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EDITORIAL

Current issues and challenges in B2B marketing

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This special edition of “*Current Issues and Challenges in B2B Marketing*” for the *Journal of Customer Behaviour* has its origins in the 2014 B2B Colloquium at Bournemouth University.

This colloquium brought together practitioners and academics to discuss opportunities created by the unprecedented advances in information and communication technologies, amidst the problems and challenges brought about by the economic recession. These factors continue to influence the way business organisations interact with their external environments and to create new challenges for marketers.

As emphasised by the first commentary paper in this issue, by Merlin Stone, job roles and the skills required, particularly for B2B marketers in marketing departments, need revisiting, as education and research in B2B marketing must line up to cope with such changes. This has been the focus of this commentary paper, which is the author’s personal reflection on a career that has combined business and academic experiences to deliver rich insights about B2B. Stone reflects on which experiences have been most valuable in business practice and as supported in the academic literature with regard to mobile marketing, CRM in higher education and postmodern perspectives in marketing.

Nicholas Barley FCIM is Founder and CEO of *Outcomes*, and in our second commentary paper, he addresses the “*buyer’s journey*” for B2B products and services. His claim is that it is important to re-design, re-skill and re-engage the marketing department in B2B firms of the 21st century to give important inputs. Buyers have gained control over the buying process due to information technology advances and the inputs of marketers in the process need to be recognised.

The first article by Elvira Bolat addresses holistically the values deriving from mobile technology use. Due to its core distinctive feature, mobility, the author claims that mobile technology represents a novel and unique category of technology. Her

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study endeavors to look at ways in which business practitioners' views of mobile technology, as a purely technical tool, could be transformed through creating and enabling communications as a strategic tool to drive new ways in managing business.

The second paper by David Cockayne draws from theoretical perspectives. He debates various epistemological positions and suggests rejecting modern marketing's theoretical foundations and adopting a more postmodern inspired perspective. His contention is that by allowing new epistemologies to flourish this would be a better way forward to aid development of the subject.

Andy Fred Wali and Len Tiu Wright in the third paper discuss Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as a customer-focused and technology-oriented strategy in the higher education sector. Their paper applies principles of CRM and service quality in a research study undertaken in a university within the UK. The authors show that an effective CRM programme to improve service quality has the ability to induce positive advocacy behaviour from its international students.

Kaouther Kooli, Kaouther Ben Mansour and Victoria Cornwell in the fourth paper debate the users' role of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Supply Relationship Management (SRM) systems in achieving strong business to business relationships. The main theme of their paper is that CRM and SRM users would be more likely to be motivated when businesses focus on attaining their satisfaction, which can be achieved by involving them in the system design. From a review of the literature the authors drive home the arguments that tailored CRM and SRM systems would generate more users' satisfaction than semi-tailored systems.

Jack Strong and Elvira Bolat in the fifth and final paper claim that branding is of importance in the B2B context, in particular for an organisation such as Panasonic where reputation is a driving force for attracting new B2B customers and retaining old ones. The authors look at digital technologies as the enablers for brand perceptions about Panasonic to reinforce important contexts about nurturing the manufacturer's relationships with its customers.

This special edition of the *Journal of Customer Behaviour* finishes with a book review by Len Tiu Wright, Adrian Wright and David Colley. The authors review the book, *New Industries from New Places*, written by Neil Gregory, Stanley Nollen and Stoyan Tenev, which was a co-publication of Stanford University Press and the World Bank. For those interested in discovering more of the reasons why the Indian software industry gained great international success and the Chinese hardware manufacturing industry grew large, this is the book to read. Written lucidly and informatively the book is a recommended read for those seeking to understand the influences of environmental and business contexts on business organisations.

Finally I would like to thank Professor Michael Baker for giving us this opportunity of a special issue for the *Journal of Customer Behaviour* and to the reviewers for their help in reviewing. I thank all the authors for their contributions in helping us to make this edition a success and to help to promote research and discussion in B2B marketing.

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