Stay or Leave: What Shapes Seller Survival in E-Marketplaces

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Abstract

The rapid growth of online marketplaces has fundamentally reshaped competitive dynamics, forcing sellers to continuously evaluate the trade-offs of platform participation. Although marketplaces offer scale and aggregated demand, they also expose sellers to governance. We examine how sellers' platform-specific investments affect exit probability, expecting a stable main effect but its strength might also depend on contingencies. Accordingly, we assess how seller characteristics, platform features, and external factors moderate the relationship between investment and survival. Drawing on a longitudinal dataset of 440 sellers across 11 online marketplaces from 1998 to 2021, with detailed measures of investments, product categories, and exit outcomes, we test how these mechanisms jointly shape market platform withdrawal. Results indicate that seller investments substantially reduce the likelihood of exit, and that offering own-brand products lowers this risk further.

Track: Retailing & Omni-Channel Management