This has been a productive year for the APJML. The journal has seen steady growth in both the number and quality of submissions, with an average of 21 submissions per month, spanning over 20 countries. Further, the APJML is now listed in the Social Sciences Citation Index, an achievement that is in no small part due to the efforts of our authors and dedicated reviewers and EAB members. Thank you for your consistent contributions to the APJML.

In this fifth and final issue for 2017, we present a range of papers on symbolic consumption, brand attachment, country image, e-commerce marketing, sensory marketing, consumer social capital, marketing ethics, sales career, and logistics services. This issue’s Industry Spotlight has two papers which shed light on the service quality in the Pakistani airline industry, and consumer mall shopping behaviour in India.

Opening this issue, Tangsupwattana and Liu examine symbolic consumption among Generation Y consumers in Thailand. Brands carry symbolic meaning for consumers, and this study examined Thai consumers’ perceptions of a global coffee shop brand – Starbucks; and the findings support the notion that successfully engaging Generation Y consumers requires that the brand image closely match the self-concept of these consumers. They further argue that these findings could also be expanded upon, and examined in relation to regional branding strategies. The next paper by Nashtaei, Hanzaei, and Mansourian is on the interactions between sales promotion and advertisement plans as the resources of the brand attachment and its consequences on the durable and fast-moving consumer goods. Using a phenomenological method and quantitative approach, this study concludes that the brand attachment leads to the emotional and cognitive consequences in both product categories. These findings provide empirical support to create a fit in marketing communication plans for achieving an enduring relationship.

Next are two papers on the marketing implications of country image. First, Woo, Jin, and Ramkumar present a study on how developing countries can leverage the halo effects of a country’s image, and a well-known product category from that country, to market a lesser-known product category. Using South Korea as the reference country, US consumers were surveyed. Their findings revealed that marketers can leverage these halo effects of country image and product category image of well-known products of that country to market lesser-known products. These findings shed light on how companies may develop strategies to leverage these halo effects for emerging product categories. Following this, Martinez, Xu, and Zhao study Chinese consumers’ product-country image of Spain and its products. This cross-cultural study examined multiple dimensions of product-country image to develop clearer insights on Chinese consumers’ perceptions of Spain, its personality, the people, and its products. In doing so, this study also identifies key areas where Spanish private and public organisations can focus on to develop better strategies to engage China and its consumers.

Different shopping environments have differing effects on consumer behaviour. Understanding these nuances can have a dramatic effect on the effectiveness of marketing strategies. Cho presents a study that examines the process of consumer satisfaction formation in e-commerce. This cross-cultural study compares US and Korean consumers helps develop a more intimate understanding of the key antecedents for consumer satisfaction in an online shopping environment, and how cultural backgrounds may temper these antecedents. Moving over to offline shopping environments is a study by Nghiём-Phụ on how outdoor out-store sensory cues may be employed in marketing. This observational study was conducted in a shopping street in Japan, and identifies key factors that may
enhance or dampen the effects of sensory stimuli. This may help retailers and associations to better coordinate their practices for out-store sensory environment, and leverage key cultural elements that resonate with consumers.

At some level, all consumers are price conscious depending on the purchase situation. To this, Iranmanesh, Jayaraman, Zailani, and Ghadriri explore the effects of volume discounts and deal proneness on consumer shopping behaviour in the context of grocery purchases. Surveying respondents across four major cities in Malaysia, their study adds knowledge to the use of volume discounts as a sales promotion strategy in this country’s supermarket sector. The findings from this study may help retailers better match volume discounts to specific products in their inventory, to improve the effectiveness of this sales promotion strategy.

Moving to a more social perspective on marketing is a paper by Muhammad, Mahadi, and Hussin, on the influence of social capital on customer satisfaction in the Pakistani banking industry. Surveying customers who recently reported service failures to their banks, Muhammad, Mahadi, and Hussin examine three facets of social capital – structural, relational, and cognitive; and their influence on customer satisfaction on the relationship with their bank. Their study sheds light on how customer-employee relations affect customers’ word-of-mouth behaviours and re-patronage intentions; and identifies some strategies that bank managers in Pakistan may employ to improve customer relationship management.

On the ethics of marketing, Arli and Leo ask the question: Why do good people do bad things? Conducted in Australia, their study takes a consumer perspective, and explores the interactions between ethical ideologies and moral affective characteristics; and their effects on unethical consumption behaviour. Their findings help develop insights on the macro- and micro-marketing implications for marketers and policymakers, to help encourage ethical consumption behaviour in consumers. Shifting focus from the consumer to the firm is a study by Fullerton, Brooksbank, and Neale. Their study examines how technology-based marketing (e.g. RFID tracking, viral marketing, mobile apps) affects consumer perceptions of firms’ ethical standing. Their study surveyed US residents on their perspectives towards various technology-based marketing initiatives, developing insight on what consumers deemed ethically acceptable, and unacceptable. Their study also sheds light on some strategies that marketers may employ to help encourage consumer acceptance of these types of initiatives. Next, Rabbanee, Handley, and Shankar investigate Australasian students’ current perception towards a sales career. The authors find that Australian and Asian students differ regarding the perception towards sales as an exciting career. The findings are imperative for the institutions offering sales education as well as for the firms conducting graduate recruitment.

Switching lanes to the logistics industry is a paper by Ghaderi, Cahoon, and Nguyen, on the issue of competitiveness within the Australian rail sector. Their study identifies some key inhibiting factors, and suggests management and policy strategies that can alleviate this issue of competitiveness. Surveying key stakeholders in the rail sector, they identify four main factors affecting the rail sector’s competitiveness. The findings and proposed strategies may be useful to policymakers seeking to optimise this industry; and for researchers to identify new research areas for this sector in Australia. Next, Tontini and Söilen employ penalty and reward contrast analysis to identify antecedents to customer satisfaction and loyalty in third-party logistics services in Brazil. Through interviews with various small and medium enterprises (SMEs), their study identifies several factors that have a nonlinear impact on customer satisfaction. Through this, they propose several strategies that third-party logistics service SMEs may be able to adopt to improve their customer satisfaction and retention rates. This study also reveals some future research directions on a more specific evaluation of customer loyalty in this sector, rather than the prior more general measures employed.
Closing this issue is our Industry Spotlight section. First is a study by Vipul and Naser on Indian consumers’ shopping behaviours in Indian shopping malls. Surveying over 400 shoppers across four major malls in Mumbai, their study identifies key shopping trends among various demographics which mall managers can capitalise upon. Through this segmentation of shoppers, Vipul and Naser provide recommendations on strategies that managers may be able to employ to better engage their clientele. This could prove to be useful insight in a country with a rapidly growing number of shopping malls. Finally, Saleem, Zahra, and Yaseen conduct a case study on the Pakistani airline industry. Their study seeks to ascertain the factors that influence customer retention, and how word-of-mouth may play an influential role in the relationships between service quality and trust, and customer satisfaction and brand image in this industry. Surveying frequent flyers across four international airports in Pakistan, they identify key managerial implications for practitioners. Among others, their findings reinforce the need for emphasis on service quality and the building of trust with customers, and identify the need for novel service features that may enhance traveller experience.

I hope this last issue of 2017 has provided interesting perspectives and unique insights to stimulate future research. I thank the reviewers and EAB for their timely reviews and contribution to the *APJML*; and the authors for submitting manuscripts of exceptional calibre.

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