

CONSUMER WELL-BEING IN A CASHLESS CULTURE

ABOUT THE TRACK

Venmo. PayPal. GoFundMe. CashApp. ApplePay. And more. Digital payment platforms have emerged as a central force in the marketplace and as mediators of consumers' everyday behaviors and social relationships. Through digital payment platforms, consumers can split their rent, transfer a child's allowance, donate to a non-profit, crowdfund for a loved one's medical treatment, share a carpool with strangers, or sell goods online.

Early cashless systems, such as credit cards, have paved the way for a cashless culture—one in which financial exchanges within the marketplace are completed electronically. From American Express encouraging us "Don't leave home without it" to Mastercard prompting us "More living. Less limits," in essence a move to a cashless culture liberated consumers to dream and consume without limits. Cashless culture embodies what, when, how, and the manner in which we consume. Coupled with technological advancements in the sophistication of cashless payment platforms and consumer acceptance of such technology, cashless culture has unlocked many pathways to financial capital (for better or for worse).

While issues of financial planning, financial decision making, and financial vulnerability have been central to the study of TCR, less attention has focused on the sociocultural aspects of financial exchanges through digital payment platforms, and more importantly, how such platforms influence consumer welfare. This track is especially interested in research that explores the many sociocultural facets of cashless culture (e.g., people, processes, technologies) and its transformative capabilities to impact consumer well-being. In line with the "bright side" focus of this year's conference, we encourage participants to consider how cashless culture serves to enable, support, and empower consumers to navigate the marketplace or overcome inequities, as they intersect with social class, gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, religion, and disability.

We seek policymakers, cross-disciplinary researchers, and industry experts with diverse interests in consumer well-being and cashless culture. Exploration of non-Western markets and culturally specific digital payment platforms are strongly encouraged.

POSSIBLE TRACK TOPICS INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

- New forms of identity, community, and power emerging from cashless culture
- Ethical implications of digital payment platform algorithms, data harvesting, and consumer privacy
- Problematization of cashless culture at the intersection of power, marginalization, inequality, and/or accessibility
- Formal and informal regulations (e.g., government censorship, parental control) of digital payment platforms
- New forms of marketplace labor, markets, and/or economic developments emerging from cashless culture or digital payment platforms
- Critical-historical analysis of cashless culture/digital payment platforms and case studies specific to consumer well-being
- Mitigation strategies for managing financial, social, and/or psychological vulnerabilities associated with cashless culture

WHAT TO EXPECT

PRE-CONFERENCE PREPARATION

Prior to the conference, all track members will engage in pre-conference preparation, including: (1) readings and resource review and (2) digital group discussions and brainstorming. To engage in knowledge building and shared learning prior to the conference, track members will work under an established timeline. The goals of pre-conference preparation will be to identify opportunities, gaps, and potential contributions for exploring the sociocultural facets of cashless culture and its transformative capabilities to impact consumer well-being.



Readings and Resource Review: A collaborative set of 'readings and resources' will be developed and reviewed—key readings will be provided by the track chairs and track members will be asked to recommend additional readings and resources (e.g., academic articles, news stories, videos) that are relevant to the track. A total of at least 10 days should be allotted to complete the pre-conference preparation.



Digital Group Discussions: The group will meet synchronously via Zoom once per month between January 2021 and June 2021, for a total of six online Zoom meetings, prior to the official conference dates. Day and time for each Zoom meeting will be collaboratively selected to meet all track members' schedules. Ongoing asynchronous group discussions and brainstorming will be managed via free software such as Slack, WhatsApp, and/or Google docs.



Data Collection (if needed): Track members will collectively determine if any data collection is necessary prior to the conference.

DURING THE CONFERENCE

With an aim towards a detailed outline of: (1) an academic manuscript for submission to JCA; (2) 2-3 short videos for course curriculum development and/or public knowledge (to be shared via YouTube); (3) a long-term plan for collaborating with industry/non-profit organizations.



Day 1: June 28, 2021

- Morning session: Breakout groups/small group discussion to work on the issues/gaps in literature identified during pre-conference meetings.
- Afternoon session: Synthesis of key points and potential contribution to the literature on cashless culture and how it may serve to enable, support, and empower consumers. Begin preparation of virtual presentation.



Day 2: June 29, 2021 (½ day)

- Morning session: Continue the work initiated on Day 1, with a focus on the TCR conference outcomes. Goal is to define the structure and content of each deliverable in the form of a detailed outline. Sub-groups will be determined and tasked with managing finalization of each outline.

POST-CONFERENCE DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

The track will serve as a catalyst to increase relational engagement between academics, practitioners, and organizations as we conceptualize the sociocultural dynamics cashless culture and consumer well-being. Academic publications will remain the primary focus for disseminating research; however, we hope to create more innovative methods of knowledge production and diffusion.



Academic publication(s): The participants brought together through the track will collectively work toward publishing scholarly academic work in reputable transformative consumer research journals. Specifically, a conceptual article, tentatively titled “Consumer Well-being in a Cashless Culture” will be targeted toward the special issue of Journal of Consumer Affairs. Given the cross-disciplinary nature of this track, other outlets in the areas of digital media and cultural studies may be considered for shorter articles, to expand the reach of the research.



Industry white paper: A short white paper will be developed immediately and disseminated to practitioners in the financial industry and to service providers with particular interest in digital payment platforms. A list of these contacts will be initially curated by the conference track chairs and then further developed with participants at the conference.



TCR curriculum content: Recognizing the need to disseminate knowledge more broadly, we aim to create open-access educational content which could be used in college curriculums. This may take the form of a presentation of key big ideas, which could be integrated into lectures, or a series of short videos (3-5 minutes) accessible via YouTube which could be more broadly viewed by those interested in the topic.



Potential partnership(s) with nonprofit organization(s): In seeking to promote positive societal impact, we will identify and connect with potential nonprofit organizations to create and offer workshops regarding key findings from our research. Track participants will collaboratively select partner organizations.

POST- CONFERENCE LOGISTICS

To ensure timely follow-through with self-selected roles during the TCR conference, the conference track co-chairs will act as leaders to set deadlines, check in with participants, and fill in missing roles, as needed. Deadlines will be determined and resources generated during the conference (e.g., notes, paper drafts) will be shared. We will utilize video conferencing software to continue regular meetings (schedules permitting), following the conference, in order to further our research.