

EDITORIAL

International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Contemporary Marketing

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Abstract

There is a great deal of interest among marketing scholars in conducting international and interdisciplinary research. Such research is highly relevant to assess global market opportunities, risks, rapidly changing geo-politics and other environmental dynamics. The international and interdisciplinary research could help understand the way these variables affect country selection and mode of entry decisions, design of global value chain, use of Internet and social media, and assessment of competitive threats. Furthermore, research in the areas of market segmentation, consumer attitudes and perceptions, consumption behavior, consumer loyalty, selection of target markets and positioning, as well as design and implementation of the elements of marketing mix, namely, 4Ps, product, price, place, and promotion may also benefit from international and interdisciplinary research. International and interdisciplinary research approaches are relevant in a variety of industries, such as, food, financial services and other B2C and B2B services, retailing, and tourism in small, medium and large enterprises. The special issue includes six excellent papers that exemplify international and interdisciplinary approaches to these challenges.

Key words: global markets; opportunities; risks; financial services; retailing; tourism; small, medium, and large enterprises; global value chain; cross-cultural food consumption; country selection; mode of entry; internet trading; website design; consumer loyalty

1. Introduction

One of the Editors of the *International Journal of Business and Economics* (IJBE), Dr. Kun-Huang Huarng, Professor of International Trade, Feng China University, Taiwan on the recommendation of Dr. Luiz Moutinho, Foundation Chair of Marketing, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow, UK, invited me to serve as the Guest Editor of the special issue of IJBE. I learnt that the contents of IJBE are abstracted and indexed by EconLit (including the *Journal of Economic*

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Literature), EBSCO, ProQuest, and Cabell's and that would make it attractive among marketing scholars. A call for papers was prepared for the special issue titled, "International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Contemporary Marketing," in April 2014. An intense activity of submissions, reviews and revisions ensued in the subsequent months. In about one year, the special issue was completed with acceptance of six excellent manuscripts that exemplify international and interdisciplinary approaches to these challenges. The same are discussed briefly in this editorial.

First Paper

The lead paper by **Noel Murray** and his colleagues stays very true to the theme of the special issue international & interdisciplinary research. It develops the "critical realism perspective" and applies this analytic framework to assess the role of corporate and individual responsibility in the context of the discourse of financial services advertising in the years preceding the Great Recession. In the lead up to the Great Recession, the authors examine one of the more ambitious attempts by a financial institution to restructure the perception of the nature of the relationship between consumer and institution, via the discourse of advertising. Murray et al. employ a critical realism framework, using text analysis and literary theory, to deconstruct the messages embodied in the Citibank *Live Richly* campaign that began in 2001 and ran for several years before the Great Recession struck. The authors show the Citibank *Live Richly* campaign as an important situational variable, setting the context for poor consumer decision-making regarding financial services and consumer debt-related products. In conclusion, the authors offered critical realism as a promising methodology to examine the broader institutional and regulatory framework surrounding financial services advertising.

Second Paper

The second paper by **Katharina Hofer** examines the internationalization process in Austrian small and medium enterprises seeking entry in the emerging markets of Central and Eastern Europe in the service industry. This study takes an interdisciplinary perspective and effectively brings together different streams of literature, namely, the international business literature which highlights the role of strategic planning in terms of market entry into emerging markets, the international entrepreneurship literature that emphasizes the exploration and recognition of business opportunities, and the literature on services marketing in an international context. The paper underscores the role of establishing and cultivating relationships for success in foreign market entries. This study employs exploratory, interview-based, multiple case studies and a cross-sectional design. An in depth analysis of fifteen cases of small and medium enterprises in Austria in the service industry with business operations in Central and Eastern European countries is presented. Based on this analysis, the paper concludes that the relationships, contacts and networks in the target market are vital for the success of the small and medium enterprises in the

foreign target market. A great number of firms studied ensured their contacts through the selection of their local partners. Another key finding of this study is the awareness of cultural differences and acting free of arrogance in a foreign market contributes to a successful entry of the service firm into the foreign market. The study also suggests that the implementation of a professional risk-management can greatly support the international market entry.

Third Paper

The third paper by **Benson-Rea and Stringer** reports a fascinating exploratory study of challenges faced by small scale producers in the cut flower industry in New Zealand. The paper sheds light on a key question in international marketing to help understand how small players can insert themselves, through specialization, into a global value chain (GVC) and sustain a competitive position. An interdisciplinary analysis of niche differentiation strategies is presented as a means to improve competitive positioning despite growth in low-cost competition from developing countries. The research study focuses on four small scale firms in New Zealand in the cut flower industry. Based on a thorough literature review, the authors have identified and examined five critical dimensions of export marketing, namely, (i) product innovation, (ii) new product development (NPD), (iii) customer responsiveness, (iv) relationship-building capabilities, and (v) strategic flexibility in networks, relationships and products. The authors have used global value chain (GVC) as a structural context to understand the export marketing strategies of small firms. The authors conclude that the cut flower industry in New Zealand has developed in parallel with the global industry led by the Netherlands. They further emphasize that in contrast to the Netherlands and Colombia, two countries which dominate the cut flower GVC, the New Zealand industry is characterized by market-based relationships. The export marketing strategies pursued by New Zealand cut flower exporters have been niche approaches focused on differentiation through high quality, product innovation and NPD, and increasing customer service, communication and relationship-building.

Fourth Paper

Lalita Manrai and her colleagues have put forward an insightful and persuasive conjecture in this fourth paper while staying focused on the “interdisciplinary and international” theme of the special issue. An “Environmental Theory,” and in particular an “Adjustment Theory” (based on the classification proposed by Anitsal and Anitsal 2011) is advanced and tested by the authors suggesting that retail development is a function of various environmental influences and a country’s capability to adopt to changing environmental dynamics. This research paper is a macro level analysis of the relative retail developments in three countries, namely, Poland, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine. All three countries have gained their independence from the Soviet Union and from the Soviet sphere of influence known as the Eastern Bloc in the late 1980s. The authors postulate that

environmental influences play a critical role in retail development both in terms of quantitative and qualitative issues. The quantitative issues include overall sales, product category wise sales, channel wise sales, overall employment etc. The qualitative issues examined in this paper are internationalization/presence of foreign retailers, product assortment/brands etc. In the process of analyzing these factors, the authors have assessed the extent to which these three countries have been able to adjust and adopt the Westernization and marketization approaches (Lascu, Manrai, and Manrai, 1997). The authors have also proposed directions for future research to develop a composite index of retail development at the country level in order to provide a holistic and precise comparison of retail development between countries.

Fifth Paper

The fifth paper by **Juan Miguel Alcántara-Pilar** and his colleagues is an elegant experimental study to understand web effectiveness in consumer purchase behavior in the tourism industry. The study employs web usability and user flow rate as two key web design attributes. The key dependent variable is consumer purchase behavior. The authors used a sample of 227 Spanish individuals to test four hypotheses proposed in the paper. The key hypothesis deals with website effectiveness (operationalized in terms of browsing time and number of user errors) hypothesized as positively related to web site usability. The other hypotheses deal with (i) the relationship between perceived risk and web site usability and (ii) the relationship between consumer flow state and consumer loyalty to service provider. An important managerial insight of this research is its advice on investing in a good website design as a prerequisite for improving the level of consumer involvement and interest during browsing, which will reduce the bounce rate and increase the length of time spent on processing the website information. This issue is of particularly interest to managers in several industries in the tourism-related field, such as travel agencies, hotels, and tour operators etc.

Sixth Paper

The sixth and final paper by **Karishma Kavita Devi** and her colleagues is an empirical study with a focus on an important topic of cross-cultural differences in food consumption using the lens of the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard (EBM) model and the Consumer Culture theory (CCT). The literature on the food consumption patterns and trends of the South Pacific countries is sparse but provides inconclusive mixed evidence on the convergence and divergence of food consumption behavior. The authors collected data on the Fiji Islands (330 islands) at the heart of the Pacific Ocean. Fiji being a multi-cultural society provides a perfect context for the goals of the research. The focus of the paper is on the two central ethnic groups in Fiji — the original Melanesian/Polynesian population of the islands (Indigenous Fijian), and the progenies of the Indian laborers who came to Fiji in late 1900s (Asian Indians). The two ethnic groups are culturally different on many dimensions including religion, language and food etc. and thus provide an excellent basis for cross-cultural

comparison. A major research finding supports the notion that indigenous Fijian culture influences consumption of fruits and vegetable and root crops. Devi et al. also found that the education has been instrumental in shaping consumer behavior and preferences. They found statistically significant differences in food consumption patterns between urban and rural populations. The urban consumers had greater preferences for healthy diets that comprised of balanced meals from all the food groups, while consumers in the rural areas have higher preference for inherited and traditional meals than balanced meals.

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