Editorial

Editorial: Marketing communications and consumer behavior: Introduction to the special issue from the 2009 La Londe conference

This special issue of the *Journal of Business Research* includes a selection of papers presented at the 36th International Research Conference in Marketing organized by the Aix Graduate School of Management (I.A.E. Aix-en-Provence), University Paul Cézanne in Aix-Marseilles (France). This conference known as the “La Londe Conference” is devoted to Marketing Communications and Consumer Behavior on a biennial basis. The La Londe conference encourages intense discussions of specialized topics in consumer behavior and communications amongst specialized and top level scholars in a relaxed and informal atmosphere. Those who have participated to the La Londe conference know the exchange value of the sessions and of the get togethers and coffee breaks on the terrace overlooking the Mediterranean Sea and the Porquerolle islands.

The La Londe conference is truly international. It has always been chaired by a duo of first class researchers, one from Europe and one from America. Professor Chris A. Janiszewski (University of Florida, USA) and Professor Stijn M. J. van Osselaer (RSM Erasmus University, Rotterdam, The Netherlands) chaired the 2009 conference. A total of 93 manuscripts were submitted and double-blind reviewed by both members of the permanent scientific committee of the conference and ad-hoc reviewers carefully selected by the co-chairs and the coordinators of the conference. Forty-two papers were presented at the conference. In addition, the provocative, thoughtful and very entertaining keynote address by Professor Tanya L. Charrtrand (Fuqua School of Business, Duke University, USA) stimulated reflections and discussions concerning the process of non-conscious mimicry and implications for human relationships and consumer behavior.

The eleven papers selected for this special issue follow the dual theme of consumer behavior and marketing communications. The first four papers deal with communication effects and advertising effectiveness. Rafi Chowdhury, G. Douglas Olsen and John W. Pracejus ("How many pictures should your print ad have?") examine the impact of increasing the number of images in a print advertisement on affective and cognitive consumer responses. The results of two experiments show that in advertisements with only positive or only negative images, increasing the number of positive (negative) images does not increase positive (negative) affect. For this type of advertisements, advertisers should select only one suitable image which provides a clear example of the benefit being advertised. However, in advertisements with both positive and negative pictures, increasing the number of positive (negative) images increases positive (negative) affect. Therefore, scope effects only occur in oppositely valenced affect integration and more is not necessarily better for pictures in advertising. Karine Gallopl-Morvan, Patrick Gabriel, Marine Le Gall-Ely, Sophie Rieunier and Bertrand Urien, ("The use of visual warnings in social marketing: The case of tobacco") explore the ideal combination of self-efficacy and fear appeal warnings (as inserted on cigarette packs) according to Protection Motivation Model principles. The exploratory study conducted demonstrates that visual messages, as opposed to text warnings, are more effective. The mostly used fear appeals need to be combined with self-efficacy and cessation support messages because they provoke avoidance reactions when used alone. Jane McKay-Nebbitt, Rajesh Manchanda, Malcolm Smith and Bruce Huhmann ("Effects of age, need for cognition, and affective intensity on advertising effectiveness") explore the moderating effects of individual characteristics (age, need for cognition and affective intensity) on the effectiveness of ad appeals that are framed emotionally versus rationally. Younger adults find emotional appeals more persuasive than rational appeals and older adults develop more positive attitude towards the ad when exposed to rational appeals. Moderating effects are also found for need of cognition and affective intensity. Finally, Boon Lim and Cindy Chung ("The impact of word-of-mouth communication on attribute evaluation") extend the media congruence hypothesis and study the impact of word-of-mouth (WOM) communication on the WOM recipient’s ratings of search and credence attributes. The experiments run in two different service contexts demonstrate, as hypothesized, that WOM has greater impact on attribute ratings for credence attributes than for search attributes. This relationship seems to be limited to negative WOM.

The three next papers deal with promotions. Don Schultz and Martin Block ("How U.S. consumers view in-store promotions") study the impact of a wide variety of promotional activities on consumer behavior, from the consumer perspective. Based on the SIMM (Simultaneous Media Consumption) studies conducted among a nationally projectable sample of U.S. consumers twice yearly (200,000+ individual responses), they show the importance of both external-to-the-store promotional activities and in-store promotional activities on self-reported behavior. Also, they establish that the relative importance of the promotional activities varies across product categories. Priya Raghurib and Kirti Celly ("Promoting promotions: Does showcasing free gifts backfire?") examine the effect of the visual size of a gift in a free gift promotion on consumer quality judgments and purchase intentions. Results from two experiments show that promotional offers that highlight the free gift (rather than the product) are less effective than those that highlight the product to be purchased. Increasing the visual size of the free gift leads to perceptions of poorer product quality and has unfavorable consequences for purchase intentions of the offer. Pierre Valette-Florence, Haiythem Guizani, and Dwight Merunka ("The impact of brand
personality and sales promotions on brand equity) study the relative impact of a long-term brand management instrument (brand personality) and a short-term marketing mix instrument (sales promotions) on brand equity formation. They find a positive impact of brand equity and a negative impact of sales promotion intensity on brand equity at the aggregate level. They identify and describe three homogeneous consumer groups which differ according to the relative impact of brand personality and consumer promotions on brand equity, following the application of a finite mixture partial least square procedure.

The remaining four articles of this special issue focus on consumer behavior. Marieke Fransen, Dirk Smeesters and Bob Fennis (“The role of social presence in mortality salience effects”) add to Terror Management Theory’s proposition that people need self-esteem to deal with unconscious existential anxiety, which they achieve by following the rules, norms, and values of one’s cultural worldview. They argue that people can experience extra self-esteem when they act in accordance with cultural norms while others can observe this behavior. The results of two studies show that the presence of others increases the effects of mortality salience on brand evaluations that affirm one’s cultural worldview. This reveals that consumers derive self-esteem indirectly from the knowledge that others observe them following cultural norms rather than directly from following cultural norms per se. JungKun Park, HoEun Chung and Brian Rutherford (“Social perspectives of e-contact center for loyalty building”) propose that an e-contact center can be used for establishing and maintaining desired relationships with customers. In particular, e-contact centers enhance the relationship between e-retailers and online customers by providing social values and quality interpersonal service to customers. Using a panel of online consumers, they demonstrate that interpersonal service quality and social value greatly influence satisfaction with e-contact centers which, in turn, influences e-loyalty.

Boris Bartikowski and Gianfranco Walsh (“Investigating mediators between corporate reputation and customer citizenship behaviors”) study the influence of corporate reputation and customer citizenship behavior (CCB) and hypothesize that the influence of customer-based corporate reputation (CBR) on CCB is mediated by commitment and loyalty. Data collected on service customers reveal that commitment and loyalty mediate the relationship between CBR and one type of CCB, namely helping the company. They do not mediate the other dimension of CCB (willingness to help other customers). Sigal Kaplan, Shlomo Bekhor and Yoram Shifman (“Eliciting and estimating reservation price: A semi-compensatory approach”) develop and test a two-stage model to elicit consumers’ price acceptability range. The proposed model is well suited for choice situations containing many alternatives, typical of the digital economy. The method retrieves the price acceptability range simultaneously for different multi-attribute product variations from cross-sectional data. It assumes a two-stage cognitive choice process consisting of a conjunctive strategy followed by utility maximization. The model is applied to a students’ rental apartment case study, as an example of a multi-attribute product with many variations.

As co-chairs and coordinators of this conference and as co-editors of this special issue, we greatly appreciate the inputs of the international scientific committee members of the La Londe conference who year after year contribute to the paper selection process and help to guarantee the quality of the contributions through their reviews. The scientific committee is composed of the following very distinguished scholars: Gerald Albaum (University of New Mexico), Søren Askegaard (University of Southern Denmark, Odense), Rajeev Batra (University of Michigan at Ann Arbor), Russell W. Belk (University of Utah), Elisabeth Cowley (University of Sydney), Christian Derbaix (FUCAM, Mons), Curtis P. Haugtvedt (Ohio State University), Wayne D. Hoyer (The University of Texas at Austin), Alain Jolibert (University of Grenoble), Lynn R. Kahle (University of Oregon), Michel Laroche (Concordia University, Montreal), Gilles Laurent (HEC, Paris), Siew Meng Leong (National University of Singapore), Sidney J. Levy (University of Arizona), Richard J. Lutz (University of Florida), Hans Mühlbacher (University of Innsbruck), Robert A. Peterson (The University of Texas at Austin), Rik Pieters (Tilburg University), Christian Pinson (INSEAD), Bernard Pras (University of Paris-Dauphine and ESSEC), Don E. Schultz (Northwestern University), M. Joseph Sirgy (Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University), Jan-Benedict Steenkamp (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Alain Strazzieri (Paul Cézanne University in Aix-Marseille), Pierre Valette-Florence (University of Grenoble), W. Fred van Raaij (Tilburg University), Luk Warlop (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven), Arch G. Woodside (Boston College) and Judy Zaichkowsky (Simon Fraser University).

We also wish to thank all other members of the review panel who have done a great reviewing job. Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to Arch Woodside, editor in chief of the Journal of Business Research for initiating and approving this special issue.

We look forward to the 2011 edition of the La Londe conference. Two outstanding researchers, Michel Tuan Pham, Professor of Marketing at the Graduate School of Business, Columbia University, New York, USA and Siegfried Dewitte, Professor of Marketing at the Faculty of Economics and Business, K.U. Leuven, Belgium, have accepted to co-chair this next La Londe Consumer Behavior and Communications conference. The 2011 La Londe conference will take place early June 2011 in the totally renovated resort of La Londe les Maures on the French Mediterranean coast.

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