

Adding value to retail and distribution management

This special issue presents the best papers from the 4th International Conference on Contemporary Marketing Issues in June 2016 in Greece. It includes contributions from Greece, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, and the UK. It covers the fashion, cosmetic surgery, animal healthcare, and higher education sectors. It addresses the marketing issues of segmentation, buyer behaviour decision-making co-creation, the use of social media and identity.

Fashion evokes emotion and is central to our social and individual identity and here we explore the passion and vanity that underpins how people behave when considering their self-image through fashion purchases. Through talking to enthusiastic fashion shoppers by interviews and through a survey, Loureiro, Costa, and Panchapakesan identify inspirational outfits, brands, identification with style, value for money, friends, fashion magazines, and fashion shows as influencers on their choices. They go on to reveal that social influence is more important than individual vanity as a stimulus to buy and wear fashionable clothes and accessories. They identify that a person's tendency to exhibitionism acts as a mediator between a passionate desire for fashion and their self-expression. The paper provides us with interesting insight concerning the effect of vanity and exhibitionism, as two components of narcissism, on fashion purchasing.

The second paper by Milfelner, Videgar Kikel, Mumel, and Pisnik considers how we should see the consumers of the high involvement services of the cosmetic surgery sector as more than a homogenous group. In their segmentation study of women, the authors determine groups of consumers who differ according to their attitudes and motivations. The choice criteria are established through exploratory factor analysis which reduces the data to a number of themes while cluster analysis is based on analysis of how consumers are grouped together on the basis of their attitudes. In the sense it is a psychographic segmentation distinguished on the basis of three dimensions: intrapersonal, social, and the acceptability of the idea of cosmetic surgery. Consumers were driven by fear of ageing, the importance they attributed to appearance, the body image, and self-esteem. This paper provides clear evidence that different attitudes motivate behaviour but that overall appearance is the common factor.

The third paper contributes to our understanding of millennial shoppers and how they make purchase decisions by considering digitally connected unseen journeys. Hall and Towers explain that the shopper journey across multiple channels prior to purchase and that these journeys need to be understood by retailers and brand management. They explore the use of technology and social media leading up to the point of fashion purchase. Through a survey of 580 millennial shoppers, the authors identify different routes, of different lengths, using a range of media and devices in the pre-purchase journey. Consumers do use retailer resources but also reach out to online and off-line social networks seeking social validation of their choices before they buy. They actively seek out novelty, knowledge, and inspiration through a variety of interactions prior to making a purchase decision. This paper provides insight into the complex ways in which views are arrived at by shoppers and gives a detailed picture of the information seeking behaviour before a decision is made.

As communities we are very involved with animals as companions, as food, and in their capacity to work for us. A significant part of the responsibility that comes from human interaction with animals is to care for their health. Animal healthcare is high involvement and costly and this fourth paper by Pyatt, Wright, Walley, and Bleach investigates the role



of value co-creation in animal healthcare from the perspective of key industry stakeholders: clients, veterinarians, and paraprofessionals. Through a mixed method approach this paper demonstrates nine underlying dimensions regarding service delivery in this sector: trustworthiness, communication, value for money, empathy, bespoke, integrated care, tangibles, accessibility, and outcome-driven service. Exploratory factor analysis of professional survey data loaded onto seven latent factors, with strong value co-creation dimensions identified. The results of this study will support the development of new models of service delivery in the form of multi-disciplinary practices and such integrated models of service provision will provide improved levels of service quality.

The fifth paper by Assimakopoulos, Antoniadis, Kayas, and Dvizac addresses how higher education institutions might make best use of social media, specifically using Facebook in their marketing strategies. The authors investigate how effective use of Facebook can be used in the competitive environment to attract new students in Greece and Serbia. Through a survey of 643 students the paper presents a framework of student choice based on a Technology Acceptance Model of behaviour. Specifically identify: social influence, perceived enjoyment, social identification, ease-of-use, usefulness, intention to use, and actual use as the components that impact on the effectiveness of Facebook as useful social media approach for universities.

In the final paper contributed by Ding, the notion of consumer ethnocentrism is explored to determine its impact on Chinese consumers in product preferences regarding local and foreign products. Based on a survey of 367 consumers in the Shenyang-Northern and Shenzhen-Southern areas of China, this paper suggests that consumer ethnocentrism is generally low in China, thus posing little threat to international opportunities in the market. There was evidence, however, that the level of ethnocentrism differs between regions, product categories, and the availability of domestically produced alternatives. Furthermore, the author demonstrates that age and educational level have significant moderating effects on the impact of ethnocentrism. The implications of this paper are that some regions and some demographic groups are more attractive than others to foreign retailers. Young, well-educated, city dwellers are more open to foreign products and so make the most attractive target market, although the impact of competition from domestic products cannot be ignored. Overall, Ding concludes that there is no evidence of barriers to free trade arising from grassroots protectionism and isolation in the Chinese market.

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