchasers and experienced customers cannot be overlooked. This is resulted in the popularization of the concept of electronic word of mouth (EWOM). The special issue covers various aspects of online reviews along with their applications in various domains.

In today's world, technology has seeped deep into our lives and rather than saying that "technology is a slave of man" it is becoming that man is a slave of technology. During last few decades, businesses have taken a huge leap from physical operations to turning digital for existence. The success credit goes to the users who have efficiently filtered the merits of using the internet amidst few disadvantages, and have forced the companies to go online and restructure their corporate strategies. This has popularised the concept of electronic commerce. Apart from selling and displaying products/services online, e-commerce firms have started providing a platform to the users for sharing their purchase as well as product related experience with worldwide potential customers. With the proliferation of digitalization into every business domain, the significance of the EWOM provided by the customers in the form of textual comments or ratings is being studied by practitioners as well as researchers. For over a decade, these stakeholders are interested in studying the differential impact of EWOM over any firm in comparison to the traditional WOM performed in a physical environment.

This special issue consists of six research papers in the context of Online Markets and are relevant to the proposed theme of the issue. The issue was open for a period of approx. 5 months from 15 July to 30 November 2019. The papers were double blind peer-reviewed and were finally accepted after the suggested revisions were made by the author(s).

In the first paper titled "Experimenting Language Identification for Sentiment Analysis of English Punjabi Code Mixed Social Media Text," Neetika Bansal, Vishal Goyal, and Simpel Rani present an initial baseline approach for language identification with English Punjabi code mixed social media text. It has been observed that people do not always use unicode rather they mix multiple languages. The processing of code-mixed data becomes challenging due to the linguistic intricacies as the noisy text increases the complexities of language identification. Using Facebook and Twitter messages collected through Facebook graph API and Twitter API, the annotated English Punjabi code mixed dataset was trained using a pipeline dictionary vectorizer and n-gram approach with some features. This work can be used as strong input for sentiment analysis of code-mixed Social Media Text.

The paper "An Approach Combining DEA and ANN for Hotel Performance Evaluation" by Himanshu Sharma, Gunmala Suri, and Vandana Savara proposes a model for evaluating performance of hotels using aspect ratings. For a hotel to succeed in long run, it becomes vital to achieve higher profits along with increased performance. The performance evaluation of a hotel can signify its sustainable competitiveness within the hospitality industry. The paper combines data envelopment analysis and artificial neural network. The input variables considered are number of rooms and the ratings corresponding to six aspects of a hotel (service, room, value, location, sleep quality, and cleanliness). RevPAR (revenue per available room) and customer satisfaction (CS) are taken to be output variables.

With the worldwide changing economic scenario, there occurs a need to structure new tax reforms especially for a developing country like India. With this ideation, the Indian government introduced the goods and service tax (GST) in order to conceptualize a common tax system. However, with digitalization transforming every service from offline to online mode, the government developed a not-for-profit website termed as GST network (GSTN) where citizens can smoothly and securely file their returns. Since the concept is new, studying the GSTN adoption by considering technology acceptance model and unified theory of adoption and use of technology variables becomes a novel approach. The paper "Determining Antecedents of Intention to Adopt Goods and Service tax Network" by Navneet Guleria considers perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, perceived risk, social influence, and facilitating conditions as exogenous variables whereas intention to adopt GSTN is considered as endogenous one.

The importance of comparable corpora as an alternative to parallel corpora for the languages where the Parallel corpora is scarce has been discussed in "Document Alignment for Generation of English - Punjabi Comparable Corpora from Wikipedia" by Manpreet Singh Lehal, Ajit Kumar, and Vishal Goyal. The paper explores Wikipedia as a potential source and defined the process of alignment of documents which will be further used for the extraction of parallel data. It has been observed that the efficiency of the models trained on comparable corpora is comparatively less to that of the Parallel Corpora however it helps to compensate much to the machine translation. The parallel data thus extracted helps to enhance the performance of statistical machine translation.

After looking at the technology acceptance and various implications of EWOM, the special issue looks incomplete without considering the importance of reviewers. Online reviewer societies flourish on contributions from different reviewers, who display wavering engagement behaviour. Effort has been made in the e-marketing literature for segmenting individuals with the help of their engagement behaviour. In the research paper titled "Segmentation and Ranking of Online Reviewer Community: The Role of Reviewers' Frequency, Helpfulness, and Recency" by Aakash and Ajay Jaiswal, the reviewers of TripAdvisor are segmented through k-means clustering based on three dimensions (F-frequency, H-helpfulness, R-recency), resulting in four different reviewer segments namely valuable, trustworthy, new, and valueless. The findings suggest that the valuable reviewers, who post EWOM regularly and get more helpful votes by readers, are the most important. Surprisingly, the trustworthy, who also get more helpful votes with a higher EWOM volume, but not posting any review recently, are the next important.

The last paper provides an overview of adoption studies towards technological products. The objective of the paper "Adoption and Diffusion of Hi-Technology Product and Related Inventory Policies - An Integrative Literature Review" by Gaurav Nagpal and Udayan Chanda is to study the published researches on the inventory modelling and optimization for substitutable technology products having short product life cycle. The paper explains the demand dynamics of technology generation products and how to administer supply chain management of this kind of products than any other functional products. The paper firstly reviews the demand models proposed on the diffusion of innovation products, and then, moves on to the literature review of the multi-item inventory models, followed by the literature review of the inventory modelling of substitutable items. The study mentions that the research that has been done on the inventory optimization of multi generation technology products is not only rare but also very restrictive in its scope and assumptions.

The papers included in this special issue provide valuable contributions to the present EWOM literature and enlightens the practitioners and academicians with insightful implications. We hope that these contributions will motivate the readers to further extend these studies and keep glorifying the EWOM concepts.

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