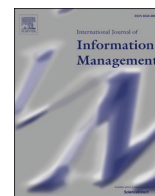




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Editorial

Guest Editorial: A special section on digital marketing



To further enhance theory and practice in the information and communication technologies (ICTs) and digital media research this special issue responds to growth of global e-commerce and digital content and how these impact existing marketing practices. Almost a decade ago, with the growth of global e-commerce, localization of digital content was seen as an effective way to target online consumers worldwide (e.g., Singh & Pereira, 2005; Singh, Bartikowski, Dwivedi, & Williams, 2009); companies needed to identify consumer segments based on nationality and language, and other broad segments, and accordingly localize and culturally customize the digital content. Individuals engage in a variety of activities, including looking for regular news and important event information, engaging with family and friends, evaluating items, facilities, and locations, selling and purchasing goods, and accessing transportation, tourism, and personal financial services. Businesses utilise these technologies and engage in digital and social media marketing efforts to create brand and product awareness, sell their goods, provide services to their consumer, encourage and facilitate consumer engagement with brand community, and enhance their customer relationship management to impact consumer behaviour (Abed, Dwivedi, & Williams, 2015; Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017; Buhalis & Volchek, 2021; Dwivedi, Kapoor, & Chen, 2015; Dwivedi, Rana, & Alryalat, 2017; Dwivedi, Rana, Slade, Singh, & Kizgin, 2020; Dwivedi, Ismagilova, Rana, & Raman, 2021; Dwivedi, Hughes et al., 2021; Harrigan et al., 2021; Ismagilova, Rana, Slade, & Dwivedi, 2020; Ismagilova, Slade, Rana, & Dwivedi, 2020; Kamboj, Sarmah, Gupta, & Dwivedi, 2018; Kang, Lu, Guo, & Li, 2021; Kapoor, Dwivedi, & Piercy, 2016, 2018; Kizgin et al., 2020; Krishen, Dwivedi, Bindu, & Kumar, 2021; Mishra, Shukla, Rana, & Dwivedi, 2020; Parthiban, Qureshi, Bandyopadhyay, & Jaikumar, 2021; Rana et al., 2020; Roy, Gruner, & Pantano, 2021; Shareef, Mukerji, Alryalat, Wright, & Dwivedi, 2018; Shareef, Mukerji, Dwivedi, Rana, & Islam, 2019). This suggests that digital and social media marketing is becoming an integral part of marketing plans of organisations worldwide (e.g. Kapoor et al., 2018; Kizgin, Jamal, Dey, & Rana, 2018). It is observed that identification of customer segments on social media and targeted communication is the key to marketing success today (Alalwan et al., 2017; Kapoor et al., 2018).

This Special Section was motivated by a research workshop at the Academy of Marketing Conference in 2019 that took place on 4–7 July, 2019 in London, United Kingdom. The special section focuses on research papers which make new contributions to theory, methodology and empirical results related to digital marketing practice. We accepted five papers for in this special section and discuss these in the following.

The paper titled “Segmenting the audience of a cause-related marketing viral campaign” by Mora, Vila-Lopez and Ines Kuster analyses the

attitudinal effect of a cause-related marketing campaign through social networks. They have used a case study methodology application with a segmentation approach based on three affinity groups: high-affinity segment (familiar with the sponsoring brand and the promoted cause), intermediate-affinity segment (familiar just with the sponsoring brand or cause) and low-affinity segment (neither with the brand nor the cause). Results show that a viral campaign works perfectly for the strong-affinity segment and adequately for the weak affinity segment. On the contrary, ival campaign presented in this paper leaves the intermediate-affinity segment indifferent. The findings help to bridge the existing gap between cause-related marketing and new technologies, stressing the importance of defining the content of the message without bias (so that one partner does not benefit more than the other) and of segmenting the audience (since, not all internet users react the same way to same messages). The study recommends that if brands address several segments, different messages should be prepared and adapted for each one, incorporating the most appropriate arguments into each of them according to the target audience. This study makes an important contribution in the area of consumer segmentation and marketing communications (Mora, Vila-Lopez, & Küster-Boluda, 2021).

The paper titled “Eye Tracking Technology to Audit Google Analytics: Analysing Digital Consumer Shopping Journey in Fashion m-Retail” by Tupikovskaja-Omovieva and Tyler is focused on investigating how Google Analytics data and data captured by eye tracking technology can be applied to better understand digital consumer behaviour and develop more relevant customer journey maps. They have used a multi-method research design, by incorporating an innovative mobile eye tracking technology and mobile fashion consumer data from Google Analytics. Digital customers’ shopping journeys on the fashion retailer’s website were mapped using data sourced from eye tracking and Google Analytics, gathered in parallel. The findings of this research study revealed that the Google Analytics tool can track less than half of the activities conducted by digital users on the retailer’s website. This research addresses a lack of understanding of actual consumer behaviour while engaging with a brand online. A combination of data from google analytics and behavioural data would provide brands with a rich insight into consumer engagement and behaviour. However, attention needs to be paid to data protection and privacy on the subject area when using cutting edge technologies to capture behavioural data (Tupikovskaja-Omovieva & Tyler, 2020).

Zhou et al.’s paper on “Social Media Influencers (SMI) Narrative Strategies used to create eWOM” discusses how SMI’s become more influential in marketing collaborations to generate eWOM for brands. The research used a netnographic study to observe fashion bloggers messages, using semiotic and rhetorical approaches. The paper has

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identified six narrative strategies (advising, enthusing, appraising, amusing, and assembling) used by SMI's in order to generate eWOM. The paper outlines SMI's formation of narrative strategies and links these to specific tactics that influencers use to express meanings of brands and persuasion. The study calls for future research into SMI's narrative strategies utilising AR, VR, and AI technologies to increase opportunities to identify customer needs and personalise content (Zhou, Barnes, McCormick, & Cano, 2020).

France, Shi, Vaghefi, and Zhao's (2020) paper entitled "Online Video Channel Management: An Integrative Decision Support System" has proposed a framework that integrates behavioural and modelling work for online video channels. The framework highlights four elements 1) user processes such as video specification, video design/script, content creation, video release and monitoring; 2) DSS methods such as video response testing, Machine Learning Prediction, Functional Prediction, Local Prediction; 3) Behavioural insights such emotional responses and social shares; and 4) Video Data such as video characteristics, view statistics, social information. The framework's elements address the multiple challenges faced by individuals and/or organisations who manage video channels to understand why video content goes viral and discover future video content attributes to ensure its performance. The research method includes using a YouTube dataset to implement models and metrics relevant to online videos. Additionally, an experiment was conducted to capture behavioural data related to emotional responses from those videos. The results illustrate how video data can be captured to model and predict video performance, extract meaning and patterns that can be used for video content creation. The proposed framework outlines the possible options a video channel manager can explore depending on the situation and context to assist their decisions. This paper contributes to an area of digital and social media marketing that has seen significant growth in the recent past given online videos' impact (France et al., 2020).

Dwivedi, Ismagilova et al.'s (2020) paper provide an overview of current debates for digital and social media marketing extracted from the literature that combined with experts' perspectives, led to a significant research proposition to advance knowledge within the domain of digital and social media marketing. The paper synthesises exiting literature to discuss context of digital marketing approaches four themes named environment, company, outcomes and marketing strategies. Then, it consolidates digital and social media marketing expert's contributions organised in terms of overview, challenges, limitations and research gap, research propositions or questions.

Within the 14 contributions of this comprehensive review, there is an interesting emphasis on addressing the themes of ethics, humanity and cutting edge technologies impact for digital marketing. The paper calls for a digital and social media marketing approach that goes beyond individuals to impact society and from moves the focus from consuming to creating. The contributions also analysed how digital and social media technologies can unlock customer engagement behaviours to improve consumer well-being. Responsible Artificial Intelligence is the focus of another contribution, how do we ensure that AI marketing proceeds responsibly, with consumers increasingly needing to trust their mobile, social media interfaces in an uncertain world. The dark side of social media marketing is examined, 'fake news' and 'fake reviews' is a new stream of communications that marketers need to manage. A surprising paucity of mobile marketing research, social media advertising research, and digital content marketing is also identified. The contributions also highlight the dilemma whereby all marketers will need to utilise data to target consumers effectively as digital grows, and the simultaneous need to use high ethics and privacy standards at a time when social media is expanding without traditional checks on ethics is scrutinized. Augmented Reality Marketing is identified as an emerging and increasingly important channel that requires integration. All the experts' contributions call for enhanced multidisciplinary digital marketing research, new ways of capturing data and relevant metrics with validated scales (Dwivedi, Ismagilova et al., 2020).

This Special Section aimed to contribute to theory and practice and motivate scholars to examine issues related to digital marketing. The above five research papers identified a number of implications and recommended a number of opportunities for future research.

With rapid emergence of artificial intelligence and its potential applications in various domains including management, marketing and retailing (Duan, Edwards, & Dwivedi, 2019; Dwivedi, Ismagilova et al., 2021; Dwivedi, Hughes et al., 2021; Pillai, Sivathanu, & Dwivedi, 2020), digital marketing domain should attempt to examine issues related to AI adoption, usage, data privacy, bias, ethics, predictive ability of AI based systems for understanding customers' needs, consumer trust, experiences and responses to AI enabled systems/applications, impacts (both positive and negative) of AI based systems and how effective AI based applications (such as Chatbots) are in comparison to human based customer services (Balakrishnan & Dwivedi, 2021a, 2021b; Davenport, Guha, Grewal, & Bressgott, 2020; Grewal, Hullah, Kopalle, & Karahanna, 2020; Klaus & Zaichkowsky, 2020; Shareef et al., 2021; Singh, Nambisan, Bridge, & Brock, 2020; Vimalkumar, Sharma, Singh, & Dwivedi, 2021). Three contributions from this special section have contributed to this growing call either by examining AI and analytics related issues (France et al., 2020; Tupikovskaja-Omovie & Tyler, 2020) or by outlining research agenda related to AI adoption and use in the marketing context (Dwivedi, Ismagilova et al., 2020).

We are optimistic that articles included in this special section of *International Journal of Information Management* will contribute towards advancing research in the emerging area of digital and social media marketing.

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