ABSTRACTS

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Marketing
from information
to decision

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MARKETING – FROM INFORMATION TO DECISION

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A WELCOME NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

It is a great privilege to introduce you to the 15th volume of **Marketing from Information to Decision (MID)**. This anthology consists of extended abstracts presented at the International Conference on Marketing, held on12 April 2024, at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of the Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania (www.econ.ubbcluj.ro/mid).

The current edition is a collection of papers covering sub-domains as luxury marketing and retail, digital marketing and Social Media, international marketing, tourism marketing, strategic marketing and entrepreneurship. We are confident that the papers considered, are inspiring and provide significant insights from the various industries.

The general purpose of the conference is to provide networking opportunities for researchers (not only) from various institutions with preoccupations in the field of marketing, in the context of a wide range of topics and to enable a stimulating environment for knowledge enhancement and sharing experience. All submitted papers to MID conference go through a rigorous double blind review process of experts in the marketing field.

Marketing from Information to Decision International Conference is a culmination of substantial efforts made by numerous people. For this reason, we want to take a moment to thank the authors, who contributed with their time and experience to the success of this conference. And also, we wish to express our sincere appreciation to the editorial board, the reviewers and all technical contributors for donating their time and dedication for the cause of research that makes this volume possible.

We are confident that this scientific event (MID) represents a good opportunity for further evolution and development in the field of knowledge. Consequently, your suggestions and constructive comments on this issue are welcome.

We look forward to building a worldwide community that values the broad domain of marketing.

Sincerely,

Managing editors

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Luxury Consumer Experience in the Metaverse Space

Amadea, AGAPIE
West University of Timişoara, Romania

Ionela, BELDEAN *
West University of Timişoara, Romania

Gheorghe, PREDA
West University of Timişoara, Romania

Cosmin, CONSTANTINESCU
West University of Timişoara, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

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A. Purpose
Social media platforms are becoming a major channel in the marketing activity of luxury brands and now more than ever have the opportunity to change consumer experiences. Business has entered into a new phase, that of the Metaverse space, which incorporates the entire virtual world, including social networks, augmented reality, virtual reality, non-fungible assets, etc.In this paper we aimed to understand the luxury consumer experience in the Metaverse. Thus, we determined consumer attitudes toward luxury brands in general, consumer attitudes toward the Metaverse, and assessed the relationship between the two variables and the engagement of luxury consumers in the Metaverse. We also determined the differences between generations in terms of their attitudes towards luxury and towards social media.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
Starting from the research hypotheses and model developed based on the literature review, we conducted a quantitative research on a sample of 558 respondents. The sample consists of Romanian and American luxury consumers who made at least one luxury purchase in the last three years. Sample selection involved the use of convenience and snowball sampling, and the questionnaire was administered online. For data analysis, we used the SPSS program, version 29.

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* Corresponding author: **Ionela Beldean** – ionela.beldean99@e-uvt.ro

C. Originality/ Value
The originality of our study is the approach of the behaviors of luxury consumers in the Metaverse space, there where are very few empirical studies, even worldwide, also the fact that the sample included Romanian and American respondents.

D. Findings/Results
The findings suggest that the overall attitude towards luxury significantly influences consumer engagement with luxury brands in the Metaverse. Another result of this analysis indicates a significant relationship between attitude towards the Metaverse and consumer engagement with luxury brands in the Metaverse. The research highlights that the Metaverse provides a promising space for luxury brands. It can deliver memorable experiences, personalized offers, exclusivity, and interactivity—attributes sought by consumers, especially in the realm of luxury brands.

E. Study/ Research limitations
The research provides valuable insights into luxury consumer behaviors in the Metaverse but has limitations. Theoretical constraints involve not considering a broader range of factors, while methodological limitations include the absence of qualitative research before the quantitative research to understand consumers' Metaverse relationship more deeply.

F. Academic implications
This quantitative study contributes significantly to the academic domain by offering novel insights into the intersection of luxury consumption and virtual environments, being among the few attempts to measure the attitude towards the Metaverse and the engagement of luxury consumers in the Metaverse.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications
This research offers significant practical implications for luxury brand managers operating within the Metaverse. Thus, aligning the business more effectively with the preferences of consumers in virtual environments, consequently bolstering luxury customer engagement.

From Classroom to Community: The Influence of Learning Spaces on Entrepreneurship Education

Patricea Elena, BERTEA[∗]

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

Nicola, DUDANU

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

Adriana, MANOLICĂ

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

Alexandra-Raluca, JELEA

Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

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A. Purpose
Entrepreneurship education has emerged as a critical driver of economic and social development, yet the influence of learning spaces on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education remains understudied. This research aims to investigate the impact of learning spaces on entrepreneurial learning outcomes, focusing on material interactions, personalization, and team-educator encounters within these spaces. By simultaneously focusing on the where and how of learning spaces, it intends to promote innovation and ultimately contribute to the creation of more effective learning environments that align with students' needs and expectations.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
The study will adopt a mixed-methods approach to fulfill its objectives. Qualitative data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews with educators and specialists involved in entrepreneurship education, employing interpretative constructivism, while quantitative data will be collected via a questionnaire distributed to business and economics students, following a positivist objectivism paradigm. Sampling techniques will include stratified random

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[∗] Corresponding author: **Patricea Elena Bertea** – patricea.bertea@gmail.com

sampling for the questionnaire and purposive sampling for interviews. Thematic analysis will be used for qualitative data, while statistical methods will be applied to analyze quantitative aspects. The research design will also integrate elements of case study and ethnographic research to provide a comprehensive understanding of learning spaces in entrepreneurship education.

C. Originality/ Value

This research extends existing knowledge by examining the specific qualities of learning spaces that contribute to entrepreneurial learning outcomes. While strengthening the theoretical framework proposed by Christensen B.T., Arendt K.M. & Hjorth D (2023) – How learning spaces matter in entrepreneurship education: introducing the concept of topopraxis, Entrepreneurship & Regional Development, 35: 3-4, pp. 317-336 - the study proposes practical perspectives for educators, policymakers, and practitioners looking for ways to improve entrepreneurship education programs.

D. Findings/Results

Initial findings indicate a favorable impact of dedicated learning spaces on entrepreneurial learning outcomes, surpassing those observed in traditional classroom environments. Notably, the presence of material interactions and personalized experiences within these spaces emerges as significant contributors to heightened student engagement, creativity, and skill advancement. Furthermore, the facilitation of knowledge exchange and mentorship through team-educator encounters appears pivotal in fostering enriched entrepreneurship education experiences. These preliminary results underscore the importance of intentional learning space design and pedagogical approaches in optimizing entrepreneurial learning outcomes.

E. Study/ Research limitations

While this study is confined to specific educational settings and limited sample size, these constraints offer avenues for future research. Diversifying the study across various educational contexts and expanding the sample size could provide insights into the sustained impact of learning spaces on entrepreneurial learning outcomes. Future studies could also explore additional factors beyond personalization, material interactions, and team-educator encounters that may influence entrepreneurial learning outcomes.

F. Academic implications

By addressing the relationship between learning spaces and learning outcomes, this study makes a significant theoretical contribution to the field of entrepreneurship education. The conceptual framework of topopraxis will be validated and extended, paving the way for additional research into optimizing educational spaces specifically designed for entrepreneurship education. Other researchers can benefit from this analysis by leveraging its insights to refine their own methodologies and theoretical frameworks, ultimately enriching the academic discourse on entrepreneurship education.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications

This research provides educators, policymakers, and practitioners involved in entrepreneurship education with useful recommendations, offering practical advice for improving the design and functioning of learning spaces. Policymakers and practitioners could modify their approaches to create successful entrepreneurship education programs, and educators can use these findings to improve entrepreneurial learning experiences and results for their students. This way, effective entrepreneurship education can lead to a more skilled and adaptable workforce, increasing the number of startups and entrepreneurial ventures, and contributing to economic growth and innovation within communities.

Rethinking Store Atmosphere Variables in the New Post Pandemic Scene within Fashion Retail Stores

Meda, BURGHELEA[*]
London South Bank University, Business School, UK

Charles, GRAHAM
London South Bank University, Business School, UK

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

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Keywords: store atmospherics; digital atmospherics; in store technologies; buying behaviour; stimulus–organism–response model; fashion retailing.

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose
The on-going digitalization of fashion retail stores has been underway for several years and the Covid-19 pandemic has expedited the urgency and opportunity to reassess what to anticipate from physical fashion stores. However, research into how digital atmospherics variables (such as: digital screens and signage, digital window, QR code, virtual mirror, sensory technologies, new layouts, and point of purchase, augmented and virtual reality) are integrated with the traditional store atmosphere variables remains under-researched, particularly within the fashion retail sector. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to gain a deeper understanding on how the holistic digital atmospheric cues contribute to the creation of overall shopping experience. The interaction between the traditional store atmosphere variables with the digital one and the impact on buying behaviour based on SOR model is also explored.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
The study adopts a mixed-method approach. It will begin with qualitative research, involving direct observation of various fashion stores (covering mass, mid-range and luxury segments) in London, UK, to understand how digital atmospherics are integrated into physical stores. Subsequently, in-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with 20 store managers. Following this, quantitative research will be implemented using a systematic questionnaire to gather and analyse data. SEM, Reliability, Convergent, Discriminate Validity and model fitness evaluation will be achieved through SmartPLS4. Data will be collected from 200 customers across mass, mid-range, and luxury fashion sectors.

C. Originality/ Value
This paper aims to contribute novel insights by offering a comprehensive understanding of the integration of digital atmospheric variables alongside traditional store atmospherics within

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[*] Corresponding author: **Meda Burghelea** – burghelm@lsbu.ac.uk

mass, mid-range, and luxury fashion stores throughout London, UK. It will also explore their influence on consumer buying behaviour through S-O-R model. Moreover, the study will identify practical implications for enhancing these innovative digital atmospherics.

D. Findings/Results

The anticipated findings aim to offer insights into the main in store technologies employed as store atmospherics that has been adopted by various fashion stores and to what degree these digital atmospherics influence purchasing behaviour and the overall shopping experience. This research seeks to enhance understanding of consumer buying behavior concerning the digital atmosphere of various fashion stores employing the SOR model to unveil the sequential connection from stimuli through the holistic digital atmospherics to emotional states as organisms, and ultimately to product related behavioural responses. These anticipated results are expected to have practical implications applicable within the fashion industry.

E. Study/ Research limitations

One limitation of this research is its exclusive focus on London, where the population generally exhibits a high receptiveness to digital technologies. It would be intriguing for future studies to explore whether the relationships depicted in the proposed model remain consistent across different national or cultural contexts. Another research limitation is that that consumers' perceptions regarding various mass, mid or luxury brand won't be considered as covariates. Future research should incorporate brand familiarity as a covariate or stimuli within fashion retail settings. Furthermore, the study does not include a comparative analysis of buying behaviour in fashion retail environments lacking digital atmospherics. This presents an opportunity for future investigation.

F. Academic implications

This study aims to bridge a gap in the literature by offering empirical insights into the development and implementation of digital atmospherics across various mass, mid-range, and luxury fashion stores in London, UK. Through a systematic examination, it seeks to identify the effects of digital atmospherics on buying behaviour using the SOR model. There is currently limited evidence regarding the implementation or the lack of various digital atmospherics such as digital screens, digital windows, QR codes, interactive mirrors, AR, and VR, within different fashion retail stores, as they strive to integrate physical and digital realms in pursuit of omnichannel strategies. This research endeavours to shed light on the adoption of these digital atmospherics by fashion stores and comprehend their influence on consumer purchasing behaviour. The anticipated findings are expected to reinforce existing scholarly recognition that prioritizing investment in digital atmospherics is crucial.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications

This study is anticipated to empower practitioners to discern which digital store atmospherics are most engaging for consumers and to what extent these new atmospherics variables influence their approach-avoidance behaviours. As physical stores face ongoing challenges and retailers deploy various strategies to attract customers, recognizing and leveraging various digital technologies as atmospherics serve as important touchpoints for customers seeking convenience or experiential value. This validation of their enduring significance serves to enhance retailers' management of digital technology innovation within stores. Moreover, the authors aim to provide policymakers with a deeper understanding to determine the appropriate digital atmospherics across different retail fashion stores spanning mass-market, mid-range, and luxury fashion stores.

Consumers' Attitude towards Co-branding Collaborations between Fast-fashion and Luxury Fashion Brands

Raluca, CIORNEA[∗]

Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

Keywords: co-branding; luxury co-branding; fashion co-branding; fast-fashion co-branding; SmartPLS

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose
It has often been argued in the field of luxury research that democratisation of luxury dissipates the dream of privilege, dilutes the value and appeal of luxury brands among upper-class consumers, while alluring middle-class consumers. Even so, co-branding partnerships between luxury brands and mass-market brands (a means of democratisation) have grown in popularity, particularly in the fashion industry. Despite the employment in practice, empirical academic insights on luxury-fast-fashion co-branding strategies is scarce. Aiming to reduce the literature gap, the current paper investigated the luxury consumers' attitude towards co-branding collaborations between fast-fashion and luxury fashion brands, and its effects on future purchase behaviors.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
To unveil the influence mechanism, a conceptual model was proposed and assessed through structural equation modeling. A quantitative research design was employed via an online self-administered questionnaire, among 198 female luxury consumers in Romania. Based on the consumption pattern, almost half of the respondents fall in the category of consumers who rarely indulge in accessible luxury. Data analysis was performed using the PLS-SEM techniques and SmartPLS 3 software.

C. Originality/ Value
Although it incorporated several relationships addressed in previous studies, the proposed conceptual model is original. More, no previous studies have been found on the topic on Romanian consumers.

D. Findings/ Results
Findings revealed that attitude towards co-branding between fast-fashion and luxury fashion brands, is a key driver with positive effects that can explain the perception of luxury value of co-branded products, future purchase intentions of co-branded products, and willingness to pay a premium price for such products (because they borrow luxury characteristics such as

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[∗] Corresponding author: **Raluca Ciornea** – raluca.ciornea@econ.ubbcluj.ro

scarcity, creativity, status/social image). The perception of luxury value of co-branded products reflects positively on future purchase intentions of co-branded products, and which in turn has a positive effect on the willingness to pay a premium price. Consequently, the two variables can play a mediating role. Additional results indicated that, the need for uniqueness (as a reason behind fashion consumption) and the perceived fit between the co-branding brands are significant predictors of the attitude towards the luxury-fast-fashion co-branding collaborations, with positive influence. Instead, the perception of luxury brand dilution (as consequence of co-branding with a fast-fashion brand), does not have a significant impact on the attitude towards co-branding between fast-fashion and luxury fashion brands; however, the value is very close to the acceptable threshold.

E. Study/ Research limitations
The main limitation of the study lies in the use of a non-probability sampling method. The analysis focused on the whole sample, consequently future studies could consider comparisons between groups by the luxury consumption pattern.

F. Academic implications
The study extends the literature on luxury co-branding, demonstrating the existence of a more complex mechanism connected to this strategy, that also involves luxury consumers. Moreover, it provides information about potential consumers of co-branded products.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications
Given the limited empirical information in the field, further studies are needed to formulate implications for the marketing decision makers in the luxury fashion industry. Based on the outcomes of the current study, the co-branding strategies with fast-fashion should be used with caution. While exploiting the short-term benefits and increasing the brand attractiveness among middle-class consumers, the luxury brands may fail to protect the luxury value perceived by upper-class and even some middle-class consumers.

The Antecedents of Augmented Reality Adoption in the Context of Purchase Decisions

Ioana, DAN[*]

Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

Flavia, HERLE

Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

Ovidiu-Ioan, MOISESCU

Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

A. Purpose
The current study explores the antecedents of augmented reality (AR) adoption in the context of purchase decisions. Specifically, we investigate the impact of the technology's perceived usefulness and ease of use on consumers's attitude towards AR and, eventually, on their intention to adopt it. Additionally, we investigate a comprehensive set of factors that impact usefulness and ease of use (i.e., relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, observability, and trialability), as well as the role of the social factor, hedonism, and privacy concerns.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
To meet the objectives of the paper, a quantitative methodology was employed, and a comprehensive framework model was devised, incorporating two established theories, the Technology Acceptance Model and Diffusion of Innovations, in addition to three distinct factors that are pertinent to contemporary technologies - hedonic and social factors, and privacy concerns. All variables in the model were evaluated using scales that had been previously developed and validated in specialized literature. A survey was conducted, and the analysis of 347 responses was carried out using PLS-SEM.

C. Originality/ Value
The uniqueness of this study lies in its integration of the Technology Acceptance Model and the Diffusion of Innovations theory while also incorporating factors specific to modern marketing technologies such as hedonic and social motives, as well as privacy concerns. The resulting model provides a comprehensive understanding of consumers' behavioural intentions towards the use of AR, thereby enabling marketers to make informed decisions while designing their own AR applications. Given the increasing adoption of such

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[*] Corresponding author: **Ioana Dan** – ioana.dan@econ.ubbcluj.ro

applications by companies, this study's findings hold significant academic and practical implications.

D. Findings/Results
Our findings show that the complexity and relative advantage of AR systems have a direct impact on their usefulness and ease of use. Additionally, AR's perceived ease of use is influenced by its trialability and hedonic dimension. Further on, our results reveal that AR's perceived usefulness and ease of use positively impact intention to use, both directly and indirectly, via consumers' attitude towards AR systems. Moreover, privacy concerns significantly affect consumers' attitude towards AR and indirectly their intention to use it. The social factor also plays an important role, having a significant direct influence on consumers' intention to use AR for purchase decisions. Considering the total effects (direct and indirect), our findings point out that consumers' intention to use AR for purchase decisions is significantly impacted by its perceived compatibility, complexity, hedonic factor, relative advantage, and trialability. However, the hedonic factor plays the most important role, followed by relative advantage and complexity.

E. Study/ Research limitations
The main limitations of this study stem from the limited sample size and the set of factors taken into consideration as antecedents of AR use intention. Given the rapidly evolving nature of AR technology (personalised, real-time interaction and device-specific responsiveness) it may be necessary to consider other factors in future research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its usage patterns.

F. Academic implications
The present study seeks to make a significant contribution to the existing literature by expanding the number of variables and the complexity involved in explaining the mechanism underlying the intention to use AR applications for shopping purposes. The findings of this research indicate that these variables explain, to a considerable extent, up to 74% of the variance in the intention to use AR applications for shopping.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications
Based on the results of this study, it is suggested that strategic decisions regarding the development of an AR application should prioritize its functionality, relative advantages and complexity, which can drive higher levels of perceived usefulness and consequent intention to use. Additionally, factors related to hedonic experiences should also be taken into account. Furthermore, social factors such as offering a visible high-status application, and potential social benefits should be considered as they are found to have a direct impact on the intention to use such technology. These findings underline the importance of a strategic approach to the development and promotion of AR applications, to maximise their potential benefits.

Looking Through the Keyhole to See What the Neighbor is Buying. Determinants of Luxury Consumer Behaviors in Social Media

Costinel, DOBRE
West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Economics and Business Administrations, Romania

Anca-Maria, MILOVAN*
West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Economics and Business Administrations, Romania

Amadea, AGAPIE
West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Economics and Business Administrations, Romania

Cosmin-Dragos, CONSTANTINESCU
West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Economics and Business Administrations, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

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A. Purpose

Luxury brands are consumed to conform to the behaviors/choices of the reference groups, or to choose different behaviors to acquire uniqueness or exclusivity. Both types of behavior can be explained using social comparison theory. This theory provides researchers with an appropriate perspective to understand the consumption of luxury brands but also the use of social platforms. The rise of social media marketing has exposed consumers to increasingly frequent situations requiring social comparison with friends, family, groups, brand communities, and celebrities, influencing both their offline and online shopping behaviors. Academic interest in social comparison on social networking sites (SNS) and its repercussions is growing. SNS platforms provide an ideal environment for consumers to engage in social comparisons, as they actively seek out others' profiles, and compare themselves based on others' posts and photos. In this study we identify the motivational orientations, social and personal values that shape consumers' attitudes towards social media and their engagement in social media as luxury consumers, all viewed through the lens of social comparison theory.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach

Building upon an in-depth literature review focused on social comparison, we constructed a conceptual model and formulated research hypotheses, alongside selecting previously

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* Corresponding author: **Anca-Maria Milovan** – anca.milovan@e-uvt.ro

validated scales. To gather the essential data, we conducted quantitative research involving a sample of 559 luxury consumers from both Romania and the USA, utilizing convenience sampling and snowball sampling techniques for participant selection. The questionnaire was distributed online. The model was analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM), while differences in engagement with social media between Romanian and American consumers were assessed through the ANOVA test.

C. Originality/ Value
The value of our research is given by the social comparison consideration in explaining the luxury consumer behavior, but also by the proposed model. Furthermore, conducting a quantitative research on a sample of luxury consumers from both Romania and the USA enhances the value of the obtained results.

D. Findings/Results
Our results confirm the relationship between luxury consumers' attitudes toward social media and their materialistic inclinations, tendencies toward conformity, inclination towards uniqueness, narcissistic orientation, and overall attitude toward luxury. Furthermore, our research has verified the direct correlations between consumers' engagement with social media regarding luxury brands and their attitudes toward social media, their general attitudes toward luxury, and their conformity inclinations.

E. Study/ Research limitations
The limitations of this research stem from the empirical selection of the sample, consequently, by its lack of representativeness.

F. Academic implications
The current research enhances our understanding of the factors influencing the social media luxury consumers behavior through the lens of social comparison theory. Specifically, this study delves into various aspects including narcissism, conformity, inclination towards uniqueness/exclusivity, materialistic orientation, and attitude towards luxury.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications
Our results hold significant implications for the marketing practice, particularly in terms of market segmentation based on the anticipated benefits sought by different consumer segments and brand positioning strategies. They also contribute to shaping strategies for creating advertising messages (image, promises, themes, textual content), the content in online marketing, the choice of influencers, the source communication in advertising campaigns (celebrities, experts, ordinary consumers).

Common Aspects Regarding International Marketing and Diplomacy

Cosmina Ioana, DRĂGAN CODREAN∗
University of Oradea, Faculty of Economics Sciences, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

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Keywords: international marketing; diplomacy; international commerce; economic diplomacy

JEL classification: M31, P33

A. Purpose
In this paper, we set out to identify the common aspects between international marketing and diplomacy, especially between international marketing and economic diplomacy.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
The subject related to the common aspects regarding international marketing and diplomacy, we proposed to approach it by reviewing the specialized literature.

C. Originality/ Value
This work is valuable for all people interested in the subject, specialists, researchers and not only. The notions of international marketing and diplomacy are present in specialized literature, because they present current approaches. International marketing represents the set of theoretical aspects, respectively practical aspects, as well as the means used to exchange goods and services between economic agents located in different countries. In general, diplomacy represents the activity of representing and pursuing the interests of the state outside its borders. In particular, economic diplomacy aims to achieve economic objectives outside the borders, promote export activity, support the activity of economic agents outside the borders and other such aspects. Also, in the sphere of economic diplomacy are included the activities of representing the state in negotiations with different bodies or international institutions. The organization of fairs in various fields of interest, exhibitions, presentations and other events falls within the sphere of activity of economic diplomacy. Here comes the common denominator with the international marketing part, because the organization of these events also requires the mastery of solid marketing knowledge. An appropriate organization leads to the recording of favorable results both in terms of international marketing and diplomacy. At the same time, both in terms of international marketing and the diplomatic side, it is essential to master knowledge about: the typology of states, the profile of negotiators, culture and others, so as to realize the maximum potential that can be obtained through these activities.

D. Findings/Results
We expect that the results we will obtain will confirm the existence of common aspects between international marketing and diplomacy, respectively economic diplomacy.

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∗ Corresponding author: **Cosmina Ioana Drăgan Codrean** – cosminacodrean@yahoo.com

E. Study/ Research limitations

The main limits of the study refer to the fact that, for the moment, this is only a research of the specialized literature and not a concrete example. That is why we suggest that, in the future, a case study should be included to investigate the presented theme.

F. Academic implications

The current work will contribute to the enrichment of the academic field, and will draw attention to the subject addressed, so that it will be researched by other researchers, from different perspectives. Thus, the research part related to the addressed topic will be developed.

Study on the Influence of Tourism Marketing in Spa Resorts in Romania

Cosmina Ioana, DRĂGAN CODREAN[*]

University of Oradea, Faculty of Economics Sciences, Romania

Paper type: Extended Abstract

Keywords: tourism marketing; business; economic development

JEL classification: M31, L83, I15

A. Purpose
In this paper, we aim to analyze a study on the influence that tourism marketing has on spa resorts in Romania.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
We proposed to address this subject by reviewing the specialized literature, respectively by carrying out a study to research this subject.

C. Originality/ Value
This work is valuable for all people interested in this field, especially, business people, specialists, future entrepreneurs and many others. Tourism marketing is a relatively new concept that is enjoying results in the field. In Romania, we find the following types of tourism: recreation and leisure tourism, sports tourism, cultural-scientific tourism, spa tourism, shopping tourism, business tourism and religious tourism. We focused, in particular, on spa tourism. More precisely, on the influence that tourist marketing has on spa tourism in Romania. The originality lies precisely in the fact that we will analyze this sector of interest. Mainly, spa tourism is aimed at people with certain specific health problems, respectively the elderly. Spa tourism is one of the oldest types of tourism. In carrying out the activity, it requires a certain geographical position and special equipment. Also, if we discuss about tourism marketing, we must take into account: the offer of goods or services offered, the environment and last but not least the beneficiary.

D. Findings/Results
We expect that the results we will obtain will show us the impact that tourism marketing has on spa tourism in Romania.

E. Study/ Research limitations
The main limitations of the study refer to the fact that this research is only about the influence of tourism marketing on spa tourism and not all types of tourism. That's why we suggest that, in the future, include case studies on the influence of tourism marketing on other categories of tourism.

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[*] Corresponding author: **Cosmina Ioana Drăgan Codrean** – cosminacodrean@yahoo.com

F. Academic implications

The present work will bring its contribution to the enrichment of the academic field, and will draw attention to the subject addressed, so that it will be researched by other researchers, from different perspectives, with updated data.

The Impact of Social Media on Consumer Behavior: the Role of Content Quality, Content Value and Source Characteristics

Flavia-Andreea, HERLE*
Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

Ioana, DAN
Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

Ovidiu-Ioan, MOISESCU
Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

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A. Purpose
The objective of this research is to assess the impact of social media content quality and source characteristics on consumer behavior, within the AISAS theoretical framework (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share). Our research model takes into account social media content quality (i.e., informativeness, design and creativity) and source characteristics (i.e., credibility and expertise) as antecedents of social media content perceived value (i.e., utilitarian vs hedonic) which further impact consumer behavior in each stage of the AISAS framework. Additionally, our study contrasts the model between two source types: brands and persons.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
We employed a convenience sampling approach and collected the data through an online survey. To increase the variance of the antecedents included in our research model, we employed a 2x2x3 between-subjects experimental design. Thus, we manipulated 2 Instagram posts presenting a product, resulting in 12 different scenarios, according to the proposed 2x2x3 experimental design: 2 types of content value (utilitarian vs hedonic), 2 types of sources (brand vs person), and 3 levels of source familiarity and expertise (known and expert in the field, known but not an expert in the field, respectively unknown and not an expert in the field). In total, 625 valid responses were collected and further analyzed using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM).

C. Originality/ Value
Previous studies have overlooked the intricate interplay between content quality, content value, and source characteristics in shaping consumers' behavior when exposed to a

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* Corresponding author: **Flavia-Andreea Herle** – flavia.herle@econ.ubbcluj.ro.

commercial message on social media. Our model adds value to extant knowledge by bringing together several relevant constructs that over time have been analyzed separately in such a context. Thus, we advance previous research and bring new insights into how social media content influences consumers' decision process.

D. Findings/Results

Our findings show that when the content is posted by brands, its utilitarian value is significantly impacted by informativeness and design, but not by creativity, while its hedonic value is positively impacted by all three dimensions of content quality. On the other hand, when the content is posted by persons, its utilitarian value is significantly influenced by all three dimensions of content quality, while the hedonic value only depends on creativity and informativeness, but not on design. Moreover, our results reveal that both source credibility and expertise exert a significant influence on the utilitarian value of a post made by a person, but have no impact when brands are the sources of the message. Regarding the impact on consumer behavior, our findings show that the utilitarian value of the content has a significant impact on consumers' attention, interest, search for information, and action (e.g., willingness to try the product), irrespective of whether the content comes from a person or a brand. When brands are posting, the hedonic value significantly impacts consumers' attention, search for information, and sharing information about the product. Nevertheless, when people are posting, the hedonic value of the message only influences consumers' attention, but not the other stages of the AISAS framework.

E. Study/ Research limitations

The limitations of the research are given by the use of only one type of content (photo), and only one social network (Instagram). In addition, the data collection method did not allow an actual interaction between the respondents and the content.

F. Academic implications

Our study expands the existing literature on content marketing and consumers' decision-making processes, proposing a new research approach around the AISAS model.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications

This research highlights the importance of a brand's content strategy in building a presence in the online environment, providing insights into how consumer behavior may be influenced via content quality and value.

Creativity, Anthropomorphism and the Effectiveness of AI Digital Content Marketing

Octavian Dumitru, HERA∗

West University of Timişoara, Doctoral School of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

Keywords: digital content marketing; generative AI; personalization; anthropomorphism; algorithmic creativity; purchase intent

JEL classification: M31, O33

A. Purpose
The research aims to identify the factors that influence the effectiveness of generative artificial intelligence-driven digital marketing content. This is particularly pertinent given the newfound generative capabilities that facilitate the creation of highly realistic content in an economically efficient manner, requiring minimal resources, and offering flexibility in terms of customization.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
The research is currently underway and will take the form of an online experiment to test the relationships between factors influencing consumer behavioral engagement and purchase intention. At this stage, relevant factors influencing the effectiveness of digital marketing content have been identified, and the conceptual model of the research has been designed. This was achieved through a review of specialized literature and the selection of recent studies that have analyzed the effectiveness of digital marketing content, as well as very recent articles addressing the incorporation of generative AI for creating digital marketing content. Thus, the relationship between consumer behavioral engagement and algorithmic creativity is being analyzed, as well as consumers' anthropomorphic reactions. Additionally, the study examines how consumer behavioral engagement can lead to immediate purchase intention by accentuating perceived value or long-term intention by building a foundation of trust. In the same context, personalized content may modify consumer reactions and amplify consumer behavioral engagement. The ethical consequences of using this new type of digital content are being identified but require heightened attention.

C. Originality/ Value
The proposed research brings the following novelties: a) It analyzes the effect of personalized content on purchase intention; b) It examines the effectiveness of digital marketing content created entirely through artificial intelligence.

D. Findings/Results

∗ Corresponding author: **Octavian Dumitru Hera** – octavian.hera78@e-uvt.ro

Developing a conceptual model and preparing for experimental testing of hypotheses. From previous research on the effectiveness of digital marketing content and the characteristics of AI-generated content, the following main relationships emerge:
- The influence of algorithmic creativity and anthropomorphic consumer response
- The influence of personalized content.

E. Study/ Research limitations
The research will test a single format of digital content, resulting from the descriptive (text) and visual combination in the form of static images. Subsequent research should assess the impact of video content. The research will capture purchase intent limited to subject exposure to the stimulus and does not provide data on the long-term evolution of behavioral engagement. The research will utilize digital marketing content at the technological level from the first part of 2024, but the progress of AI capabilities is so rapid that new opportunities for optimizing digital marketing content through AI may emerge shortly.

F. Academic implications
The research contributes to a better understanding of how technological factors capable of replacing human creativity can affect the effectiveness of digital marketing content. For researchers, this phenomenon opens-up nascent opportunities with the potential to radically influence marketing in the coming years.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications
For managers, it will provide useful insights into how human specialists can integrate the generative capabilities of AI into their work. Additionally, it will offer a perspective on the technological response of consumers to content generated through AI.

The Importance of Measuring Customer Satisfaction in Developing Effective Marketing Strategies

Oana, MAN-KESSELHEIM [*]
Centricity Consulting SRL, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

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Keywords: customer satisfaction; experience; marketing; strategy

JEL classification: M31

A. Purpose
To highlight the importance of measuring customer satisfaction in developing effective marketing strategies

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
The current paper looks at the 2024 results of an annual satisfaction survey for a Romanian office building company and how they impact the effectiveness of the marketing decision making process. 194 responses were collected following the implementation of an online satisfaction survey. The satisfaction survey questionnaire was custom built for the company based on interviews with stakeholders, observations and draws on the theoretical framework SERVQUAL and the ACSI (American Customer Satisfaction Index). The questionnaire was pre-tested before launch. The company chose to have a 4.5 out of 5 customer satisfaction strategic objective, therefore all items in the questionnaire were on a 5-point scale. Regression analysis was applied to understand the significance of factors impacting customer satisfaction and decision to recommend the company. Based on this understanding recommendations were made for effective marketing and engagement strategies.

C. Originality/ Value
The paper adds value through 1. Developing a satisfaction model to inform effective marketing strategies 2. Showcasing the importance of measuring customer feedback in prioritizing relevant improvements in service experience.

D. Findings/Results
Upon the statistical analysis of the survey responses, several items have been shown to significantly impact "satisfaction", and "decision to recommend", respectively. *"*Technology", "Events", "Promptness of staff", "Using service providers regularly" and "Feeling part of the community" have been shown to significantly impact "satisfaction" with the company ($p<0.10$) whereas "Technology", "Events", "An open and friendly attitude", and "Feeling part of the community" have been shown to significantly impact "intention to recommend" the company to others ($p<0.10$). Adjusted R square is 0.58. Is worth noting that

[*] Corresponding author: **Oana Man-Kesselheim** - oana@centricity.cx

coefficients for these factors in both explanatory models are similar with one exception, for the item "I feel part of the Company community" 0.16 in the satisfaction model versus 0.30 in the recommendation prediction model. From the items which were shown to be non-significant, three are not consistent with previous literature findings: cleanliness, atmosphere and elevators.

E. Study/ Research limitations
The study at hand was built with constraints on how scientific it will be. Therefore, the 10p scale recommended for such studies was not applied. Also, two of the four basic tests for applying statistical regression analysis were not performed due to lack of time and excel knowledge. The non-statistical significance of, otherwise common sense items in affecting customer satisfaction, can be attributed to the formulation of those items in the questionnaire or them being understood as hygiene factors by the respondents – so they become significant only when a poor performance is registered on them, which is not the case here. The answers to the question referring to whether the tenants will be in the building next year is influenced by the lease contracts companies have. Further research is needed to refine the satisfaction model to include all aspects of the experience with the company and standardize the measurement scale.

F. Academic implications
This paper will help Romanian marketing researchers develop models to explain customer satisfaction and highlight their importance in making effective decisions for enhancing customer satisfaction.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications
Once the study was concluded, its results together with recommendations were presented to the management team of the company. It became clear that customer priorities and company priorities when it came to investment in building and facilities, commercial offers and engagement strategies differed. The company can now rethink these investments and make them in a more effective way to foster customer satisfaction and intention to recommend.

Romanian Higher Education Institutions on Social Media: Comparing Romanian Universities' Social Media Communication

Silvia, MAICAN⁎
"1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, Faculty of Economics, Romania

Andreea, MUNTEAN
"1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, Faculty of Economics, Romania

Carmen, PAŞTIU
"1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, Faculty of Economics, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

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A. Purpose

Higher education institutions are increasingly incorporating social media into their strategies to enhance engagement with online learner communities. Also, rebranding efforts on social media have been shown to lead to a more cohesive brand image, increased audience interaction, and improved promotion of academic programs. The aim of the study is to analyze and compare the way Romanian higher education institutions use social media strategies to promote their brands and connect with various stakeholders. In the context of rapid digitization within social media channels, universities must be careful in choosing the communication channel and understanding the preferences and behavior of their target audience.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach

To define the research objectives of the study, to identify theoretical frameworks, current research trends, and patterns in this field a literature review was developed on the first stage. Using content analysis, a relevant number of publications were analyzed. On the second stage of the study, a secondary data analysis method was conducted to analyze how these institutions manage their marketing communication on various social media platforms, followed by a quantitative analysis on the universities' social media KPIs, according to their communication strategy on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.The research was carried out during the period September 2022 - April 2023 and targeted five prestigious higher education institutions in Romania highly ranked and positioned in different geographical regions.

⁎ Corresponding author: **Silvia Maican** – smihalache@uab.ro

C. Originality/ Value

In this study, we underscore several novel contributions that distinguish our research from existing works in the domain. Firstly, our investigation provides a comprehensive analysis of social media communication specifically tailored to top five Romania Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This focus on the Romanian context is significant as there exists a scarcity of studies delving into this particular niche within the country's academic landscape.

D. Findings/Results

Based on the literature review analysis, the results highlight the potential of social media in higher education, the need for theoretical frameworks, and the importance of recognizing its role in maintaining educational sustainability.Based on the data gathered, all the five analyzed universities have active accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok. As regards the frequence of posting on Facebook during the analyzed period, Western University of Timișoara is in the lead, with a monthly average of 56 posts per month. As for the frequency of posts on Instagram, we noticed that the University of Bucharest is distinguished by the fact that it has the highest monthly average of posts on Instagram, with approximately 15 posts. The highest number of posts on TikTok was made by the West University of Timișoara, with a monthly average of approximately 3 posts. When analyzing the types of content posted on the Facebook platform, according to the analyzed data, universities most frequently choose to post content that contains text and images. Most of the posts on TikTok are intended for the internal audience.The Instagram engagement rates for these universities reveal a diverse landscape of digital interaction and community engagement across the academic sector in Romania. Babeș-Bolyai University leads impressively with an engagement rate of 10.86%, indicating an exceptionally strong connection with its audience on Instagram. The engagement rates and video output across various universities on TikTok present a fascinating insight into their respective digital presence and audience interaction.

E. Study/ Research limitations

The main limitation of the research is the sample's lack of representativeness.

F. Academic implications

Our findings fill a critical gap in the literature and furnish HEIs with a comprehensive understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in leveraging social media for marketing purposes within the Romanian context.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications

This study serves as a catalyst for informed decision-making within the strategic planning frameworks of HEIs. By offering empirical evidence and actionable insights, we empower institutional leaders to allocate resources judiciously and prioritize initiatives that yield the greatest returns on investment in the realm of social media marketing.

The Effectiveness of Explicitly Integrated Product Placements in Podcasts

Anca-Maria, MILOVAN[*]

West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Economics and Business Administrations, Romania

Costinel, DOBRE

West University of Timisoara, Faculty of Economics and Business Administrations, Romania

Ovidiu-Ioan, MOISESCU

Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

Keywords: podcast host; parasocial relationships; brand placement; brand attitude; brand recall

JEL classification: M31; M37

A. Purpose
In the current investigation, we analyze the influence of consumers' perceptions of host-read advertisements, including perceived entertainment value, informativeness, and congruence with the brand narrative, as well as their attitudes towards the podcast host, encompassing authenticity, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise. Drawing from theories such as the Parasocial Interaction Theory (PSI), the Meaning Transfer Model, and the Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT), we explore how these factors, along with the parasocial relationship between consumer and host, collectively affect brand recall, brand attitude, and subsequently influence consumer intentions towards the brand.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
To empirically validate our proposed structural model, we administered an online survey aimed at Romanian podcast consumers who had come across brand-related content while engaging with podcasts. The data collection took place between May and July 2023, utilizing social media sampling techniques. We distributed invitations within pertinent social media groups and micro-influencer communities, employing network and snowball sampling methods. Ultimately, we obtained a valid sample comprising 512 podcast consumers. Data analysis was conducted using partial least squares structural equation modeling.

C. Originality/ Value
Although various studies have delved into the impact of traditional and digital celebrities on consumer-brand dynamics, their conclusions might not directly translate to podcasts owing to the distinct nature of this medium. Unlike other platforms, podcasts foster prolonged engagement, draw in a more attentive audience, and are characterized by lower levels of

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[*] Corresponding author: **Anca-Maria Milovan** – anca.milovan@e-uvt.ro

distraction. Additionally, to our knowledge, no research has specifically examined the interaction between consumers' perceptions of podcast advertisements and the podcast host in shaping brand recall, brand attitudes, and, ultimately, consumer behavioral intentions towards the brand.

D. Findings/Results
Our research reveals that consumers' attitudes towards the podcaster, the content related to the brand, and their parasocial connection with the host indirectly shape brand behavioral intentions, with brand attitude and brand recall acting as intermediary factors. Among all the source characteristics examined, the expertise of the podcast host had the most notable impact on brand outcomes. Brand recall demonstrates a stronger effect on brand behavioral intentions in comparison to brand attitude.

E. Study/ Research limitations
In our study, we specifically focused on entertainment podcasts and product placements associated with low involvement/high feeling products. Additionally, we did not categorize podcasts based on their audience size, which could have influenced the strength of parasocial relationships developed between the podcaster and listeners.

F. Academic implications
We contribute to a deeper understanding of how podcast branding campaigns impact consumer behaviors. Our research also delves into the influence of consumer-host parasocial relationships, specifically examining the effects of friendship and identification on listener behavior, which is an aspect that has been largely overlooked in existing literature.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications
Given that podcasts offer flexibility in format and are perceived as more authentic and engaging, marketing managers can leverage them as an alternative to traditional influencer marketing methods. As listeners tend to attribute attractiveness, trustworthiness, and authenticity to podcast hosts, incorporating product mentions by the host can bolster brand associations. Furthermore, the audio-centric nature of podcasts lends itself to higher brand recall rates, making host product mentions and integrated storytelling more effective than simple product displays. To enhance recall further, hosts can reiterate the brand across multiple episodes, showcase the product during segments, or engage in discussions about its benefits. When selecting podcasters for brand placements, marketing managers should prioritize individuals who have expertise or qualifications relevant to the product being promoted.

Connecting Dots, Creating Value: Bringing in Consumer's Data for Digital Business Innovation

Iuliana, OBREJA﹡
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

Adriana, MANOLICĂ
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

Alexandra Raluca, JELEA
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

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Extended Abstract

Keywords: digital marketing; consumer experience; website design; website characteristics

JEL classification: M31, M37, D91

A. Purpose
As economic market processes are continually evolving and today's digital landscape incorporates modern elements in line with modern consumer demands, digital marketing strategies are transforming. In other words, they are shaping in such a way that well-designed websites are an important piece in companies' online presence. With this in mind, the paper aims to better understand consumer experience and preferences in the context of browsing an online store in order to ultimately provide a model. Moreover, factors related to web architecture, customer support and online behaviour of the respective user are analyzed throughout the research in order to observe what drives traffic, engagement and, by default, conversions.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
When recalling the methodology used in the present work, we emphasize the online survey as a unitary technique in the research design. Furthermore, the tool used to analyse the experiences and preferences of online consumers was a questionnaire, created and implemented through the Google Forms platform. Also, in order to generate the factors that persuade a user to use the services of certain online shops we use a quantitative method, with a total of 130 unique participants as sample size. As well, the interpreted collected data was analyzed and on the basis of this, the results could be presented in an original way of visual expression.

﹡ Corresponding author: **Iuliana Obreja** – iulianaobreja18@gmail.com

C. Originality/ Value

In this paper, we present a new approach to better understand the synergy of digital marketing and website design and thus create original insights that differentiate the study from the existing literature in the field. In other words, we provide insights into what consumers want to find on a website. Thus, we highlight the value of the study as modelling a digital image of the ideal online store from the end-user's point of view, taking their requirements as benchmarks.

D. Findings/Results

When discussing the results of the research, we point to the outlined objectives and, moreover, highlight the conclusion regarding consumer experience as 62.3% (81 responses) for displaying the cost of delivery in the footer in the Delivery and Shipping section of a website. Also, 57.7% of respondents (75 responses) also welcomed the option of display at checkout and only 20% (26 responses) found it at the top of the online shop.

E. Study/ Research limitations

As there are a number of limitations to our work, we highlight, in terms of the online survey conducted for data collection purposes, the actual sample of respondents as a factor in restricting the generalizability of the results to a wider population of Romania.

F. Academic implications

The academic implications of our study stand out in contributing to a better understanding of the relationship between digital marketing and website design, thus becoming a starting point for future research in this area. Also, the new perspectives highlighted provide guidance for practitioners wishing to deepen the field.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications

In the same manner, this research can be an updated model that business people can follow in order to own a 21st century consumer-optimized online store. Above all, the findings of the study contribute to the evolution of digital marketing information and, more importantly, provide companies with an opportunity to adhere to an approach that will improve their online presence and help increase digital interactions with their target audience.

What If the Entrepreneurial Moment is Just a Moment? Marketing Implications

Gelu, TRIŞCĂ∗

Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

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A. Purpose
This study investigates the marketing implications of business decision-making by risk-averse entrepreneurs operating within small business contexts.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
The empirical research employs a diachronic, in-depth case study approach to explore the business decision-making of risk-averse entrepreneurs. The case focuses on a Romanian electro-IT market outlier, and the researcher conducted a longitudinal analysis over a twelve-year period. This involved direct observation of daily business decision-making processes, their underlying factors (antecedents), and subsequent outcomes (consequences). Utilizing an inductive approach, the research identified recurring patterns in the entrepreneur's decision-making. These patterns were then compared to established theoretical frameworks within the business literature. The selection of this methodology was initially driven by the desire to achieve a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the outlier's atypical market success within the Romanian electro-IT landscape.

C. Originality/ Value
Within the field of entrepreneurship research, creating a small business is widely recognized as an explicit expression of an entrepreneurial mindset. This paper demonstrates that entrepreneurial endeavors do not invariably align with the characteristics associated with an entrepreneurial mindset, specifically, with risk aversion traits. While a risk-averse business owner might overcome this barrier in the start-up phase, a failure to maintain a balanced approach to risk will detrimentally affect the evolution of his business through poor decision-making processes. These findings are particularly significant for marketing consultants and business coaches who work with risk-averse business owners.

D. Findings/Results
Research suggests that small businesses reflect the personalities and temperaments of their founders. Entrepreneurial traits exert a significant influence across all aspects of the business. For risk-averse owners, success may be limited to mere survival. Businesses can become reliant on external financial incentives like "commercial credit" and "back-rebate mechanisms," creating a potentially detrimental dependence. Risk aversion can further

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∗ Corresponding author: **Gelu Trişcă** - gelu.trisca@econ.ubbcluj.ro

manifest as procrastination in decision-making, micromanagement, and constant, unproductive business tinkering. This short-term focus characteristic of risk-averse entrepreneurs hinders the implementation of a strategic marketing approach. Owners prioritize familiarity and comfort, perpetuating existing practices even if the business stagnates. The stress associated with "survival mode" can exacerbate risk aversion, creating a cycle that impedes the development of a sustainable business model. The absence of strategic vision and failure to understand the need for differentiation leads to imitative behavior and an entrepreneurial rationale based on the "collective constraint" (I do what everyone else does because that's how it's done in this industry).

E. Study/ Research limitations

The main limitation of the study results from its focus on a single market outlier. Sometimes outliers can be explained by external factors or specific circumstances. In such cases, they might not represent a broader theoretical concern but rather an exception to the norm. As a result, further research is needed in different contexts (markets & cultures).

F. Academic implications

The research shows that highly risk-averse individuals can start a business and even survive in a highly competitive market. These findings contrast with existing literature and ask for further research.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications

Marketing consultants who lack a comprehensive understanding of the owner's traits and their decision-making processes may struggle to grasp the nuances of the business itself. Conversely, for owners lacking a strong entrepreneurial mindset, business consulting can serve a therapeutic function, potentially fostering a dependence on external guidance. However, this reliance does not necessarily guarantee progress. For risk-averse entrepreneurs, the managerial function of the business may overshadow the entrepreneurial function. This prioritization often translates into a reluctance to make strategic investments in areas like high-performing employees, innovative merchandising, targeted promotion, and exploring new business directions. Consequently, marketing consultants working with such entrepreneurs may need to adopt a "small-step consulting strategy" that prioritizes incremental improvements and emphasizes achieving demonstrable successes within a risk-averse framework.

The Impact of Flow on Consumer Brand Perceptions in the Metaverse

Ibolya, VIZELI*

Babeş-Bolyai University, Economics and Business Administration Doctoral School, Romania

Mónika-Anetta, ALT

Babeş-Bolyai University, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Romania

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Paper type: Extended Abstract

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Keywords: flow theory; brand perception; metaverse

JEL classification: M31, M39, O33, L86

A. Purpose
The metaverse, comprising virtual collaborative spaces with 3D environments and immersive technologies, enables the real-time interaction of digital personas. While widespread adoption is pending, platforms known from the gaming industry such as Roblox provide opportunities for individuals and businesses to explore the metaverse concept. Notably, brands like Nike, Adidas, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, or LEGO, have entered the metaverse, but their impact on consumer perceptions is unknown. Thus, this research aims to investigate the influence of flow on consumer brand perceptions within the emerging context of the metaverse. Specifically, it seeks to explore how consumer interactions with brands in virtual environments impact their attitudes, commitment, and purchase intentions.

B. Design/ Methodology/ Approach
A quantitative study was conducted among university and high school students from Romania. Participants engaged in a simulated experience within Nike's branded metaverse environment named Nikeland available on Roblox platform. Following the simulation, participants completed a survey that assessed their perceptions of the brand and their experience in the metaverse. A total of 187 responses were collected. The conceptual model was analyzed using the PLS-SEM method.

C. Originality/ Value
This study contributes to better understanding consumer brand perceptions in the evolving metaverse, where the effectiveness of branding practices remains largely unexplored. Additionally, analyzing the potential influence of flow in this context is a novel contribution. Ultimately, conducting the study with a real-life example like Nike's branded virtual world on Roblox enhances the originality of this research.

D. Findings/Results
Preliminary findings suggest that flow significantly impacts consumer brand attitude and commitment within the metaverse. Participants who experienced a state of flow during their

* Corresponding author: **Ibolya Vizeli** - ibolya.vizeli@econ.ubbcluj.ro

interaction with Nike's branded environment exhibited more positive brand attitudes and stronger commitment to the brand. These factors, in turn, were found to positively influence brand purchase intent.

E. Study/ Research limitations
One limitation of this study is that participants were required to engage in the Nikeland simulation, rather than voluntarily choosing to interact with the brand in the metaverse, potentially affecting the authenticity of their experiences and responses. Additionally, the study focused solely on the perception of one specific brand (Nike) and one specific metaverse platform (Roblox), limiting the generalizability of the results to other brands or virtual environments.

F. Academic implications
This study significantly advances the understanding of consumer behavior in the emerging metaverse by investigating the impact of flow on brand perceptions. By shedding light on these dynamics, it provides valuable insights into the intersection of virtual environments and branding strategies, potentially shaping future research agendas in this domain.

G. Practical/ Managerial implications
The results offer practical insights for brand managers and marketers aiming to establish a presence in the metaverse. Understanding how consumer interactions within virtual branded spaces like Nikeland on Roblox influence brand perceptions can lead to designing effective brand strategies in these environments, thereby enhancing brand experiences and fostering consumer engagement.