

AMS Quarterly



Academy of Marketing Science

Winter 2020/21 Volume 20 Number 2

AMS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Greetings AMS Members, I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well as we all cope with the continued disruption and uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As you are likely aware, we had to make the tough decision of moving both the 2020 and 2021 Annual

Conferences to a virtual format. While we are disappointed we will not be able to meet in person, this modification provides certainty in these uncertain times and allows attendees to plan accordingly, particularly for the 2021 conference. The 2020 conference registration rates have been set at very affordable levels in an effort to create maximum engagement with the program. Please be sure to renew your membership to take advantage of this opportunity. We will continue to communicate important conference details as timely as possible.

Conference co-chairs Pia Albinsson and Bidisha Burman have been and continue to work tirelessly in preparation for the 2020 Annual Conference in December. The 2021 conference co-chairs—Lauren Beitelspacher, Marko Sarstedt and Joe Hair—are also preparing for AMS's 50th Anniversary.

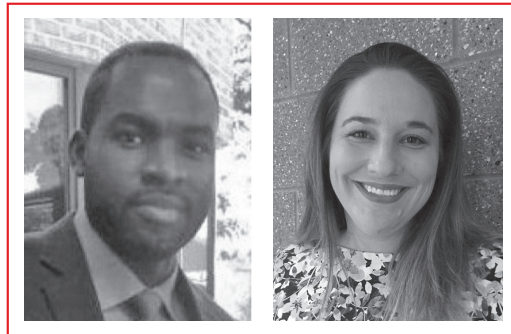
I am also very pleased to announce that a new track on Diversity and Inclusion has been added to the 2021 Annual Conference. I am grateful that Leila Borders (Kennesaw State University) and McDowell Porter (California State University, Fresno) have agreed to spearhead this important track.

Obviously, I did not anticipate that my term as president would entail leading AMS through this unprecedented crisis. I am disappointed and coming to grips with the likelihood of never attending an in-person AMS conference as president. Yet, I am also optimistic that AMS will emerge stronger than ever, and I am eager to assist AMS in attaining the "silver linings" of this unfortunate circumstance.

My optimism and excitement are largely due to AMS's excellent leadership team, who began their terms on June 1. All have demonstrated their dedication to AMS and are highly familiar with our organization's culture and operations.

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FROM THE EDITOR



We are delighted to return with the new edition of the AMS Quarterly! With all else going on in the world, we certainly hope you are relishing the things that bring you joy.

Before introducing the new issue, we want to take this opportunity to thank our immediate past-president, O.C. Ferrell, for his guidance and leadership through the last few years, and for his unwavering dedication to AMS these many years. We also welcome our new President, Julie Moulard, with whom we very much look forward to working.

OBI: On a personal note, I would like to express my gratitude for the almost four years I have served as editor for the AMS Quarterly. It has been a pleasure bringing you all the news on the activities of AMS, as well as a few thought-compelling pieces through the years. As I step down from my role, I am delighted to introduce Jennifer Locander as the new editor for AMSQ, and I trust she will continue the excellent tradition we've established.

JEN: Thank you so much for the warm welcome and for inviting me to join the AMS family! First, I would like to thank Obinna Obilo for providing the engaging content of AMSQ for the past four years and for his mentorship during this transition of leadership. As the new Editor, I hope to provide members of the Academy with innovative content and information about upcoming AMS events and look forward to continuing this tradition for the next few years.

As the world is currently evolving, we too at AMS have adapted to this evolution and changed the way we do things. This issue thus contains information regarding the new version of upcoming AMS activities, as well updates in the columns we have all become familiar with. Of course, we will continue to bring novel

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AMS UPCOMING EVENTS

2020 Academy of Marketing Science Annual Conference

December 14-19, 2020

VIRTUAL

Conference Program Co-Chairs:

Pia A. Albinsson

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Bidisha Burman

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The 2020 Academy of Marketing Science Annual Conference is now going virtual, and as Conference Program Co-Chairs, it is still our great pleasure to invite you to attend the conference. Please mark your calendars for this exciting event.

The theme of the 2020 AMS Annual Conference is *From Micro to Macro: Dealing with Uncertainties in the Global Marketplace*. The global marketplace is full of uncertainties resulting from emerging technologies and disruptive innovations. For example, some large privately held start-ups, specifically those created in the last decade have recently gone public to manage risks with varied levels of success. Many of these are high-tech companies that are leveraging artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud computing, robotic automation, augmented reality, and other recent advancements. Some of these companies operate in what is known as the Sharing Economy and offer collaborative consumption opportunities. These digital technology companies are bringing incremental, as well as radical and disruptive innovations

to the marketplace, sometimes challenging the status quo of long-standing incumbents and traditional industries. We see proliferation of automation in the service sector all the time. For example, front-line service employees are traded for screens at fast food restaurants, airports, and luxury hotels. Autonomous vehicles may soon replace the way we use rideshare services, taxis and public transit. On the other hand, there is immense potential of using automation towards social good. The proliferation of artificial intelligence in the health care sector is providing cost-cutting, time saving, and enhanced professional efficiencies to improve patient outcomes. All these innovations are profoundly impacting consumer experiences. Although now virtual, we will still have the opportunity to engage in competitive paper sessions, special sessions, and panels that discuss the above and many other stimulating topics.

So, please save the date for the 2020 AMS Virtual Annual Conference to be held from December 14-19, 2020.

AMS Upcoming Events *continued from page 3*

2020 Academy of Marketing Science World Marketing Congress

June 2-4, 2021

VIRTUAL

Conference Program Co-Chairs:

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Joe Hair
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Marko Sarstedt
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Join us for the 50th Anniversary conference of the Academy of Marketing Science. Under the theme “Celebrating the Past and Future of Marketing”, we will celebrate the history of marketing while also exploring its future at this conference.

Marketing has evolved from “sell, sell, sell” to a world of endless information. Today’s consumers are more likely to take the advice of a social media influencer than they are of a salesperson. How do companies compete in this noisy, competitive

environment? The 2021 AMS conference is aimed at bringing the community of marketing researchers and practitioners together. In its spirit of sharing and caring, this conference will endeavor to develop the field further in all respects. Plenary sessions with renown marketing experts and competitive paper sessions, will be accompanied by a comprehensive virtual social program. We look forward to you joining us for this exceptional event!

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FROM THE EDITOR *continued from page 1*

and interesting columns spanning topics on innovative teaching, research, and the continuous development of members of the Academy in future issues. As always, please send us any news, photos, articles, or suggestions you deem to be relevant for the next issue to jlocander@bus.olemiss.edu.

Cheers,

—Jennifer Locander, The University of Mississippi
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—Obinna O. Obilo, Central Michigan University
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AMS Upcoming Events *continued from page 4*

2021 Academy of Marketing Science World Marketing Congress

July 14-16, 2021

The University of Queensland Business School, Brisbane, Australia

Conference Program Co-Chairs:

Jay Weerawardena

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Alastair Tombs

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As Drucker said, the only two value-added functions in business are marketing and innovation. Today marketers are challenged to add value in an environment characterized as filled with problems arising from climate change, global natural resource management, fractionized political and economic viewpoints, and changes in the social landscape, both within and across national borders. These “sands” continue to shift from the past into our current world and marketing innovations more and more are leveraged by the rising influence of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, mechanamorphics, a proliferation of data, changing economic power concentration, and a myriad of other factors. Notably, Queensland, the host state of the 2021 Academy of Marketing Science World Marketing Congress and home to the Great Barrier Reef and oldest and most bio-diverse rainforest in the world, is no stranger to environmental threats.

In the complex context of today’s world, as in the past, marketers continue to seek to discover new ways of creating value-adding exchanges. Tools such as marketing analytics point toward innovative

ways to replace or assist marketing decision-making. However, marketing efforts should continue to be guided by such values as equity, transparency, authenticity, and empathy. At a collective and organizational level, marketers should strive to continue to offer value in a socially-responsible way to society and the consumers within.

Accordingly, the AMS WMC 2021 provides a platform and collegial atmosphere for marketing scholars as they continue to consider their work through the lens of ‘responsible’ or ‘enlightened marketing’, which takes into consideration the disciplines potential societal and environmental effects and contributions in theory and practice. This will include the presentation of possible new theory discoveries and findings that could lead to more efficient and impactful responses by

marketers to the current multi-faceted global challenge array. Gatherings such as this help to assure that the future of marketing and the communities it so closely impacts will be bright and continue as a true value-added function to business.



AMS OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS

Updates from the V.P. of Publications

James S. Boles



AMS continues to play a leading role in advancing marketing thought and the marketing discipline. AMS, with John Hulland (University of Georgia) as Editor-in-Chief, continues to be one of the most widely read and cited marketing journals with an impact factor of 7.96. JAMS also continues to be represented on the Financial Times List Top 50 Journals list. Stephen Vargo (University of Hawaii at Manoa), Editor-in-Chief of AMS

Review, continues to enhance the Journal's position. Downloads and citations of AMSR articles are growing and the reach of the Journal is continuing to expand. Finally, as the new Editor of the AMS Quarterly, Jennifer Locander (The University of Mississippi) will continue to keep us informed about important AMS news and events related to the Academy. We appreciate your support of our publications.

Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science New Impact Factors and Special Issue

The most recent JCR/ISI impact factor scores continue to provide good news for JAMS. For the third year running, JAMS has the highest 2-year and 5-year impact factors (both with and

without self-citation) of the six Marketing journals included on the Financial Times 50 list. Below is a summary of the impact factors for the six Marketing journals, from 2017 to 2019

2-Year Impact Factors	<i>JAMS</i>	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	<i>Marketing Science</i>	<i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>
2019	7.96	5.27	6.21	4.23	3.02	2.96
2018	9.36	7.82	4.70	4.20	2.49	2.47
2017	8.49	7.34	3.54	3.85	2.79	2.81

Last year we received a total of 613 submissions, representing authors from 62 different countries. Since JAMS publishes roughly 60 articles a year, the journal's acceptance rate is under 10%. Furthermore, for the first time ever, a majority of the accepted papers were authored outside of the U.S. JAMS is also proud to have received recognition from Springer earlier this year for its editorial excellence.

Increasingly, schools and departments around the globe include JAMS as a premier marketing journal in their P&T and

annual review assessments. We appreciate your help as AMS members in promoting the journal's growing reputation as a top quality research publication.

With respect to JAMS special issues / sections, we currently have four open calls (full details can be found on the JAMS website):

- *Creating Customer, Firm, and Social Value through Cutting-edge Digital Technologies* (edited by Plangger, de Ruyter,

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AMS Official Publications *continued from page 6*

Tucker, and Grewal). Submissions will be accepted until January 2, 2021.

- *AI & Robotics in the Retail and Service Sectors* (special section edited by Noble and Mende). Submissions will be accepted between December 1, 2020 and January 31, 2021.
- *Scarcity and Marketing* (edited by Belk, Das, Jain, and Zhu).

Submissions will be accepted between February 1, 2021 and March 31, 2021.

- *Reimagining Marketing Strategy* (edited by Plangger, Montecchi, de Ruyter, Keeling, Scott, and Dahl). Submissions will be accepted between August 30, 2021 and October 15, 2021.



John Hulland
Editor-in-Chief

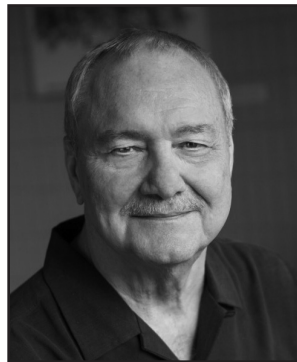


Anne Hoekman
Managing Editor



Mark Houston
Editor

AMS Review



Stephen L. Vargo
Editor, AMS Review

Increasing downloads and visibility of the journal

Through September 2020, *AMS Review* has witnessed a rather dramatic, almost 100 percent increase in downloads compared with the same months of 2019. Some of that increase is probably attributable our concerted effort to build a social-media presence for the journal over the past six months, which has resulted in an equally dramatic increase in followers and friends. Please assist us in this effort by following the *AMS Review* in Twitter (@AmsrUpdates) and Facebook (@amsreviewupdates) and retweeting/sharing our posts.

Special Section on “Advancing Conceptual, Theoretical Articles in Marketing”

Another reason for these high download numbers is the popularity of the Special Section on “Advancing Conceptual, Theoretical Articles in Marketing” that was published in the June 2020 issue of *AMS Review*. The Special Section includes 10 contributions from notable marketing scholars and is aimed at facilitating theory development in marketing by exploring issues of problematizing, developing, writing and reviewing conceptual-only manuscripts. I encourage everyone to take a

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AMS Official Publications *continued from page 7*

look at these insightful papers. I think you will find them helpful both in developing your submissions to AMS Review, as well as elsewhere.

The Winners of the AMS Review – Sheth Foundation 2020 Annual Doctoral Competition for Conceptual Articles (ADCCA)

The 2020 edition of ADCCA was again quite successful, with 35 submission from doctoral students around the world. Jodie Conduit, of the University of Adelaide and Michael Kleinaltenkamp of Freie Universität Berlin, served with me as the co-chairs. The five winners of this year's competition are:

“Cleansing the Doors of Perception: Perceptual Inaccuracy in Marketing Relationships”, Zeynep Müge Güzel, Koç University, Turkey

“Corporate Sustainability (CS) and Firm Performance: A Systematic Review and Topic Modeling Approach”, Youngtak M. Kim, University of Georgia, USA, Sundar Bharadwaj, University of Georgia, USA

“AI-enabled marketing capabilities: an exploration through the hierarchy of operant resources (HOR) perspective”, Kerry Manis Texas Tech University, USA, Sreedhar Madhavaram, Texas Tech University, USA

“Demand Spillover of Add-ons: The Role of Network Homogeneity”, Pallav Routh, University of Texas at San Antonio, USA, Richard Gretz, University of Texas at San Antonio, USA, Daniel Kaimann, University of Paderborn, Germany

“Conceptualizing Service Exclusion through Service-Dominant Logic”, Sajith Siriwardana University of Tasmania, Australia

Call for proposals: AMS Review-Sheth Foundation 2021 Annual Doctoral Competition for Conceptual Articles

We are encouraging all marketing PhD students to submit proposals for conceptual articles to the 2021 edition of the *AMS Review*-Sheth Foundation Annual Doctoral Competition for Conceptual Articles. The detailed call for proposals with submission instructions is now available in the *AMS Review* webpage. The deadline for proposals is January 17, 2021. All PhD students currently enrolled in a marketing doctoral program, or those who have graduated in 2020, are eligible for the competition. PhD students can submit their papers as sole authors or coauthors (as long as they are first authors). The winners will receive recognition, a monetary award and mentoring toward potentially publishing their manuscript in the *AMS Review*. Elina Jaakkola (University of Turku, Finland) and Rod Brodie (University of Auckland, New Zealand) are co-chairing the 2021 competition with me.

AMS PRESIDENT'S COLUMN *continued from page 1*

The new AMS Executive Committee members, who will be serving two-year terms, have served as track chairs at AMS conferences. I note each of their other prior roles at AMS.

- Brad Carlson (St. Louis University)—President-Elect
 - VP for Programs (2018-2020), 2014 AMS Annual Conference Co-Chair (Indianapolis), 2015 and 2016 AMS Doctoral Consortium Co-Chair (Disney World and Coronado)
- OC Ferrell (Auburn University)—Past President
 - AMS President (2018-2020), VP for Publications (2007-2016), 2018 AMS Doctoral Consortium Co-Chair (New Orleans)
- Nina Krey (Rowen University)—Vice President for Programs
 - Secretary/Treasurer (2016-2020), Proceedings Editor for both the Annual Conference and WMC (2017-2019),

AMS Quarterly Co-Editor (2017-2020), interim AMS home office manager (2016)

- Janna Parker (James Madison University)—Vice President of Engagement
 - VP for Development (2018-2020), Lead Instructor of Teaching Digital Marketing Certificate Program (2017-2019 AMS Annual Conferences)
- Obi Obilo (Central Michigan University)—Vice President of Communication
 - AMS Quarterly Co-Editor (2017-2020)
- Felipe Pantoja (IÉSEG School of Management)—Vice President for Global Membership
 - Proceedings Editor for both the Annual Conference and WMC (2019)
- Patricia Rossi (IÉSEG School of Management)—Secretary/Treasurer

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AMS PRESIDENT'S COLUMN *continued from page 8*

- VP for International Membership (2018-2020), Proceedings Editor for both the Annual Conference (2016-2018) and WMC (2017-2018)

I am also pleased to introduce four new AMS Board of Governors members, who will serve six-year terms. They too have a wealth of AMS experience. I highlight their most noteworthy and recent contributions to AMS.

- Sharon Beatty (University of Alabama)
 - 2019 AMS Cutco/Vector Outstanding Marketing Educator, 2015 AMS Harold W. Berkman Distinguished Service Award, 2014 AMS Doctoral Consortium Co-Chair (Indianapolis), AMS 50th Anniversary Planning Committee
- Adilson Borges (Carrefour; NEOMA Business School)
 - AMS President (2016-2018), AMS VP for Programs (2012-2014), 2019 AMS Doctoral Consortium Co-Chair (Vancouver), 2012 AMS Annual Conference Co-Chair (New Orleans), 2014 AMS World Marketing Congress Co-Chair (Reims, France)
- John Ford (Old Dominion University)
 - AMS President (2008-2010), AMS Co-Director of International Programs (2019-present), 2019 AMS Doctoral Consortium Co-Chair (Vancouver), 2018 AMS World Marketing Congress Co-Chair (Porto, Portugal)
- Manjit Yadav (Texas A&M University)
 - Editor of *AMS Review* (2014), creator and chair of the *AMS Review* Theory Forum (2014-2019), *AMS Review*/Sheth Foundation Doctoral Competition for Conceptual Articles Co-Chair (2016-2019), AMS 50th Anniversary Planning Committee

In addition to these new officers and BOG members, several individuals have been appointed to assist in other ways. Dana Harrison (East Tennessee State University) will be serving as Director of Technology and Data Management. Jennifer Locander (University of Mississippi) is now the AMS Quarterly editor. Karen Hopkins (Auburn University) has agreed to serve as Director of Social Media.

Further, Jim Boles continues as VP for Publications, and several BOG members will continue in their roles: Barry Babin (co-chair), Joe Hair (co-chair), Linda Ferrell, Linda Golden, Jean-Luc Herrmann, Dave Ortinau, Nicholas Paparoidamis, and Leyland Pitt.

I would like to thank all of these individuals for volunteering their time and energy. Their commitment to and experience with AMS will be instrumental as our organization navigates these uncharted waters.

I would also like to give special thanks Brad Carlson for his previous role as the VP for Programs over the last two years. The office of VP for Programs is highly time intensive and requires arguably more work than all of the other offices *combined*. VP for Programs is responsible for overseeing the conferences. While the conference co-chairs' efforts are instrumental in creating the conference program, the VP for Programs oversees that process along with managing the other conference events (e.g., certificate programs, doctoral consortium) and coordinating with the hotel (e.g., food and beverage, room blocks). These behind-the-scenes responsibilities often go unrecognized.

Nina Krey has stepped into this role and is facing the unique challenge of transitioning our conferences to a virtual format. I have no doubt she will go above and beyond what is expected.

Please thank Brad and Nina for their hard, behind-the-scenes work!!

While AMS's conferences are the "bread and butter" of our organization, the pandemic has spurred us to explore other ways to offer value to our members. In August, AMS held its first webinar—*Networking Tips for Doctoral Students*—which attracted nearly 170 participants. Many thanks to Janna Parker for organizing and moderating the event. Several other webinars and networking events are in the works, along with some other exciting initiatives. I encourage you to renew your membership so that you are able participate in these upcoming events.

In closing, I would like to thank all of you for your commitment to AMS, as well as your patience as we learn and evolve during these unusual circumstances.

Julie Moulard

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

SCHOLARSHIP AND RESEARCH

Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (JRCS)

Call for Papers for

Special Issue: Evolution and Challenges Facing Retail Atmospherics in the Era of the “Customer Journey”

Deadline for submission: February 15, 2021

Guest editors

Luca Petruzzellis, University of Bari Aldo Moro, luca.

petruzzellis@uniba.it

Barry J. Babin, University of Mississippi, bbabin@bus.olemiss.

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Purpose

This special issue is created to pay tribute to Professor Jean-Charles Chebat, who contributed immensely to cutting-edge research and education in the field of retail atmospherics. Jean-Charles research interests were many and varied. However, he is best known for contributions that helped provide an understanding of the way one's environment shaped the retail customer experience. Uniquely, his research applied consumer psychology theory and blended it with knowledge drawn from retailing and services practice and theory.

High quality papers on any aspect of retail atmospherics with a different perspective in the era of customer journeys are welcome. Strategies related to retail atmospherics can have a pervasive influence on customers' purchase behaviors (Babin, Chebat and Michon, 2004). Specifically, prior studies have identified a number of factors in retail establishments such as, ambient lighting (Biswas et al., 2017), ambient scent (Chebat and Michon, 2003), color (Chebat and Morrin, 2007; Labrecque and Milne, 2012;), music (Petruzzellis, Chebat and Palumbo, 2018), co-shoppers (Borges, Chebat and Babin, 2010), physical proximity to employees (Esmark and Noble, 2016), and similarity with employees (Chebat, Sirgy and St. James, 2006); all of which can influence customers' feelings, attitudes, and behavioral responses. This special issue is dedicated to contemporary and traditional phenomena in retail and services marketing and operations with respect to the role of retail atmospherics in times of digital transformation.

Although retail atmospherics has been a very active area of study, a new perspective can be adopted following Jean-Charles Chebat seminal works. Retail has to face the challenges and opportunities of the digital revolution on the one hand, and challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic on the other. Different

approaches and perspectives should expand understanding of retail atmospherics to incorporate multiple retail touchpoints that a customer may encounter during a journey that involves different cognitive, emotional, and behavioral cues and responses.

The following are indicative of the potential breadth of contribution:

- Multisensory approaches to atmospherics
- VR and AR in retail and services
- Servicescape and atmospherics in the digital retail era
- Shopper/consumer behaviour and marketing in omni-channel retail environments
- Digitalization in retailing
- The role of artificial intelligence in the retail environment
- Resilient retailing
- Business and retail analytics
- Digital Innovation and technology in the retail environment
- Contemporary issues in retail atmospherics
- Research methods in retailing research
- Replicating key works in retail atmospherics
- Social retailing
- Academic retail and service research post p-value

General Information for Prospective Authors

We welcome submissions that can represent different methods. These include but are not limited to new frameworks using multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary explanations. Submitted papers should not have been previously published nor be currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Submission Procedure

Prospective authors are encouraged to contact one of the guest editors regarding potential topics of interest or any questions/suggestions regarding the special issue. Abstracts (up to 750 words) can be submitted directly to the guest editors via email. Abstracts must be concise and to the point with appropriate references. The guest editors will provide feedback on each submitted abstract.

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Other Announcements *continued from page 10*

Please find the “Guide for Authors” and the JRCs home page: <https://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-retailing-and-consumer-services/> for information about formatting and style for the JRCs. To submit a manuscript for consideration in the special (virtual) issue, please use the JRCs submission page: <https://www.editorialmanager.com/jjrc/default.aspx>

Make sure to designate your paper for the special issue by looking for “VSI:Retail Atmospheric” among the special issue topics. Deadline for manuscript submission is February 15, 2021. We expect a speedy review process so that only papers requiring less than a major revision will be invited to revise. In that way, we can publish the VSI in the summer of 2021.

INDUSTRIAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT

Call for Papers for

Branding and Positioning Strategies in Industrial and B2B Markets in the Middle East or Africa (MEA)

Deadline for submission: August 1, 2021

Overview and Purpose

The aim of the special issue is to develop knowledge and generate new insights and applications of the concepts of branding and positioning relevant to managers and scholars in industrial/B2B or business markets in the Middle East and Africa (MEA). This special issue builds on and extends researches published in *Industrial Marketing Management* in positioning strategies in industrial and B2B markets (see IMM vol. 81, 2019), industrial marketing strategy and B2B management by SMEs (IMM vol. 40, issue 3, 2011), and corporate image and reputation (IMM vol. 39, issue 5, 2010).

Positioning strategy is defined as the firm’s marketing activities geared toward positively adjusting the mind of the consumer via various marketing communication and promotion approaches and other marketing mix tactics with the view of convincing the consumer to prefer the firm’s offerings relative to those of competitors. In a sense, positioning strategy aims to differentiate the firm and/or its offering(s) in the mind of the consumer. The literature reveals several positioning strategies that can be pursued by the marketer. A recent research conducted by Blankson, Ketron, and Coffie (2017) found that Shoprite in Ghana employed “top of the range,” “service,” “value for money,” “reliability,” “attractiveness,” and “the brand name” positioning strategies at the Accra Mall in Accra. As well, Coffie and Owusu-Frimpong (2014) found that “service reliability,” “social responsibility,” and “branding” positioning strategies were popular in the Ghanaian services industry.

Even with the strongest of brands, firms are challenged to generate sufficient competitive advantages in order to remain competitive and superior among their rivals (Clancy and Trout, 2002; Porter, 2008). To achieve such competitive superiority, Matthyssens, Vandenbempt, and Weyns (2009) posit that in addition to a firm’s appealing offering(s), the firm must possess

a distinct and difficult-to-imitate position in the minds of consumers (i.e., reflecting favorable perceptions) which complements its offering(s) (i.e., product(s), service(s), or brand(s)). Consequently, the firm enters the domain of positioning—the act of designing the firm’s offering(s) and brand image to occupy a distinct place in the minds of the target market.

A well-communicated image should help establish a brand’s position, insulate the brand from competition and ultimately enhance the brand’s market performance. The latter impact underscores the importance of managing the image over time (see Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis, 1986). As noted by Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis (1986), any offering (i.e., product, service, brand) can be positioned.

One of the important assets that firms carry is the intangible value represented by its brand’s/brands’ purpose(s) that are acknowledged by consumers as in the case of Apple, Samsung, Google, Microsoft, Coca Cola, Toyota, BMW, Honeywell, etc. These brands capitalize on creating opportunities for positioning and growth (Orton-Jones, 2015).

Keller (2003) defines a brand as a product that adds other dimensions that differentiate it from other products and services designed to satisfy the same need. Kapferer (1992) writes that a brand exists when there is a certain perceived risk, and that without that risk, a brand would simply be the name of a product. Thus, a brand makes life simpler and less risky and is a source of value for the consumer.

An important step in the creation of brand value is the shaping of consumers’ perceptions, which is enabled by the firm’s employment of positioning strategies (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 1986; Porter, 2001; Blankson, 2016). Webster (1991) states that positioning is an important strategic concept developed in consumer marketing but equally applicable for industrial products and services. The author also argues that the firm’s

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value proposition is the firm's unique way of delivering value to consumers.

The employment of positioning strategies thus paves the way for preference for a firm's brands over competitors' brands. Positioning strategy, therefore, is the antecedent to brand management and is subsequently the foundation of a brand's position in the marketplace (Blankson, 2016; Blankson and Kalafatis, 2007). In other words, the result of successful positioning strategy is a distinctive brand image (i.e., *mental picture*) of the brand in consumers' minds (see Park, Jaworski, and MacInnis, 1986). Therein lies the synergy between branding and the concept of positioning.

Webster (1991) states that positioning is an important strategic concept developed in consumer marketing but equally applicable and relevant for industrial products and services. While marketing scholars understand that positioning strategy and brand management individually lead to enhanced firm performance (Hooley, Piercy and Nicoulaud, 2012), the two seemingly independent concepts (i.e., positioning and branding) have a closer relationship than many scholars acknowledge (Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010; Blankson, 2016). A broader understanding of the streams of research on contemporary issues and challenges in branding, brand management, and positioning will help scholars in expanding their research scope, comprehension and appreciation of the domain of branding and positioning, and practitioners in finding further applications. These fundamental components of marketing strategy are relevant in both domestic and international markets (Blankson, Ketron, and Coffie, 2017; Alden, Steenkamp, and Batra, 1999). As noted earlier, an important step in the creation of brand value is the shaping of customers' perceptions, which is enabled by the firm's employment of positioning strategies (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 1986; Kalafatis, Tsogas, and Blankson, 2000; Porter, 2001). But, positioning decisions are too important to be determined at a tactical level, yet this is the reality across much of industrial marketing (Bennion, 1987; Kalafatis, Tsogas, and Blankson, 2000; Penttinen and Palmer, 2007).

Unfortunately, the sales-led culture of many industrial businesses leads them to overlook the implications of positioning for the whole business leaving both scholars and practitioners with insufficient evidence of positioning and its influence. Further, an investigation into positioning in the business to business domain should pave way for scholars to understand the role of the concept of positioning in industrial and B2B marketing management. In addition, scholars will have greater insight into how businesses position themselves in the marketplace.

Despite the pivotal role played by positioning in consumer/B2C markets, positioning is not well understood and clearly

requires further stream of studies (Bennion, 1987; Kalafatis, Tsogas, and Blankson, 2000; Penttinen and Palmer, 2007) to develop understanding in terms of theoretical development and managerial guidelines in industrial/B2B markets. As concluded by Kalafatis, Tsogas, and Blankson (2000), although there is clear indication of the relevance of positioning within the business domain, there is urgent need for research dealing with the topic. This is critical in that the image-led positioning strategies that are prevalent in consumer goods marketing do not translate well to the industrial marketing context. Notwithstanding this, what matters is that current and prospective customers see the merits in a firm's positioning and that the firm links other brand strategies to the positioning strategies in order to deliver the "promise" implied by the positioning decision in a particular market (Hutt and Speh, 2007).

Although the Middle East and Africa (MEA) compare unfavorably with the rest of the world in terms of academic business research canon, researches in branding and positioning of firms in MEA continue to receive attention and interest (see Domzal and Unger, 1987; Melewar, Turnbull and Balabanis, 2000; Korkmaz and Messner, 2008; Adokou and Kyere-Diabour, 2017; Odoom, Narteh, and Boateng, 2017; Bonsu and Godefroit-Winkel, 2016; Coffie, 2016; Hinson, Madichie, and Ibrahim, 2012; Narteh et al., 2012). Still, these efforts are meager relative to North America, Europe, and Asia regions. Industrial and B2B opportunities in sectors such as telecommunications, construction, mining, manufacturing and services abound in MEA. With a growing middle class and expatriate populations, MEA is an attractive marketplace with enormous research potential.

Furthermore, it is critical to increase research in branding and positioning in view of the increasing collaboration between businesses in the Middle East and Africa and the subsequent growth and expansion of businesses – local and foreign (see Narteh et al., 2012; Blankson, Ketron, and Coffie, 2017) and competition among firms.

To that end, this Special Issue seeks manuscripts that draw on multiple methodologies including qualitative, quantitative, modelling, case study, or triangulation of methods. All manuscripts should have clear relevance to the Middle East or African marketplaces. As well, conceptual papers that focus on branding, brand management, brand positioning, product positioning, and positioning issues and links with firm market activities in the Middle East or Africa are welcome.

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Positioning or branding decision making approaches and/or employment of positioning strategies in MEA (i.e., Middle East or Africa).

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- Linking firm positioning or branding strategies/activities and relationship with target audiences' perceptions in MEA.
- Firm value propositions and positioning or branding strategies and outcomes in MEA.
- Application of positioning or branding strategies and impact on firm performance in MEA.
- Congruence between suppliers' positioning or branding strategies, firms' positioning/branding strategies and target audiences' decision making (e.g., why target audiences buy) in MEA.
- Evaluation of firm positioning initiatives and/or re-positioning and outcomes in MEA.
- Relationship between market orientation and positioning or branding in MEA.
- Firms' characteristics and positioning or branding strategies in MEA.
- Measuring—development and validation of scale measuring positioning or branding strategies in MEA.
- Determinants and outcomes of positioning or branding capabilities in industrial/B2B in MEA.
- Branding and positioning interface in industrial/B2B markets in MEA.
- Case studies of how firms engage in branding, create brands or acquire positioning capabilities in industrial/B2B markets in MEA.
- Employment of positioning strategies or branding strategies in SME within industrial/B2B markets in MEA.
- How and why firms develop or adapt, or change their branding or positioning capabilities in MEA.
- Marketing practices outcome following the employment of branding strategies or positioning strategies in MEA.
- Positioning or branding activities of firms in the context of cross-cultural environment (e.g., Chinese firms in MEA; Indian firms in MEA; Western firms in MEA etc.).
- Firm branding or positioning activities in the context of a cross-national Middle East or African environments (e.g., a comparison of Saudi Arabia and UAE; UAE and Oman; South Africa and Kenya; Zambia and Tanzania; Cameroon and Gabon; Ghana and Nigeria; Egypt and Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia; Senegal and Ivory Coast; Liberia and Sierra Leone; Uganda and Zimbabwe etc.).
- Issues about firm ethical and/or CSR pursuits and branding or positioning strategies in MEA.
- Other topics are also welcome as long as they relate with branding or positioning in industrial/B2B markets in MEA (i.e., Middle East or Africa). Papers submitted to *Industrial Marketing Management* should be explicit about the contribution to industrial/B2B marketing or business markets.

Manuscript Preparation and Submission

To submit a paper please visit the IMM editorial site at <https://www.eviser.com/profile/#/IMM/register>. Please login, register as an author, and submit the paper as the site will instruct you. Submissions are now open until August 1, 2021. When you get to the step in the process that asks you for the type of paper, select SI: Branding and Positioning Strategies in MEA. All papers will be reviewed through the standard double-blind peer review process of IMM. In preparation of their manuscripts, authors are asked to follow the Author Guidelines closely. A guide for authors, sample articles and other relevant information for submitting papers are available at: <https://www.elsevier.com/journals/industrial-marketing-management/0019-8501/guide-for-authors>.

All queries about the special issue should be sent to the Guest Editors (see below).

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With the end of the year, we start the process of identifying candidates for AMS "Academy" Awards. Also, with the delayed Annual Conference, we'd like to congratulate the following award recipients:

Harold W. Berkman Distinguished Service Award: *Rajan Varadarajan / Cutco/Vector Outstanding Marketing Educator: Manjit Yadav / Harold and Muriel Berkman Faculty Achievement and Development Award: Patricia Rossi / The AMS Parasuraman Best JAMS Long-Term Impact Award: Richard Bagozzi and Youjiae Yi*

It's sad that we will not be able to recognize these individuals in person as planned. But, we will do our best to acknowledge their achievements via a virtual format. Nominations for the following Academy Awards are being taken now:

**Harold W. Berkman Distinguished Service Award
 Cutco/Vector Outstanding Marketing Educator Award
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Information about each award, including the criteria for selection, can be found under the "about us" tab at the home page (www.ams-web.org).

Thanks for all of you who are engaged with AMS.



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