
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Costas Assimakopoulos is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Business Administration of the Alexander Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki. His research interests are in the area of internet marketing and mobile marketing. He is the author of several papers published in international journals and refereed conference proceedings. He has been a member of the scientific committee of several international conferences in marketing and guest editor to several special issues published by prestigious journals in the same scientific field. He took part in several European and national projects as a researcher. He serves as a reviewer for IEEE, Emerald, Inderscience, Taylor and Francis, Elsevier, etc.

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In the last decades, information and communication technologies (ICTs), internet, mobile and social media marketing have radically and unforeseeably changed society as a whole, especially since when the internet of things emerged making available multidimensional set of data which are known as big data. The digital revolution and the convergence of ICTs have ignited the development of new communication grids, thus, challenging the marketing strategy and business model of companies in any sector with new opportunities and threats. Currently, technology and internet, as used through any device, provides

companies with new venues and platforms to be used to perform pricing, distribution, promotion, product policies. Technologies and internet can be used for customer acquisition and profiling, customer engagement, brand reinforcement, reputation and image building, monitoring and complaint management, co-create new product/services with consumers, quality control and analysis of competitive strategies and many others strategic purposes.

This special issue on 'Challenges and opportunities in marketing in the era of contemporary technological environment' aims to provide a forum for publishing original papers aimed at investigating current issues in the field of contemporary digital and technological marketing. Specifically, it includes substantially extended versions of papers that was selected from the International Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues (ICCM) 2014 as well as papers we received from researchers who were interested in the open call for papers. Out of a considerable number of papers that have been submitted coming from academic researchers of many countries, we selected six of the manuscripts through a two-round blind review process.

The first paper entitled 'Implications of the use of social media for pre-purchase information searches for automobiles' is devoted to the topic of consumer information search behaviour and offers an empirical investigation in the context of high involvement and durable products (i.e., automobiles) in an emerging economy (i.e., Egypt). Based on the adoption of a mixed method approach, the results of this study suggest that social media-based information searching has an impact on information quality (enhancing the quality of it), consideration sets (reducing the size and increasing the homogeneity of it) and selection criteria (increasing the number of them). Beside the contribution to the current literature devoted to consumer search behaviour, the paper provides managers with useful information to formulate marketing strategies.

The second paper entitled 'Critical success factors of online music streaming services – a case study of applying the fuzzy cognitive maps method' deals with the investigation of a new business model that has been rising in the music industry during the last few years, that is the online music streaming services. Specifically, it offers the reader with an interesting empirical analysis aimed at investigating the critical success factors (CSFs) of a streaming music business model (namely, Bandcamp) and how they relate to each other. In order to achieve this, a fuzzy cognitive map (FCM) method has been used which increase the value and originality of the study. The implications of this paper are quite useful to companies which follow contemporary streaming music business models.

The third paper is entitled 'Extending E-S-QUAL with hedonic dimensions to measure the quality of internet travel services and its effects on perceived value, loyalty and switching barriers'. This study aims at presenting, testing and discussing an extended version of the traditional E-S-QUAL which also consider hedonic dimensions (namely: enjoyment and design) as moderating factors of consumer perceived value and behavioural intentions (i.e., loyalty and switching behaviour). Results of multiple regressions show that system availability and design are the most influential factors affecting perceived value and behavioural intentions, thus suggesting that the extended version of the model is suitable to analyse the online consumer behaviour in the context of the hotel booking. Conversely, enjoyment does not exert any influence on any of the dependent variables. The papers suggest that this latter point could be explained referring to the fact that the study is carried out in a Greece, a country whose economy has been affected by a relevant economic crisis in the last few years; this would have rendered Greek consumers more sensitive to functional characteristics. Recognising the magnitude

of culture as a relevant variable affecting online consumer behaviour, the paper calls for future research replicating the model in other countries and sectors so that cross-cultural comparison could be done with the aim of verifying if findings cannot be generalise or not.

The fourth paper 'Multi-sided search platforms: global and local' is a very interesting piece of work. What makes it unique of its kind is the methodological approach established herein regarding the multi-sided search platforms which are by nature complicated due to their great number of tools and applications. Based on this approach, the author proposes a business model for a 'candidate' new (or even existed) MSP, organising the way managers should face such a problem or issue.

The fifth paper entitled 'Social network analysis and social capital in marketing: theory and practical implementation' deals with the relevant topic of consumer commitment and engagement in the era of social media and social network sites. Specifically, considering the case of Facebook, the study underline how social network analysis can be used to assess the social capital that arise when consumers do interact among them on a social network (putting like and/or commenting corporate and others consumers posts) and how this can support/affect marketing strategies aimed at creating, developing and nurturing a brand for products and services any sector. Further, the papers suggest interesting managerial implications and future research venues that can respectively support and guide practitioners and researchers in their activities.

Finally, the sixth paper entitled 'Cultural values reflected in the adoption of social networking sites' investigates the impact of two dimensions of Hofstede's cultural framework, namely, individualism and masculinity, on the adoption of social networking sites across countries, controlling for social-economic factors such as mobile internet penetration, a country's median age and urban population. Applying a series of hierarchical regressions on a large-scale secondary dataset for 23 countries, the study reveals that both individualism and masculinity have significant impact on nations' adoption levels of social networking sites above and beyond the effects of the social-economic factors. Beside contributing to a quite under investigated research area (i.e., the influence of culture on social network sites' adoption), the papers suggests marketers should particularly consider the relevant role of social media when planning marketing strategy aimed at targeting countries characterised by high individualism and low masculinity scores.

In the era of contemporary technological environment, challenges and opportunities for marketing are enormous and in the epicentre of academic research and managerial interests. The technological products and services are going to be integrated in the mainstream of marketing science at a point that they both would seem to be difficult to distinguish. The main aim of *International Journal of Technology Marketing* is to contribute to the knowledge and interconnection of technology and marketing; both the guest editors believe that the papers published in this special issue are able to further stimulate both the scientific community and the industry in their attempt to deepen their understanding on how technologies are currently affecting marketing strategy and business models.

We both like to thank the Editors-in-Chief Eric Viardot and Alexander Brem for their assistance and advice to the whole procedure as well as the anonymous reviewers who provided authors with useful comments and suggestions to be used to further improve the quality of their manuscripts.