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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Gandolfo Dominici is a PhD in Business Management. He is the Chair of Marketing at the Department SEAS, Polytechnic School, University of Palermo, Italy. He is a co-founder and Scientific Director of the Business Systems Laboratory. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the World Organisation for Systems and Cybernetics (WOSC) and of the Italian Universities Consortium of Industrial Economics and Management (CUEIM). He is the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Electronic Marketing and Retailing*, *International Journal of Digital Culture and Tourism* and *Business Systems Review*. He serves as an editorial board member of a number of international peer reviewed journals. He is the author of more than 50 published articles and books on the topics of customer satisfaction, e-marketing, new products development and systems thinking in management.

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The interactive power of digital media has dramatically increased the number of ways in which companies and their consumers communicate and interact. The striking evolution of the digital world has forced companies and consumers to confront new, complex scenarios characterised by the overwhelming influence of digital technologies. These technologies shape a growing network of social relations which deeply change marketing theory and practice. As a consequence, academics, researchers, practitioners and entrepreneurs alike are shifting their focus to the value and impact of the digital and virtual world in marketing.

From the perspective of firms and organisations, digital technologies have prompted a paradigm shift in marketing and communication from the old model of the 4Ps and the linear communication paradigm to a new paradigm in which the constant interaction of actors is pivotal. Through new media, consumers have radically altered their purchasing behaviour and are gradually gaining control of the value creation process towards value co-creation. This transformation implies that marketers are not the ‘controllers’ anymore of value creation, and they instead need to assume a new role as mediators and facilitators.

The incredibly massive and free availability of information on products and brands has deeply changed the balance of power in marketing distribution and retailing, both online and offline. Producers and distributors once decided on price, but consumer perceptions now dictate the price. Therefore, price is now determined more by the feelings of consumer networks than by production and distribution costs. The informative power of brand, once considered as the only guarantee of quality, is now weak because of the information easily accessible to every consumer in Web 2.0.

In the mid-2000s, the marketing challenges which resulted from digital technologies were understated and seemed to have been addressed, but in reality, these challenges were only beginning to take form then and will eventually result in a new paradigm shift. Web 2.0 has radically changed the way information is shared among consumers, and the new use of digital technology has started to show its disruptive power on the marketing paradigm. Social media platforms have become important tools to empower consumers. With word of mouth progressively overtaking traditional media, such as television, the old 20th-century paradigm for marketing communication is now obsolete in its role as the most effective marketing media. Several studies on the effectiveness of old media advertising show that old mass media are progressively becoming outdated for marketing scopes. Consumers perceive social media word of mouth as a more truthful and reliable source of information on products than corporate-sponsored mass communications. The emergence of social media has facilitated the communication of a single user with a large number of other people who express their opinions on products, services, brands and companies. Consequently, the impact of interactive many-to-many communications has been dramatic in the marketplace. Before, managers were expected to control the marketing mix leverage of promotion-communication, but the same task has gradually gone outside their control at present.

Marketing research has long relied on collecting and analysing data to recognise markets and steer strategic actions. While the acquisition of marketing data was once difficult and expensive, the amount and depth of information available through social media and other Web 2.0 platforms, are now something that could only be imagined in science fiction a few decades ago. When Facebook began in 2006, technology seeped into every aspect of daily life, and as a consequence, the concept of marketing research was radically altered. The change towards the marketing use of a huge amount of data derived from digital information (e.g., social media, web transactions, browsing, Web 2.0, and cloud platforms) has barely begun as the age of 'big data', which requires new skills and expertise, has just commenced.

In this framework of marketing theory, research and practice need to find new ways to deal with complex, sometimes chaotic and interactive, phenomena, as well as eliminate the linear and one-directional approach of the last century. Constructing and facilitating an innovative way of thinking in which new approaches are discovered to adapt value creation processes to the new marketing context are necessary to reach this goal.

What has been presented above is just a small aspect of the many ways in which the striking growth of social media has considerably affected business models. Researchers and practitioners have only just started to comprehend these ways. The implications of the marketing paradigm shift are broad in scope because addressing the paradigm shift without considering the entire marketing discipline is impossible.

The need to understand new ways of marketing is the reason why research on e-tailing, as well as on marketing in the digital and virtual world, has gradually attracted the attention of organisations, business practitioners and entrepreneurs. They all feel the impelling need to develop and implement effective marketing strategies.

Given this premise, the new editorial turn of the *International Journal of Electronic Marketing and Retailing (IJEMR)*, in which I assumed the position of editor in chief starting March 2014, is geared towards understanding the implications of digital media to the marketing paradigm shift. *IJEMR* aims to publish cutting-edge research which can shed light on the implications of the paradigm shift from linear to interactive marketing. We believe that merely technological and quantitative approaches to e-marketing, in

which consumer relations are treated as a mere database problem, are insufficient for an in-depth understanding of the implications of this evolution. Indeed, the *IJEMR* is privileged to focus on interpretive qualitative inquiry on new theories and practices. However, we will also give space to quantitative research, which has relevant implications to the understanding of the new digital marketing paradigm.