Editorial

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In the financial turmoil of recent months, accompanied by much finger-pointing and name-calling by all parties and at all levels from the prime-ministerial down (or up, if you prefer), it comes as no surprise to find a reprise of the now familiar attack on the advertising industry. *The Guardian*, never reluctant to bite the hand that feeds it, gave space on 25 October to its regular columnist George Monbiot, never reluctant to provide the teeth to bite with, to denounce advertising (no exceptions noted) as ‘poison’. This drew a response in the paper’s Response column a few days later from the CEO of the Advertising Association, Tim Lefroy.

What consistently surprises us about this debate is the inbuilt assumption (on both sides) that the advertising industry, despite its unique spread of interests and activities, can somehow be encapsulated in a catch-all characterization, and must stand or fall on that basis. After all, no one this side of the funny farm would be given a hearing for the view that products or services — the things that advertising exists to promote — are, without exception, ‘poison’. So why should we give even the slightest credence to the equally absurd contention about advertising, which is no more homogeneous than the products or services it promotes?

The fact is that some products, and some advertising, are harmful (cigarettes, for example, where government has rightly banned the advertising, but has not yet summoned the courage to ban the products), some are mendacious or misleading (particularly noticeable in the health field), some are positively useful, some are disliked by some segments of society but not others, and most are just part of the rich tapestry of life. Where products, or associated advertising, are harmful to society, we rely on discriminating legislation to correct matters; where advertising is mendacious or misleading the industry has created a self-regulatory system, which is the envy of most other nations; where none of this is true, it would be good to feel that commentators might occasionally exercise the sort of discrimination that legislators are obliged to use.

In this issue, we have a wide variety of contributions. The first is an Opinion Piece from across the water by Lisa Bodell, dealing through the medium of an online questionnaire with the problem of learning and development in a rapidly changing world. This is followed by an elegant article by Lazar Dzamic of Kitcatt Nohr Digitas on the use of metrics and evaluation in the context of social media. Having devoted the whole of our last issue to the subject of advanced metrics, and with more to come on this, we note both the increasing observed importance of the issue and the need for guidance felt by many who are finding themselves overwhelmed by the amount of data available, from social media in particular, and by the lack of time in which to analyse adequately.

Next up is an article by Barry Leventhal (our guest editor for our last issue) and Tom Breur on markdown pricing, seeking to establish strategic commonality between a variety of industries employing these methods and explaining the role of analytics (that word again) in relation to this activity. Following Barry and Tom, we have an article from Andy Green on the difficult issue of the valuation of customer data: why it is essential to value it, and how to set about doing so.

After these articles comes a rather unusual Case Study — a theoretical study by a group of students set to produce a campaign for the Training and Development Agency for Schools, whose remit is to persuade new graduates (particularly in Maths and Science) to take up teaching as a career. The quality of the work, reflecting the quality of new business graduates, is, we think, something for the industry to be alive to, and proud of.

These contributions are followed by our usual Legal & Regulatory column, contributed as usual in the majority by Osborne Clarke, but headed in this case by a follow-up from Mark Chipperfield of the IDM Data Council on the subject of cookies, after the brief piece on this subject by the Data Protection Commissioner in our last issue.

We conclude with our usual abstracts and a book review, which brings together two stalwarts of the industry in the unforgettable persons of George Smith (author) and Drayton Bird (reviewer).

Call for papers

We have always prided ourselves in this journal on being, in contrast to many of our contemporaries, primarily a practitioners' publication. While we are always pleased to carry academic papers, where these offer new insight from research that has a practical application, we are constantly aware that among our readers are many potential writers who feel too burdened by the day-to-day needs of their businesses to share their valuable insights with us, and their colleagues.

We would like to take this opportunity to invite all our readers who believe that they have something to say to the world of marketers to contribute now. Details of the sorts of material (varied) we are looking for, and of how to submit a manuscript may be found at: http://www.palgrave-journals.com/dddmp/author_instructions.html or by calling Robin Fairlie on 020 8340 2528 or by email at robin@idms.co.uk.

*Robin Fairlie
Derek Holder*