Editorial

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Reading recently published research¹ on the ways in which different generations consume ‘old’ and ‘new’ media reminded me of the continual need to revisit and revalidate some of the techniques we employ to understand and evaluate the ways in which consumers are motivated to buy, and what lies behind some of these motivations. The young, it is suggested, engage in significantly higher levels of multi-tasking — switching rapidly between different media channels — than the old. The implications for brand recognition and recall, as well as for methods used to elicit consumer awareness and attitudes, are considerable. In this issue of the Journal, Jenny Romaniuk explores the relative effectiveness of prompted (recognition) and unprompted (recall) methods of measuring consumers’ brand associations in a conventional ‘free choice’ approach. She finds that using an unprompted methodology works against non-brand users and the brand associations that consumers have for smaller share brands and new brand entrants. This finding is of significance for larger brands also, since such results downplay the potential competitive threat of new entrants.

Another attractive method for eliciting a deeper understanding of consumers’ attitudes and motivations is the means-end chain model (MEC). Such models assume that consumers view products as a means to some desired end, and their decisions regarding product purchase and use are driven by their evaluation of the extent to which products can enable them to meet those ends. The MEC suggests that consumers evaluate products and attributes not in their own right, but in terms of what these attributes can do for them. Understanding these links has the potential to enrich the judgments that marketers make. But analysts disagree over the way in which the MEC should be operationalised. Eugene Kaciak and Carman Cullen provide a helpful review of the

competing approaches. For those familiar with the technique, Kaciak and Cullen provide some useful pointers for sharpening the effectiveness of the data reduction methods employed; for those less familiar, their reading list provides the basis for a valuable primer on the technique.

The kind of behaviour emerging from increasingly digital, networked environments suggests — particularly among the most active consumers — a greater emphasis given to variety seeking (promiscuous or polygamous behaviour in brand choice). It may be constructive, as a result, to be able to segment consumers based upon how much variety they seek and how consistent they are in the search for that variety. Amresh Kumar and Minakshi Trivedi examine such behaviour in the context of the consumption of soft drinks, beer and video rentals. They employ a practical, pattern-based approach that, although sacrificing some of the higher definition of more sophisticated techniques, provides a mechanism for identifying ‘non-loyal’ customers.

Yannick Poubanne, Fabrice Clerfeuille and Jean-Louis Chandon focus their attention on mechanisms for better understanding levels of customer satisfaction in services, in a second paper for the Journal (following an initial publication in 2003) dealing with the use of the ‘tetra class’ model; in this case applied to veterinary services. The model divides services into four categories, dependent on the ways in which they affect the customer experience. They distinguish between key, plus, basic and secondary services, which have differential contributions to levels of customer satisfaction.

Finally, however, the shifts I have described have implications for marketing-led organisations, too. Our concluding paper is from Angus Jenkinson. It addresses the challenges created by the transformation of the media landscape from

'old' to 'new' media, characterised by the growth of lower reach/more highly targeted options, for developing 'media-neutral' communications planning within an organisation. We have read a great deal about the theory of integrated marketing communications (IMC) but evidence suggests that few companies are good at this. Jenkinson's focus is therefore on *how* to do integrated planning, rather than whether it should be done. In particular, in introducing his 'CODAR' open planning tool, he discusses ways

of overcoming the barriers to implementation that arise from organisational structure: the 'mental and organisational structures that sub-optimize performance and polarise practitioners' views'.

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Reference

- 1 ICM Research for Creston plc, 2006.