

Editorial: Retailing and Marketing at the Edge of Global Uncertainty

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The global retail and marketing landscape in 2025 is being redefined not only by the rapid pace of technological innovation but also by the sobering realities of escalating geopolitical tensions. The ongoing Russia–Ukraine war, the intensifying conflict between Israel and Tehran, and the newly reintroduced economic and trade measures under the Trump administration have collectively cast long shadows over global trade, supply chains, and consumer confidence.

The implications for businesses are profound. Energy prices remain volatile, raw material costs continue to climb, and cross-border trade is fraught with uncertainty. Supply chain disruptions—once considered pandemic anomalies—have become recurring hurdles, forcing retailers to rethink inventory strategies, sourcing locations, and contingency planning. In particular, small and medium enterprises (SMMEs) are under severe pressure, often lacking the resilience or bargaining power to absorb such shocks.

From the consumer’s perspective, inflationary pressures have led to cautious spending behaviour and value-driven purchasing. There is a renewed emphasis on essentials, price transparency, and ethical consumption. In politically stable regions, consumers are increasingly expecting brands to take principled stands on global conflicts—fueling a wave of “conscious consumerism” that transcends borders.

Against this backdrop, marketing is undergoing a seismic shift. Brands can no longer rely on clever campaigns alone; they must communicate empathy, purpose, and adaptability. Retailers are investing in **hyper-localisation**, **crisis-sensitive messaging**, and **predictive analytics** to tailor offerings to anxious and fragmented markets. We are witnessing the rise of **resilience marketing**, where the focus is on trust-building, brand authenticity, and long-term relationship cultivation amid uncertainty.

Meanwhile, digital transformation is not just a trend—it is an imperative. The surge in AI-driven tools, blockchain for supply transparency, and immersive retail experiences (such as AR/VR shopping environments) are being fast-tracked. In-store technologies are evolving to offer seamless touchpoints with online platforms, ushering in the next phase of **phygital retailing**.



Future research will bring into focus these critical challenges and responses. Researchers will explore how geopolitical volatility affects brand strategy, consumer psychology, and marketing agility. These researchers will delve into how retailers across Africa, Asia, and Europe are adapting their models, and how marketers are crafting narratives that resonate in a world where global headlines influence local choices.

As researchers and practitioners, we find ourselves operating in an era where political borders, cultural identities, and economic policies intersect more visibly than ever. It is our responsibility to develop frameworks that are not only academically sound but practically relevant—grounded in the lived realities of consumers and the operational complexities of modern commerce.

In these uncertain times, the call to the retail and marketing community is clear: to be flexible, ethical, informed, and above all, human in our response. We must not only anticipate the next trend but also engage critically with the socio-political forces that shape them.

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