

Customer value and various connotations

More than ever before, success of marketing largely depends upon its ability to facilitate and sustain meaningful and engaging experiences for consumers. Significant advances in technology and communications, facilitated by social media, in recent years, have greatly contributed to making experience delivery to consumers easier. Customers have abandoned the traditional one-way passive reception of products and brand offerings and now consciously look for ones where creation of value happens. Marketing's role has seen a steady jump in enabling effective user-brand interactions, putting the onus on brands for supporting product offerings with personalized marketing efforts. Shifting societal expectations demand that marketing organizations become genuinely involved with the local environment in a way that simple monetary contributions alone cannot achieve the end-goals. Adding altruistic value to consumer experiences of such brands becomes pertinent. Modern youth, as a growing affluent customer base, is increasingly getting dissatisfied with conventional product offerings and expects experiential activities that captivate and motivate them to stick to a brand. The theme of the 2017 IIM Indore NASMEI Marketing Conference was to focus on identifying ways of enriching customer values through unique product offerings supported by strong branding. The conference deliberated upon the following broad themes, containing both conceptual and empirical papers about recent and emerging developments:

- understanding consumer behavior in current marketing environment, where organizations need to explore and understand consumers for valuable insights for the development of new products/services and innovative marketing communications;
- role of social media and digital marketing in playing a profound role in influencing the consumer behavior, making the market place dynamic with success of any firm dependent on designing effective means to reach its customers through innovative technologies;
- culture, sub-cultural factors, society, reference groups and mass media that can influence consumers; and
- role of marketing strategy in using some new marketing tools for creating richer customer values and long-term consumer – brand relationships.

Six articles, out of the multiple papers presented at the 2017 IIM Indore NAMSEI Summer Marketing Conference, supply rich insights in the domain of customer behavior across various contexts. The coverage of the articles spreads across brand anthropomorphism, attitude to counterfeit products, tax evasion, organizational buying, mis-selling in insurance and augmented reality applications in social marketing campaigns. The diversity of the papers should lead to readers acquiring a holistic perspective of customer behaviors in varied contexts.

Ankitha Shetty and Savitha Basri, in the first paper, argue that the menace of mis-selling in the insurance industry has created disconnect between the insurance company and its customers in India. Agents' unethical selling behavior is one of the reasons for mis-selling, which has prompted insurance companies to encourage its agents to develop long-term relationships with customers. This review paper focuses



on developing a better understanding of the constituents of an effective marketing relationship in financial services. Results suggest that customer orientation combined with adaptive selling behavior improves the relationship quality, culminating in higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. Sales person characteristics such as contact intensity, contact frequency and client knowledge enhance the long-standing relationship with customers.

Archit V. Tapar and colleagues, in the second paper, consider the role of anthropomorphic entities in the public service advertisements (PSAs) and its implication on individuals' perception at two levels, i.e. self and social. The paper examines the effect of self-construal on the persuasion of consumers toward pro-social behavior in case of anthropomorphized PSAs. Furthermore, the role of need for affect is explored in the present study. The study contributes to deepen the understanding of individual differences in self-construal (i.e. independent/interdependent view of self) and examining its moderating effect on anthropomorphizing and need for affect in PSAs.

In the third paper, Amrita Joshi's work on AR applications in the area of social marketing campaigns visualizes Vedantic conceptualizations of reality and hyper-reality in a contemporary context. These are recognized as empowering and interactive modes encouraging greater user participation and involvement. The study explores a range of Vedantic spatio-temporal constructs such as *Maya*, *Avatar*, *Siddhis* and *Divya-Drishti* from this perspective. It also opens up the field of marketing research to qualitative paradigmatic analysis using a structural schematic framework. These propositional structures could be of potential interest to planners and developers in search of innovative design interventions in the wider domain of social marketing.

The fourth paper by Himanshu Srivastava and colleagues sheds light on the ethical aspects of consumption tax evasion (CTE). Customers play an indirect but important role in promoting CTE. They attempt to understand the ethical decision-making process followed by a customer during participation in CTE. They also intend to understand other factors impacting the attitude of a customer toward CTE. Results indicate that even when consumers recognize participation in CTE as a moral issue, they do not intend to curb it because of their negative attitude toward government. They contribute to this novel context where consumers indirectly influence the tax evasion by identifying the ethical aspects related to the consumers.

Santosh Pandey and Amit Mookherjee, in the fifth paper, through an exploratory study, assess the role of emotions in business-to-business (B2B) buying decision-making. The authors have used interview techniques with industry representatives along with repertory grid method to demonstrate that the concept of customer experience applies in an organizational buying situation as well and leads to the formation of an experiential value, which in turn guides the purchase intent. Five dimensions of customer experience – sensory, emotional, behavioral, relational and intellectual – and four dimensions of experiential value – cost, functional, symbolic and emotional – are shown to be relevant in an organizational buying scenario, affirming the presence of emotions in B2B decision-making, hence opening avenues for further exploration and research on this subject.

Finally, the sixth paper by Vinitha Bhatia explores factors affecting consumers' attitude toward counterfeit fashion products and their effects on purchase intention. She uses structural equation modeling to test the associative relationships. Her findings indicate that value consciousness, materialism and social influence positively relate to consumers' attitude toward counterfeit fashion products, which eventually leads to

purchase intention. She also suggests that low-income-group consumers are more value and brand conscious and perceive a low risk, which in turn influences their attitude toward counterfeit fashion products.

As Chair of the organizing committee of the 2017 IIM Indore NASMEI Summer Marketing Conference, it gives me immense pleasure in bringing together this valuable special issue, and I hope that future iterations of this or other conferences will take the agenda raised by these papers.

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