A SWOT Analysis of Turkish e-commerce activities in post COVID-19 era

COVİD-19 sonrası dönemde Türkiye'deki e-ticaret faaliyetlerinin SWOT Analizi

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Abstract

This paper presents a SWOT Analysis to state Turkish E-Commerce activities' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the post-COVID-19 era. By examining the internal and external factors, the study aims to provide valuable insights for the whole actor, such as stakeholders, policymakers and businesses in the e-commerce ecosystem. As Türkiye has an important position among global actors, this study examines the key factors navigating the evolving landscape of e-commerce in Türkiye, both academically and practically. The analysis sheds light on strategic considerations associated with the market orientation approach to enhance the sector's resilience and assess the emerging opportunities in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Keywords: E-commerce, COVID-19 Pandemic, SWOT Analysis

Jel Codes: M31, L81, L1

Öz

Bu çalışma ile, COVİD-19 sonrası dönemde Türkiye'deki e-ticaret faaliyetlerinin güçlü ve zayıf yönleri ile pazarın fırsat ve tehditleri, ortaya konan SWOT Analizi üzerinden değerlendirilmektedir. Araştırmanın temel amacı e-ticaret sektörünü etkileyen iç ve dış faktörleri değerlendirerek ekosistemdeki paydaşlar, politika yapıcılar ve işletmeler için katkı sağlayacak görüşler sunmaktır. Türkiye günden güne büyüyen e-ticaret pazarı ile küresel aktörler arasında önemli bir konuma erişmiştir. Bu bilgiler ışığında araştırma hem akademik yazında hem de uygulamada e-ticarete yön veren temel faktörleri gözler önüne sermektedir. Analiz ile ortaya konan başlıklar, sektörün dayanıklılığını artırmaya ve salgın sonrasında ortaya çıkan fırsatları değerlendirmeye yönelik bir bakış açısıyla sunulmaktadır. Aynı zamanda pazar odaklılık anlayışı ile ilişkilendirilerek işletmelere yönelik stratejik hususlara ışık tutmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: E-ticaret, COVİD-19 Pandemisi, SWOT Analizi

JEL Kodları: M31, L81, L1

Introduction

In late 2019, human life was disrupted by the emergence of COVID-19, which acted as a catalyst for unprecedented change. In every aspect of industry and commerce, the virus acted as the prior actor to lead transformation. While the world faces uncertainties and disruptions, consumers and businesses tend to shift to digital platforms for their shopping and selling needs. Today, it can be said that the results show a positive effect on e-commerce evolvement as the COVID-19 virus directly accelerates it.

During this period, governments-imposed lockdowns, and people had to spend long periods at home. Thus, a new way of survival has been adopted, and consumers have discovered online shopping channels to meet their daily needs. Among this demand, businesses are pushed to accelerate online solutions with developed operational systems to meet their needs and want for customer satisfaction.

The customer orientation aiming to meet the needs and wants was introduced in the 1990's and has evolved daily (Kohli and Jaworksi 1990; Kohli et al.,1993; Narver and Slater 1990; Ruekert 1992). With the development of technology, customer orientation has evolved, marketing measurement began to be evaluated through the translational channel, and the concept of marketing automation was introduced (Little, 2001). Kotler et al. (2016) argue that even if technological development offers advantages to marketing processes, this situation has moved marketing to a value-oriented understanding. Value-oriented marketing means communication and interaction with the customer (Kotler et al., 2016). Even the American Marketing Association (AMA) replaced the concept of promotion in the definition of marketing with communication (AMA, 2017). The concept of e-commerce, which was born with the digitalization and transfer of marketing activities to the Internet environment, is an integrated structure that includes traditional marketing approaches (Kotler et al., 2016).

At the beginning of 2000, e-commerce was defined in the literature and evolved to today's latest version as it is beyond online commercial transactions (Vijayaraman and Bhatia, 2002; Holsapple and Singh, 2000; Reynolds, 2004). E-commerce provides advantages and opportunities for companies to grow and develop by propelling their businesses with new insights on a global scale (Koe and Sakir, 2020). E-commerce dissolves costs for renting, physical utilities and staff and provides cost efficiency compared to launching a traditional retail store. SME's can expand their markets via digital infrastructure as they do not need to open a physical store in each country. While they can easily increase the customer volume beyond local boundaries, this advantage allows them to simultaneously reach global markets and accelerate diversification and growth in different markets (Thuy, 2022).

Marketplaces have evolved into digital platforms since the internet is the operation's driver for digital platforms for selling and buying goods and services (Ocloo et al., 2020). Any individual with internet access can reach online stores wherever they are. Consumers reach global brands regardless of location (Zhang et al., 2023; Hamad et al., 2018). As companies could reach global audiences without geographical boundaries, customers could reach the brands anytime. Therefore, it can be said that convenience could be one of the most crucial advantages of e-commerce, providing 7/24 browsing, selecting or purchasing options.

Data analytics could be the other advantage of e-commerce platforms, as user behaviour can be monitored and measured via various algorithms. Data analytics could enable the company to get customer feedback and evolve its marketing strategies to focus on advertising or promotion tactics. Businesses also reach personalized data via preferences and habits, and this could enable them to take data-driven strategies to increase customer satisfaction (Chakraborty et al., 2022).

As e-commerce provides these advantages and increases sales worldwide, the results allow brand awareness and brand value with developed products and services via customer feedback. Positive customer feedback could also create a competitive advantage with wide market intelligence, knowledge, and extended global markets (Chakraborty et al., 2022; Ramanathan et al. 2012; Sila, 2019).

With all these advantages, e-commerce was already gaining ground in the digital world. However, COVID-19 dramatically increased the scope of e-commerce with the rapid adaptation of consumers through their reshaped behaviour (Türkiye E-ticaret Ekosistemi, 2022). The E-commerce sector, which has gained rapid growth momentum on a global scale since 2020 due to the impact of the pandemic, seems to have slowed down with the elimination of closures in 2022. However, this period was sufficient to transform the business in Türkiye through digitalization as Türkiye stands out as a very advanced country in terms of the development of e-commerce. Although the pandemic is over, the acceleration of digitalization in many sectors is rising. With the effect of perfecting their experiences, online shopping permanently affects consumers and has become a behaviour. E-commerce has reached a market share of 5.7 trillion US dollars worldwide, representing 5.7% of the US$100.2 trillion global gross product. In

Türkiye, the share of e-commerce in gross domestic product (GDP) in 2022 was 6%. While the share of e-commerce in GDP increased by 2.8% in the last 5 years, 1.6% of this increase was recorded under the influence of the pandemic. After its display, 2022 data showed that this rise will continue (Türkiye E-ticaret Ekosistemi, 2022:1).

This article examines the transformation of e-commerce in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic by evaluating the current situation and recommendations for all sector shareholders. There are studies in the literature related to the relationship between COVID-19 and the e-commerce sector; however, it is observed that there is a gap in research to evaluate the current situation through internal and external dynamics. It is a fact that the pandemic era has a catalyst role for the transition of digitalization. However, there are or will be some challenges or threats to overcome for the sustainability of the process. Thus, the study performs a SWOT Analysis of the post-pandemic situation of the e-commerce sector in Türkiye. As it is a promising and rapidly growing ecosystem, according to recent statistics, it aims to evaluate the current situation and recommend strategies for the actors of the whole sector based on post-COVID-19 adoption.

Methodology

The questions derived from "how, why" are investigated under qualitative research through phenomenology, case study, ethnography, narrative research and grounded theory, and the main issue is to focus on more detail to understand deeply the replies besides the data gathered by measurable characteristics such as quantity, average, or number of people (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Saban and Ersoy, 2019). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative data analysis includes the stages of data collection, data reduction, data display, drawing conclusions and verification (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016).

After determining the research method and the design, it is decided to arrange the way of gathering the data and the analysis. This research paper aims to investigate the e-commerce sector of Türkiye, which has rapidly grown during COVID-19. While the recovery period of the pandemic continues, the sector seems promising based on the market volume and customer tendencies. However, the market dynamics could vary, and challenges could be overcome.

In the context of this research, document review analysis is used for the research design. Document review, a methodological approach including collecting and analyzing related data via existing documents, records or materials, is preferred for data collection. Document review is a systematic analysis of written, printed or electronic sources of information. While analyzing the collected data, document analysis is also preferred to be used beside all other techniques (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016).

According to Scriven (1991) "…evaluation refers to determining the merit, worth, or value of something, or originally (and still typically) involving judgment but then extended to cover all claims about value many of which are observational…" (Scriven, 1991:163).

It is conducted to provide a SWOT Analysis to evaluate the current situation of the post-COVID-19 era for the e-commerce sector in Türkiye. Furthermore, it aims to evaluate and reveal the suggestions for the stakeholders of the e-commerce sector in Türkiye while the recovery period continues. It is briefly illustrated in Figure 1 for the SWOT Analysis of the study.

The two main components of SWOT are the indicators of the internal situation described by existing Strengths and Weaknesses and the indicators of the external environment described by existing Opportunities and Threats (Markovska et al., 2009:753). Using strengths and opportunities to prevent threats by minimizing weaknesses is the main purpose of SWOT Analysis (Aslan et al., 2014:234). Based on the SWOT Analysis method, some challenges can occur according to the subjective approach of the author. The real data are gathered via company reports from reputable sector studies and research groups to overcome this situation.

The use of this method gives rise to some advantages and disadvantages. The advantages, for instance, may include the idea that this method is very simple and everybody can use it without having advanced knowledge or external technical support. The disadvantages refer to various shortcomings regarding this method, such as its simplistic, static and subjective character. These shortcomings have influenced the transparency of the results of SWOT Analysis (Şeker and Özgürler, 2012: 1544-1545).
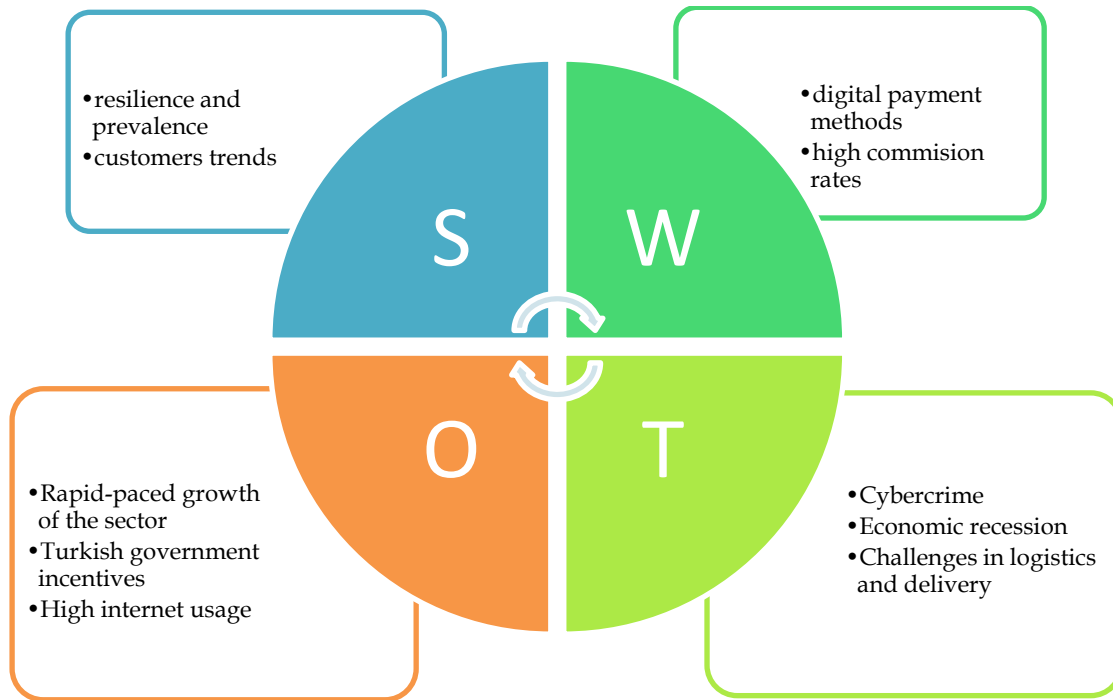
Figure 1: Overview of SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Resilience and prevalence of e-commerce platforms

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the e-commerce platforms of Türkiye displayed remarkable resilience, as observed from the statistical reviews. The advantage of this era is that the safety concerns and lockdowns enabled the adaptability of these platforms. However, it is not easy to adjust the digital technologies and operate 7/24 logistics—the pivot of online shopping needed to be a digital transformation and solid infrastructure. The process incorporates advanced technologies, including data analytics, machine learning and artificial intelligence. Furthermore, contactless delivery and prioritized customer safety must be managed with great attention and care. As a result, the Turkish e-commerce ecosystem, including all channels, proved the existence of a robust online infrastructure and logistics network.

The channels that e-commerce sellers offer products are listed as a marketplace, independent website (direct online selling) or both. As can be read in Table 1, in 2022, Türkiye will have a high ratio with 82.7% of marketplaces among e-commerce platforms, including independent websites. Turkish online customers' interest in marketplaces has caused global marketplaces to be included in the ecosystem. Turkish marketplaces have reached global investments, leading them to improve their processes operationally and in terms of infrastructure with the investments they receive from abroad. With all the efforts, Türkiye is the 18th biggest e-commerce market in the world (Türkiye E-ticaret Ekosistemi, 2022:59).

Table 1: Volume Share of Retail E-Commerce of Marketplaces in Total Retail E-commerce in Selected Countries

%, 2022	
44.1%	Germany
37.6%	USA
59.0%	Brazil
88.7%	China
75%	India
33.5%	UK
50.3%	Poland
82.7%	Türkiye

Source: (Türkiye E-ticaret Ekosistemi, 2022:59)

The most popular actors of Türkiye's e-commerce ecosystem, including e-commerce platforms, marketplaces and e-commerce solution providers, are listed below (Türkiye'nin En Büyük E-ticaret Siteleri, 2023):

- **Trendyol:** Trendyol, one of Türkiye's most popular e-commerce platforms, was founded in 2010 by a woman entrepreneur and scaled up in a few years. Trendyol offers a wide range of products, including fashion, beauty, household goods, electronics, etc. It has also created brand value by connecting various sellers and buyers on one platform.

- **Hepsiburada**: Like Trandyol, Hepsiburada is a major Turkish e-commerce platform. It started its activities in 1998, growing and building trustable customer relationships. Hepsiburada provides diverse products, including electronics, fashion, household goods, and beauty products.

- **n11:** n11 is a popular online marketplace in Türkiye that has brought various sellers and buyers together since its foundation in 2013, with an open market e-commerce brand mindset. In n11, sellers offer electronics, fashion, household, living, and more products.

- **Sahibinden:** Sahibinden was founded in 1999 as a classifieds and e-commerce platform where users can buy and sell a wide range of products. Initially, it focused more on the real estate and cars sector, adding more product groups to its categories like electronics and more within years. The brand is also known for its user-friendly interface and solutions.

- **Ticimax:** Ticimax is primarily focusing on e-commerce activities as a solution provider. It has then begun to operate as an online marketplace. Through its infrastructure, businesses can set up stores to sell online and directly reach customers using Ticimax's platform.

Customer trends in online shopping

E-commerce categories worldwide are categorized in the Digital 2023 report, and fashion is the most demanding category. Online shoppers spend 871.2 billion USD worldwide for products in the fashion category (Digital, 2023:366). Fashion is listed at the top shown in Table 2 as it is the same as the interest of consumers in Türkiye.

Table 2: Estimated Annual Spend in Each Consumer Goods E-commerce Category

%, Billion (USD)	
Fashion	871.2
Electronics	765.7
Toys, Hobby, DIY	601.7
Furniture	387.7
Personal and Household Care	368.2
Food	244
Beverages	207.9
Physical Media	143.8

Source: (Digital 2023:366)

According to a report by Statista, clothing and shoes are ranked first, as shown in Figure 2, the most popular categories for online purchases in Türkiye as of March 2023 (Statista, 2023). This trend shows that Turkish consumers are harmonious with the demand of global consumers based on the report of Digital 2023.
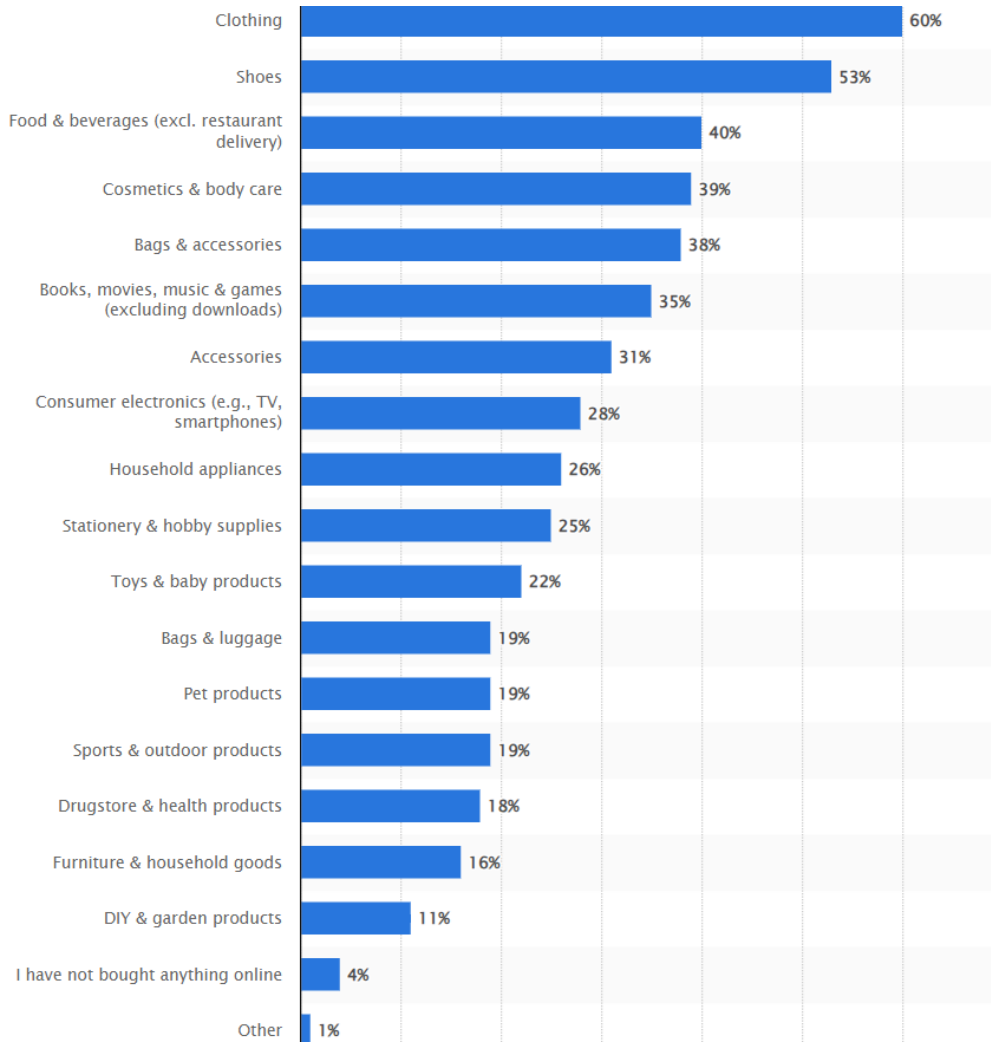
Figure 2: Most Popular Categories for Online Purchases in Türkiye as of March 2023

Source: (Statista, 2023)

Weaknesses

Less adoption of digital payment methods

Total e-commerce volume based on payment methods of Türkiye in the first 6 months of 2023, is listed as 62.7%, with 409.3 billion TL in card transactions, 32% with Remittance/EFT and other payments with 209.3 billion TL while 5.2% was made up of door-to-door payments with 34.1 billion TL (ETBİS, 2023). Turkish consumers still prefer traditional payment methods when shopping online. Traditional methods include credit cards, debit cards or cash payment in-door. Alternative methods such as cryptocurrencies, digital wallets, prepay, post-pay, BNLP, or A2A payment systems are accepted.

According to Figure 3, the preference ratio for traditional payment methods was 71% in 2022, nearly twice the world average (Türkiye E-ticaret Ekosistemi, 2022). This result explains that traditional payment methods are gradually left behind. Terminating the PayPal payment activities of Türkiye in 2016 also creates a disadvantage for global purchasers (Paypal, 2023). Brands established with global infrastructures, such as Shopify, could not use global payment methods due to this legal situation. Also, the brands selling their products through independent websites could face customer doubt about the security issues of the local payment channels in global markets.
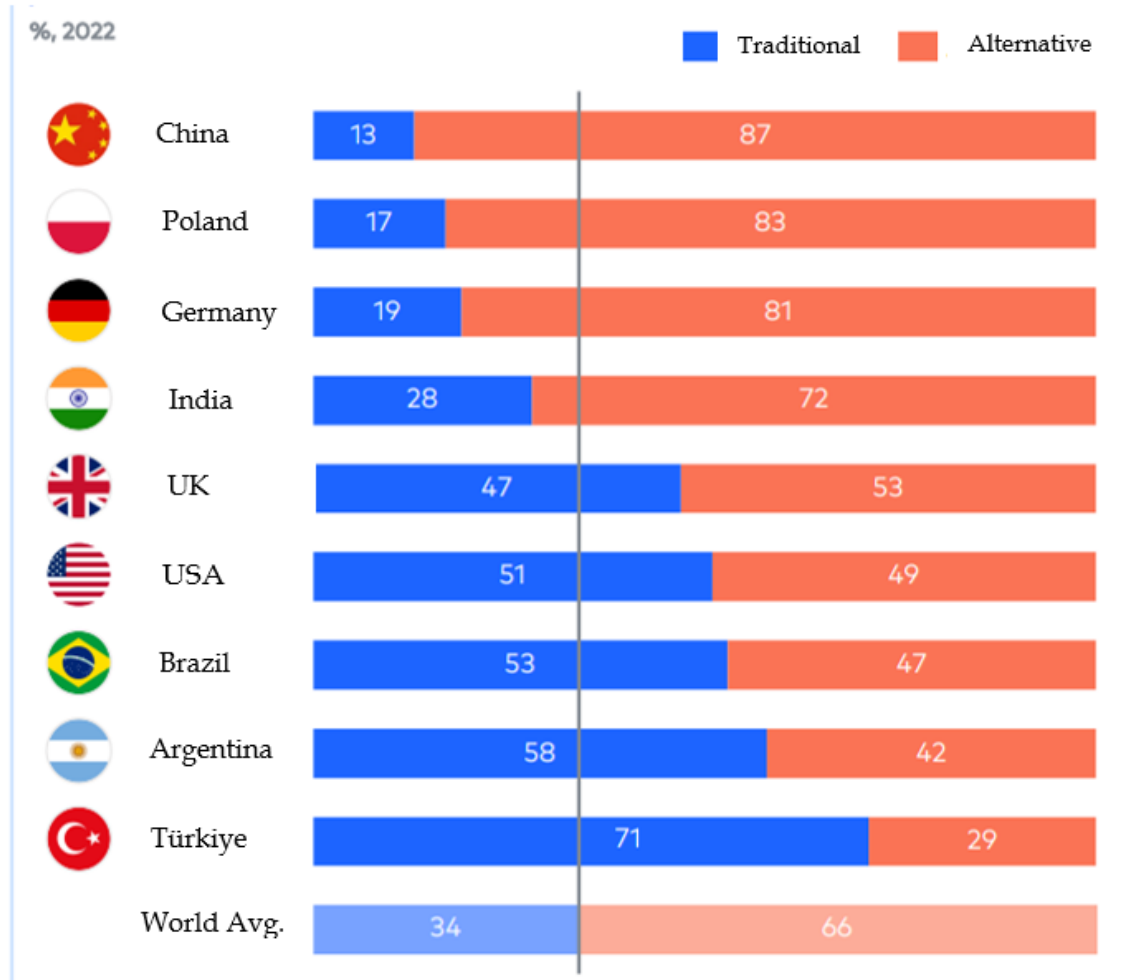
Figure 3: Preference Rate of Traditional and Alternative Payment Methods in E-Commerce in Selected Countries

Source: (Türkiye E-ticaret Ekosistemi, 2022:40)

According to Digital 2023 report results shown in Figure 4, the use of mobile payment services such as Apple Pay and Samsung Pay is approximately 25% compared to other payment methods. When we look at the use of mobile payment services in Türkiye, this ratio is 13.7%, nearly half of the world average. These results also support the other reports as Türkiye needs to develop financial infrastructure for e-commerce payment systems to become an important actor in the global base.
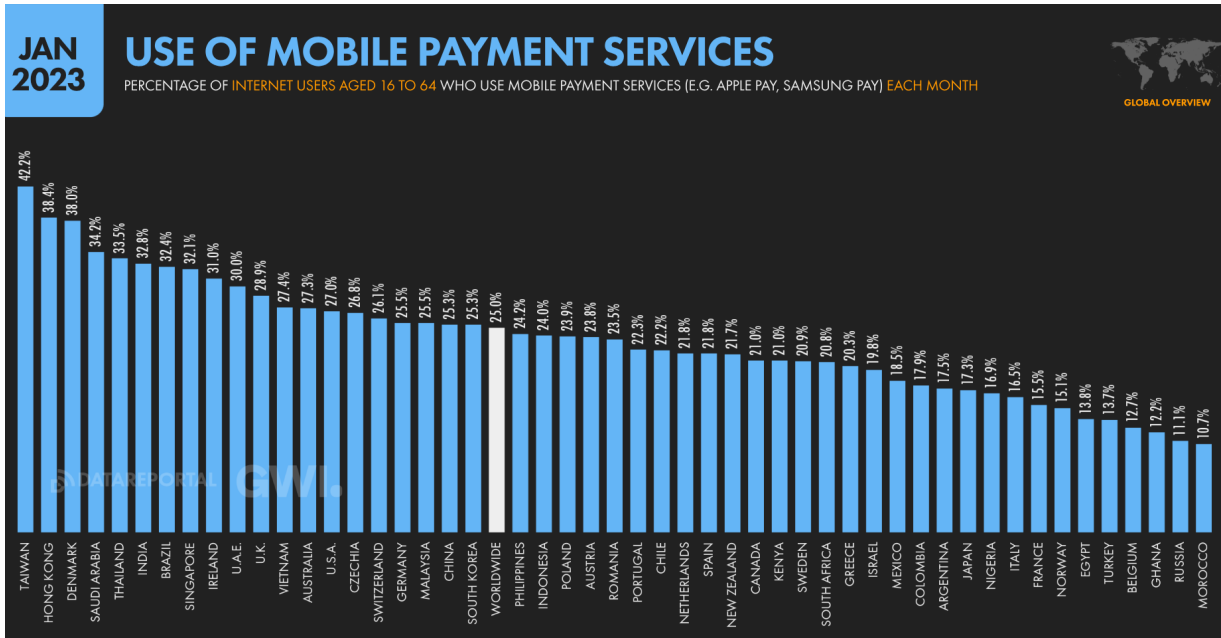
Figure 4: Use of Mobile Payment Services

Source: (Digital, 2023:396)

High commission rates of marketplaces

E-commerce has a two-sided structure that combines sellers and buyers. From the sellers' side, the goal is to create a sustainable business model in online platforms and maintain a long-term relationship with the customers under a strong brand name. It is difficult to transform all the operations into digital systems and manage the process in the long run. Especially for Turkish marketplaces, it is observed that the commission fees include the usage fee of the platform plus the fee for each sales transaction. The commission rates differ according to the product segment. However, it is observed that the approximate commission fee rate is nearly 10-15%, which forces new ventures to enter online stores (Bayramoğlu, 2022). While digital advertising that sellers have to use is considered the iterative element of the process, the operational costs reach higher levels.

Opportunities

Rapid-paced growth of Türkiye's e-commerce market

According to *the* Turkish E-commerce Ecosystem Outlook presented by Stragey, the Turkish e-commerce market significantly grew during the pandemic and is expected to maintain its high-paced growth. The rise of the Turkish e-commerce market size between 2019 and 2020 is 98%, as it reached 46 billion TRY and then 90 billion TRY. Although the direct impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has decreased, the growth is still observed on the positive side, and it was expected to follow up this rise by approximately 25% (Turkish E-commerce Ecosystem Outlook, 2023).

However, it was interesting that according to the Electronic Commerce Information System of Türkiye (ETBİS) report, this estimation is much higher than Stragey's report, and e-commerce volume reached 136 billion TRY in 2020. In 2021, it was estimated as %25 growth in the following years; however, we observed 68.7% growth in 2021 and 109% growth in 2022 compared to previous years. This result means that e-commerce volume reached 381.5 billion TRY in 2023 and 800.7 billion TRY in 2022 (ETBİS, 2023).

According to the Digital 2023 report, the percentage % of internet users aged 16 to 64 who buy something online weekly is 64.6% in Türkiye. This ratio ranked Türkiye in third place among other countries, while the world average is 57.6% (Digital, 2023:355).

Today, e-commerce volume in Türkiye in the first half of 2023 reached 652.7 billion TL, an increase of 109.7% compared to the same period of the previous year (ETBIS, 2023). World e-commerce is expected to reach 6.3 trillion (Forbes,2023). E-commerce is a rapidly growing sector both in Türkiye and the world, and as a result, this situation creates great opportunities for e-commerce ecosystem players. In 2021, before the year is completed, Deloitte provided a report explaining the effect of COVID-19 on the e-commerce experience worldwide. According to the study, 4 of 5-internet users have experienced at least one online shopping due to the impact of COVID-19 (TÜBSİAD, 2021:7). The final results also show

that Türkiye has a high adoption rate. At the same time, the sellers provide online solutions to the consumers and consumer behaviour is accepted as a positive response to this digital offer as this will push the market size to grow.

Turkish government incentives

While the e-commerce sector is rapidly growing, the Turkish Republic government supports Turkish companies in becoming global and increasing their e-export activities. The government incentives include issues related to the expenses of trademark registration, market research, business travels, international fairs, opening business units abroad (such as offices, stores, warehouses or showrooms), global marketplace entrance, e-commerce advertising and promotion activities etc. The financial amounts for support associated with e-commerce activities are briefly listed below:

• Trademark registration: International trademark registration expenses support reaches max. 50% ratio and USD 50.000 annually.

• Opening business units abroad: Support ratio reaches max. 40-50% and USD 100.000-120.000 annually based on business unit type (office/store/warehouse/showroom)

• Digital marketplace promotion activities: Support amount reaches TL 7.500.000 per company for 3 years.

More specifically, in an e-commerce support program, which is among market entry government incentives, companies are provided financial support for opening online stores, renting warehouses abroad, digital advertising costs, global marketplace integration expenses, and operations of order fulfilment services. These reinforced incentives focused on e-commerce activities were launched by the Ministry of Commerce in 2022 as online shopping has been rapidly increasing due to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic era. Since then, the program has been announced through informative public events and provided in detail on the website of the ministry (T.C. Ticaret Bakanlığı Resmi Websitesi, 2023).

High internet usage

Online shopping, the main actor of the e-commerce ecosystem, could derive from a digital tool providing a solid internet connection. There are 5.16 billion total internet users in the world. This number explains that 64.4% of the world's population uses the Internet. For Türkiye, internet usage is over the world average with a percentage of 83.4, which means that approximately 64 million Turkish people could use the internet in Türkiye. Using mobile phones to use the internet in Türkiye (94.3%) is over the world average (92.3%). When we look at the daily time spent using the internet, the world average is 6 hours and 37 minutes. Türkiye is over the world average with 7 hours and 24 minutes, the average time internet users aged 16 to 64 spend daily on their devices (Digital, 2023).

Threats

Cybercrime

Common threats to e-commerce businesses include fraud, malware, other security breaches, and illegal data sharing. Digital businesses should also be mindful of the risks associated with working with third-party vendors, digital security regulations, data privacy laws, and customer service issues. Cybercriminals only require a few expenses beyond a computer and an Internet connection. They are unconstrained by geography and distance. They are difficult to identify and prosecute due to the anonymous nature of the Internet.

Since attacks against information technology systems are very attractive, the number and sophistication of cyber-attacks are expected to keep growing (Jang-Jaccard and Nepal 2014:973). As Jang-Jaccard and Nepal made this prediction in 2014, cyber security crimes have increased daily. According to the most recent data breach report by IBM and the Ponemon Institute, the average data breach cost in the US is $4.24 million in 2021, with a 10% increase from 2019 (Vaurs, 2023).

Cybercrime is a crime committed using information tools, i.e. devices such as computers, phones, tablets, ATMs, and POS machines. However, the definition in question is narrow, and entering an information system unlawfully and staying there will lead to the commission of a crime. Cybercrimes are regulated between Articles 243-246 of the Turkish Penal Code No. 5237 (What is cybercrime? What are the penalties? 2023). However, not only for Türkiye but also worldwide, it is a threat to e-commerce activities, which are also improving while the e-commerce ecosystem is growing daily.

Economic recession

Türkiye's economy grew by 3.9% in the first quarter of 2023 compared to the same period of the previous year. Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) also announced the economic growth figures for the second quarter of 2023. In the second quarter, GDP grew by 3.8% in the second quarter of 2023 as the industrial sector grew by -2.6%, the agricultural sector by 1.2%, and the services sector (including construction) by 3.9%. (TÜİK, 2023). Although there has been growth, consumers are struggling in the face of high inflation and the depreciation of the Turkish Lira, while all sectors are going through difficult times. Furthermore, two devastating earthquakes have caused an estimated loss of USD 34.2 billion while the recovery from the pandemic continues (World Bank, 2023).

Economic recession poses various negative effects on consumer spending as people tend to cut back on spending, which may slow down businesses. Many companies may face difficulties such as bankruptcy and closure in this fragile business environment. Employment costs could contribute to these consequences and thus increase the unemployment rate. Addressing these threats requires governmental policies coordinated with the central bank to encourage economic recovery. The recovery process includes the combination of fiscal, monetary, and structural measures to change today's market dynamics and the future positively. The sector could be downsized and damaged because of online shoppers' loss or limited spending.

Challenges in logistics and delivery

Customer expectations are getting higher and higher via the competition among e-commerce businesses as they promise the fastest delivery method. High expectations directly put pressure on the logistic providers to meet the customer demands at a high level. Most of the companies are the customers who vote for them after the delivery process, and the choices include "fast enough", "not satisfactory", and "delivered on time". Furthermore, traffic congestion in populated cities such as İstanbul makes the situation challenging. In Türkiye, an average of 5,000 to 5,500 motorcycle accidents occur every month, according to the accident statistics published monthly by the General Directorate of Security. It is estimated that many of these accidents are motorcycle courier accidents (TUMTİS, 2022).

Apart from the challenges in logistics, there could be another issue that E-commerce businesses often face after delivery. There could be returns or changes that include an extra cost to delivery operations. It is needed to reverse logistics with quick delivery in a highly competitive environment.

Concluding remarks

In the previous section, the internal strengths and weaknesses of the e-commerce sector of Türkiye under the external opportunities and threats of the post-COVID-19 pandemic era are examined. Since the COVID-19 pandemic is accepted as an unexpected external environmental factor in the design of this article, a portfolio of strategies focused on marketing approach is provided for suggestion in the context of the development of the e-commerce sector in Türkiye as follows:

• Even if the importance of e-commerce is included in the development plan of Türkiye, it would be crucial and beneficial to prepare a strategy plan specific to the e-commerce sector. The market volume of e-commerce has been growing rapidly around the world during the COVID-19 pandemic. Türkiye is one of the markets showing the same growth. Although the size of this acceleration has decreased, the growth continues. Thus, it is the correct time to prepare a marketing-oriented strategic plan, especially before the force-major situations occur while the recovery process of the pandemic is still current.

• Türkiye's geopolitical situation could make the country a hub between Asia and Europe. Türkiye can act as an intermediate warehouse for warehousing services, especially crucial in e-commerce operations. However, operations management needs to be further specialized because the most powerful aspect of e-commerce is fast and easy access. E-commerce operations management should be valid for major forces as online customers have had a huge demand after the pandemic. Türkiye could offer global brands to become the solution provider with warehouse and storage services as it is estimated to be a cost-estimated business model.

• The online customers in Türkiye do not prefer the global payment channels used. The exit of PayPal from the country has created a negative situation for global customers. At the same time, banning websites such as Booking.com, which is preferred globally, creates a loss of trust. Türkiye is a country with a free market economy. Therefore, such restrictions should be resolved as soon as possible. At the same time, brands and marketplaces should encourage alternative payment methods that are preferred globally. In this way, the Turkish consumer will become a global customer and Türkiye, which competes in the global market, will reach more markets. Again, facing a future pandemic or any other force-major

situation is possible. COVID-19 was an experience to observe all these results, take precautions, and be prepared for unpredictable cases.

- The Turkish government's incentives are often effective instruments to stimulate the economy. These supports that will also increase the volume of e-export are of great importance. It is observed that the e-commerce incentives were strengthened after the COVID-19 period, as this period proved that Türkiye's e-commerce system could successfully handle this unpredicted situation. However, at this point, the subsequent payment of incentives causes the funds to melt against inflation. The improvements to be made at this point will transform regulations into business-friendly and clear structures, which will cause e-commerce activities to increase further and will contribute to the growth of small enterprises as well.

- The COVID-19 period was not only revealing the issues related to digital transformation but The issue of sustainability was also highlighted after the COVID-19 period, which is of great importance for Türkiye as it is all over the world. In this context, an environmentally friendly and eco-friendly approach is developing in e-commerce products. Türkiye should closely monitor these developments, and Turkish brands should include sustainability issues in their marketing plans. For example, they should develop products and services in line with environmentally friendly packaging, zero waste, or green consensus.

- The advantages of artificial intelligence or virtual reality can become solutions for e-commerce brands. The effect of lockdowns and long hours spent at home increased integration and communications during COVID-19. At the same time, social media platforms have begun to transform e-commerce into s-commerce. Instant shares and video content have taken the e-commerce process to a different point. Thus, it is recommended that e-commerce brands follow these developments closely and avoid the current developments in the sector in the post-COVID era.

- The market-oriented approach evolved into a customer-oriented approach and then a value-oriented one. Today's customer wants to personalize and perfect their experience with the brand. Brands need to find solutions to bring them to the level of excellence to gain a competitive advantage within the dynamics of e-commerce. During COVID-19, people tend to understand the importance of their real desires and wants. Thus, the post-COVID era should focus on customer-oriented approaches and develop their marketing strategies from this perspective.

To sum up, as in the rest of the world, Türkiye has kept pace with the accelerated e-commerce trend during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the sector has grown rapidly. Although the growth rate decreased due to COVID-19, customers adapted to online shopping, so this period provided a transition from traditional to e-commerce activities for both companies and consumers. While the study reveals Türkiye's rising e-commerce potential, it also includes some limitations. However, as Türkiye has a promising market in the global e-commerce ecosystem, the weaknesses are focused on payment terms only. Moreover, threats are common worldwide as countries are challenged with cybersecurity issues.

For further studies, items of each SWOT Analysis area can be examined from a different point of view and designed based on other elements that occurred after the COVID-19 period. This paper aims to reach the marketing executives and digital heads of e-commerce platforms or websites to consider the results while arranging their marketing steps. It is also desired to contribute to the sellers and entrepreneurs in the e-commerce sector while determining their marketing decisions.

Türkiye's e-commerce volume may increase when some issues, currently seen as disadvantages, quickly turn into positives. Finally, while the study intends to contribute to the academic and business world, the results reveal that Türkiye will follow a positive course soon.

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