Editorial

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In this third issue of Volume 20, I have the pleasure of introducing the following five papers. The first paper, *Advertising Appeals across Varying Economic and Regulatory Conditions: A Longitudinal Content Analysis in the Mutual Fund Industry* by Robert Underwood, Thomas Smythe, Beth Pontari and Sean Hastings, investigates the relationship between the utilization of different appeals in mutual fund advertisements and prevailing market and regulatory conditions to ascertain whether the application of appeals varies over time and according to market conditions.

Drawing on a longitudinal content analysis, the authors examine the presence and prevalence of various advertising appeals used by mutual fund providers in print advertisements published in *Money* magazine in the United States during the period 2000–2009. This period covers a particularly dynamic economic decade in the United States; including two significant down-market periods (2000–2003 and 2008–2009) and one up-market period (2004–2007). Hence, the authors argue that this 10-year period provides a rare opportunity to explore the question of whether changes in economic markets impact strategic advertising appeals.

Mutual fund firms promote their investment products using a variety of advertising appeals, including those which highlight performance, product and consistency. Advertising acts as a key information source, but there is a general recognition that mutual fund advertisements lack the information needed to make rational decisions, and investors tend to rely on past performance rather than more salient information.

The results reveal that appeal usage indeed varies over time and by market performance.

Appeals focusing on performance and product were found to be strongly correlated with market performance, while appeals relating to trust were found to be correlated with subpar market performance. In addition, the use of cost information, broadly defined, has become increasingly important over the 2000–2009 period independent of market performance. The paper discusses the implications of these findings and their relationship to government regulation.

The second paper, *An Investigation of Internal Marketing and its Effects on Employees in the Banking Sector in Saudi Arabia* by Faisal A. Albassami, Soad A. Al-Meshal and Ainsworth Anthony Bailey, examines the impact of internal marketing in motivating employees to develop specific attitudes and behaviours. Recent research in relationship marketing suggests that internal marketing has a positive effect on factors such as employee satisfaction and commitment to an organization, and suggests that effective customer–firm relationships are anchored in effective employee–firm relationships. Acknowledging the importance of internal marketing to financial services providers, the authors examine what elements of internal marketing motivate key employee attitudes and brand-supporting behaviours. Building on existing research in the area, the authors explore the links between internal marketing, in particular perceptions of organizational commitment to employees and employee, and identification with the organization. The study was based on a survey conducted among a convenience sample of Saudi Arabian banking employees. Out of 350 distributed questionnaires, there were 235 usable completed questionnaires. The findings reveal the impact of internal marketing on

perceptions of organizational commitment to employees and employee identification with their employers.

The results indicate that internal marketing impacts perceptions of organizational commitment to employees; rewards, employee empowerment and perceptions of organizational commitment to employees impact employee identification with the organization. In addition, perceptions of organizational commitment to employees partially mediates the internal communications, in particular the relationship between employee identification and employee empowerment, and it fully mediates the relationship between training and employee identification and between rewards and employee identification. The paper discusses several managerial implications and suggestions for future research.

The third paper, *Effects of Commitment on Intentional loyalty at the Person-to-Person and Person-to-Firm Levels* by Christer Strandberg, Olof Wahlberg and Peter Öhman, explores how customers' commitment to the personal financial adviser and the bank, respectively, affect their intentional loyalty to both. Commitment was studied in terms of affective commitment and calculative commitment. On the basis of a Web survey of mass affluent customers of a major Swedish bank, the results reveal that person-to-person and person-to-firm loyalty are impacted by affective and calculative commitment to the personal advisor but by only affective commitment (not calculative commitment) to the bank. Furthermore, the study finds that there is a strong relationship between customer loyalty to the personal adviser and customer loyalty to the bank. The authors conclude that affective commitment shows a stronger overall impact on customer loyalty than calculative commitment. This highlights the centrality of the personal adviser to the bank–customer relationship and suggests the importance of building and maintaining strong emotional and social bonds with customers.

Continuing the theme of relationship commitment, in the fourth paper,

Continuous Mobile Banking Usage and Relationship Commitment – A Multi-Country Assessment by Aijaz Shaikh, Heikki Karjaluo and Natalie Chinje, the authors examine the phenomenon of continued technology use on relationship commitment. Acknowledging the importance of relationship commitment in banking and responding to calls for more in-depth, customer-oriented research in the use of m-banking, the study seeks to broaden our understanding of continuous usage of m-banking services in the context of relationship commitment. Drawing on literature on mobile banking adoption, continuous usage behavior and post-adoption of technology behavior, the authors investigate the nature of experienced mobile banking users' relationship commitment with their bank and personal finances.

On the basis of a total of 36 in-depth interviews with experienced m-banking users in the city of Jyväskylä (Finland-FIN) and Johannesburg (South Africa-SA), the study reveals important changes in commitment and highlights the added value to users provided by mobile banking offers. Specifically, the study reveals that consumer perceptions of their commitment to the management of their personal finances have changed because of the utilization of m-banking services. Overall, the results indicate positive changes in bank customers' commitment after using m-banking services.

The final paper in this issue, *We Are Who We Are: Incorporation of Individual Culture in Customer Satisfaction Models* by Sanjai Parahoo, Ahmed Al-Nakeeb and Ismail Onagun Abdussalam, investigates how culture interacts with and influences other traditional variables such as service quality, perceived value and reputation, in predicting customer satisfaction. The authors argue that despite increasing recognition that cultural values have a major impact on consumer behavior, few studies have examined the effect of individual culture on customer satisfaction. Addressing this shortfall, the study builds a conceptual model of customer satisfaction that incorporates the individual

cultural variable of Uncertainty Avoidance (UA), and tests it among a sample of 227 Arab customers in the UAE banking sector using structural equation modelling. Using cultural assessment frameworks, Arab individuals tend to score high on UA, hence provide a suitable context in which to determine how this cultural trait affects their consumer satisfaction. The study revealed that perceived value and UA are direct antecedents of corporate reputation which in turn has a strong effect on satisfaction.

Contrary to expectations, service quality was not found to affect satisfaction. Various theoretical and managerial implications arising from the study findings are discussed, as well as potential avenues for further research in this important area.

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