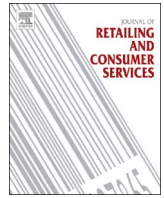




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## Editorial

## Special issue on the National Brand &amp; Private Label Marketing Conference 2014

This special issue of the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services is devoted to research papers from the First International Conference on National Brand & Private Label Marketing (NB&PL), 24–26 June 2014. The conference is based in Barcelona, with its main venue being the headquarters of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Open University of Catalonia, UOC).

The aim of this conference is to bring together marketing researchers working in the field of NB and PL from areas as varied as retailing, marketing and business in general, psychology, economics and statistics, among others. Although there are existing retailing conferences including sessions on related topics, this conference is believed to be the first international forum to present and discuss original, rigorous and significant contributions specifically on NB and PL issues. The first edition of the conference was sponsored by Fundación Ramón Areces (with backing from El Corte Inglés), the UOC, the publisher Springer, IRI Spain, the Spanish Association of Commercial Codification (AECOC) and ESADE.

The main topic of this first edition highlighted how the global economic crisis has strongly modified consumer purchasing behaviour. The global economic downturn has accelerated the growth of PLs at the same time as the underlying long-term shift in power moves from manufacturers to retailers. In the past, PL sales spiked during a recession but quickly returned to normal levels at the first sign of an upturn. However, this time PLs remain static. This new landscape, in which NBs and PLs compete, offers exciting new opportunities for researchers to discover different aspects underlying this new framework. It is with this goal in mind that this conference was launched and organised.

The conference attracted close to 40 researchers and almost 30 papers were submitted. The submitted papers address a diversity of areas such as assortment decisions, dual-brand manufacturers, brand positioning, consumer preferences, online context, the economic crisis, review of the literature, PL share, PL trends and PL innovation, among others. In these papers, a wide variety of theoretical and methodological approaches have been used. Of these submissions, 10 papers were accepted for review according to the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services reviewing process standards. The review process for these papers took around 18 months, with the following four papers finally making it through the double-blind review process.

Chan Choi's article focuses on understanding defensive strategies of a national brand manufacturer facing a retailer that also markets its own private label. Drawing upon a game-theoretic model, he reinforces the argument of building brand premium as

the first line of defence for a national brand instead of aggressively cutting the wholesale price. The results show that such a strategy can also induce retailer cooperation, because the retailer also benefits from the increased brand premium of the national brand through an increase in the retailer's total profit.

The article by Rubio, Villaseñor and Yagüe confirms that consumer loyalty and trust towards the chain are constructed through favourable perceptions of assortment and satisfaction with price tiers, which, in turn, encourage loyalty to PLs. In a study of 742 households, it is shown that the umbrella PL strategy connected to the label is especially good in the case of introducing new product categories or product innovations within the same category. Retailer price policy is confirmed as a key strategy for generating loyalty to its own brand.

In their article, Miquel, Caplliure, Pérez and Bigné explore whether gender and certain psychological variables, said to be relevant in explaining consumer PL purchasing behaviour in the context of convenience goods, can be extrapolated to the context of durables. By focusing on two durable categories (plasma TVs and washing machines), Miquel et al. show that factors influencing PL durables purchase intentions are very similar to those pointed out in the PL convenience goods literature.

Finally, the article by Gázquez-Abad, Martínez-López and Esteban-Millat argues that consumer acceptance of PL-only assortments is a separate phenomenon rather than merely being a consequence of the economic situation. By developing a controlled online experiment for two large consumer panels in the Spanish and the US markets, they show that, in an economic recovery, retailer decisions to delist NBs, so that they can offer an assortment containing only PLs, might not be the best strategy.

We would like to thank the EIC of the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, Professor Harry Timmermans, for his valuable support to the National Brand & Private Label Marketing Conference.

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