
Editorial

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This special issue of *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising* is dedicated to 'Contemporary issues in marketing and advertising' and is inspired by the 1st International Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues hosted in 2012 in Thessaloniki, Greece. The advent of new media and technologies such as Web 2.0 and social media has transformed marketing and expanded its practice from physical offerings to the virtual marketplace. Berthon et al. (2012, p.262) point out that technological innovations have three critical implications for marketing:

- “1 a shift in locus of activity from the desktop to the web
- 2 a shift in locus of value production from the firm to the consumer
- 3 a shift in the locus of power away from the firm to the consumer”.

Technological advances constantly facilitate the development of new applications, revolutionising marketing and new product development (Brennan et al., 2010), offering a constant connectivity between firms and customers (Jansen et al., 2009) as well as attracting, retaining users and developing long-term customers (Asur et al., 2011). For instance, Van Belleghem et al. (2011) suggest more than 50% of social media users follow brands on social media and participate in various brand communities. Interestingly, users who become fans of brand fan pages tend to commit to the company, open to receiving brand information (Bagozzi and Dholakia, 2006) and generate positive word-of-mouth (Dholakia and Durham, 2010). On the other hand, companies shift their attention from one-way communication to interactive and real-time relationships investing intensively in social media, as illustrated by the worldwide marketing spending on social networking sites of about \$4.3 billion (Williamson, 2011).

Today’s marketing environment could be viewed as a dynamic, inter-connected and fast changing enormous field of communication, where information is exchanged among its users. This phenomenon generates an emerging line of enquiry followed by the five articles published in this special issue. Following a call for papers on ‘Contemporary issues in marketing and advertising’, we received a number of interesting articles that were subjected to the normal blind review process. Five papers survived the process and are published in this special issue of *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*. The papers selected capture a variety of perspectives and methodologies on the interface of technological advances and marketing and include empirical work. All five articles published here through one way or another contribute to the topic of the special issue, capturing either the consumers’ or the company’s perspective and rendering insights into how the field of study can move forward.

Three articles examine different aspects of consumer perceptions and behaviour of internet and social media. In Ham, Lee and Lee’s article ‘Understanding consumers’ creating behaviour in social media: an application of uses and gratifications and the theory of reasoned action’ the theories of gratification and reasoned action are employed to investigate why consumers create social media content and how consumers’ motivational beliefs and subjective norms influence attitudes towards, intention to, and behaviour of creating social media content. They employ a mixed method approach combining qualitative and quantitative data. The authors initially identify five significant motives to social media content creation: social-cognition, entertainment, self-expression, social-belonging, and communication. Following structural equation modelling, they reveal that motives are positively related to attitudes towards creating behaviour, which in turn influence intentions and behaviours involved in creating social media content.

Consumer perceptions and beliefs are the focus of the paper by Natarajan, Balakrishnan, Balasubramanian and Manickavasagam titled ‘Perception of Indian consumers towards social media advertisements in Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter’. Using an online survey they collect data from 710 social media users on seven belief factors, namely product information; hedonic/pleasure; good for the economy; social role and image; materialism; falsity; and value corruption. The authors apply a multivariate analysis of variance to identify the difference in belief perceptions of Indian

consumers among the four social media sites. Their evidence suggests that all belief factors exhibit comparatively significant difference among the four social media websites except for the beliefs, materialism and value corruption. Interestingly, the falsity/nonsense demonstrates a highest significant mean difference between LinkedIn and YouTube. Given the increasing use of social media in India from consumers and companies, this study provides an enhanced understanding of Indian consumer perception towards social media advertisements that appears to be missing from the relevant literature.

Personal characteristics and influence of peer groups are examined in the article by Vlachopoulou and Boutsouki 'Facebook usage among teenagers – the effect of personality and peer group pressure; an exploratory study in Greece'. Their research examines the way in which teenagers experience social life on Facebook, and investigates the mediating effect of personality characteristics and peer group pressure on its use. An online survey among 567 teenagers (12–14 years old) was conducted in schools in a small town and a metropolitan city in Greece. Greece provides an excellent laboratory for study as the change is recent and of significant magnitude. Teenagers' personality characteristics are measured in terms of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. Peer group pressure is based on informational, utilitarian and value expressive statements. The paper indicates that the intensity of Facebook usage is positively related to increased extraversion and peer group pressure. The evidence of this study shows that the majority of Greek teenagers are ardent Facebook users mainly for two reasons to follow the trend and to keep in touch with them. The authors posit that by examining teenagers' personality and peer group pressure, advertisers will be able to understand the way teenagers think, act, behave, handle emotions, and socialise and to indicate new and more efficient ways to communicate with them and predict future behaviour.

The study by Algharabat 'Conceptualising and modelling virtual product experience for online retailers' is based on consumers' aims to define and conceptualise three-dimensional (3D) virtual product experience (VPE) for online retailers. The study is conducted on a hypothetical retailer website that presents a variety of 3D laptops and ring sites that allow participants to control the content and form of the 3D flashes. The findings suggest that the measurement of VPE should be based on a multidimensional construct rather than a unidimensional one and include the authenticity, perceived diagnosticity, compatibility, flow and enjoyment aspects of the 3D product. An interesting finding of the study that may fuel future research is the positive relationship among VPE, product attitude and purchase intention. Although this study is consumer centric it contains important information for companies and specifically the manner in which products are presented on websites.

A company perspective is found in the paper by Papaioannou, Assimakopoulos, Sarmaniotis and Georgiadis 'Investigating websites' e-CRM features in building customer relationships: evidence from Greece'. The study examines the marketing communication function of websites of the 500 largest Greek companies. The authors suggest that Greek firms do not adopt advanced e-CRM features as a means to obtain feedback from various stakeholders including customers. Only a minority of firms surveyed have exploited the web as a marketing communication tool. The authors further administer a questionnaire survey to the marketing managers of the largest 500 companies in Greece. The results indicate that advanced e-CRM features (such as e-commerce web applications and website information quality) are related to the

communication and advertisement goals of a company's website. In light of the survey evidence, they authors put forward e-CRM strategy components of a company webpage employed by the investigated firms.

In short, in this introductory article, we presented the challenges associated with marketing in technologically changing world and discussed how the five unique contributions published in this special issue feature in this discourse. We would like to warmly thank the editor of *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising* who agreed to host this special issue on contemporary issues in marketing; the organisers of the 1st Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues who assigned us the role of guest editors for this special issue; the authors of the articles, who worked and collaborated with us; and the reviewers for this issue who assisted authors in significantly enhancing their articles, and informed us on our editorial decisions. Reviewers will be acknowledged collectively in a future issue of *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*.

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