Guest editorial:
Retail reinvention through retaining customer engagement

This special issue aims to showcase cutting-edge research papers that address the pressing need for retail reinvention through the retention of customer engagement in the ever-changing marketplace. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has significantly impacted consumer behavior, underscoring the urgency for direct-to-consumer marketing and digital transformation to ensure business resilience. Therefore, we seek research that delves into retailers’ strategies for reinvention by effectively retaining customer engagement through adopting diverse digital approaches and responding to these transformative shifts.

Within this issue, we present five selected manuscripts presented at the AMA/ACRA Triennial Conference (American Marketing Association/American Collegiate Retailing Association), which was held virtually between March 25 and 26, 2021 and expertly guest-edited by Dr Heejin Lim from the University of Tennessee and Dr Jewon Lyu from University of Georgia, USA.

The first study by Lee and Lim investigates the impact of visual design principles in food images on purchase intention in mobile food delivery apps. Two experiments reveal how repetition and compositional lines influence crossmodal correspondences between vision and taste, thereby influencing the intention to order. These findings extend our knowledge of sensory experiences in online retailing and offer practical implications for visual content development.

The second study by Quach and Lee aims to identify distinct mobile-user segments based on their need for cognitive closure, personalization preferences and privacy dispositions. Cluster analysis reveals three unique segments: Equivocal users, structured users and eclectic users, contributing to our understanding of mobile customer segmentation and offering insightful managerial implications for mobile retailing.

The third study by Chung and Wong explores the antecedents of online brand community commitment and engagement, leading to offline purchase intention. Structural equation modeling shows that online interaction propensity and online self-congruity significantly influence behavioral engagement, which, in turn, affects offline purchase intention. This study highlights the importance of cultivating a customer-initiated online brand community for offline success.

The fourth paper by Lyu et al. examines how consumers’ perception of new technology and personality traits influence their positive attitude and intention to use the technology, with critical insights into the role of innovativeness for technology adoption and target marketing.

The fifth paper by Im and Lee compares consumers’ perceptions of AI-driven recommendations with human experts’ recommendations in fashion and meal subscription services. The study reveals that consumers are more willing to follow human expert recommendations, with perceived creativity playing a mediating role. Additionally, the study uncovers differences in recommender effect between fashion and meal-utilitarian conditions.

We extend our gratitude to all who have contributed to this special issue, including the authors of the five papers and the reviewers for their invaluable input and patience. Special thanks to Dr Neil Tower, Editor-in-Chief and the administrative team of the *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management* for their instrumental guidance throughout this journey.