Editorial

Rarely before has the customer journey been the cause of so many unanswered marketing questions. Since the rise of the Internet, many, if not all, marketing rules have been challenged and thus must be reconsidered. In this situation, marketing science has a broad field of investigation and can generate valuable insights into new consumer behaviors and the functioning of markets. In this issue, we present such insights from eight fascinating studies. Most of them highlight approaches to addressing Internet-driven marketing challenges.

Our journey begins with a look at the “*wisdom of the crowds*” in online product evaluations. Find out how bias in the posting population can lead to a skewed overall impression on page 8. Despite this distortion, another study shows that *online chatter* is still relevant – even on the trading floors: Learn how an investment strategy based on online consumer evaluations succeeded in outperforming the Standard & Poor’s 500 index on page 13.

Viral marketing, our next topic, draws from consumers’ joy in “electronic socializing.” A user’s inclination to share experiences, games and tools can be reinforced by built-in viral product features, according to recent research. Read how an app’s spread can be significantly boosted when a Web service is equipped with the ability to automatically inform Facebook friends about an adoption or invite them to use an app on page 18. But *social networks* carry risks as well. One’s friends not only encourage the use of offers, they may also prompt users to terminate services (p. 40).

Constant online activity has further encouraged mobile marketing, and an increasing number of companies now offer *branded apps* to consumers. Under certain conditions, the apps can be successfully used for brand communications, but some risks remain. Research shows that the apps must be seen as useful (p. 24), and this notion is supported by marketing managers at Nestlé, BMW and Allianz. They share their experiences with branded apps in our MIR-Forum (p. 53).

Other stations in our journey include the interplay between *online shopping* and brick-and-mortar stores (p. 28), consumers’ *grocery-shopping strategies* (p. 34) and *marketing controlling* (p. 46). This last article demonstrates how vector autoregression models help identify metrics with the strongest impact on sales and observe lagged effects from specific activities.

Finally, I would like to announce some upcoming changes to our journal: We will extend our electronic offers to subscribers next year, and all future issues will each be centered on a specific marketing-related topic. These issues will be orchestrated by guest editors who are specialists in that topic’s field. Therefore, I will be saying goodbye to you as editor-in-chief in this issue. I hope you have enjoyed reading GfK MIR as much as I have enjoyed the editorial work.

Yours,
Hermann Diller
Editor-in-chief

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Diller'.

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