

**Editorial:**

**Academy of Marketing Conference 2007  
“Marketing theory *into* Practice”**

**Hosted by Kingston Business School**

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**Abstract** The Chairs of the 2007 Academy of Marketing Conference would like to welcome you to the *Journal of Marketing Management* Special Conference Issue, dedicated to the theme “Marketing Theory *into* Practice”.

**Keywords** Marketing theory, Marketing practice.

Organising the 2007 AM Conference has been a reminder that the three of us started our working lives as marketing practitioners. Our practical marketing, communication and organisational skills have indeed been called upon throughout the months of planning, organisation and management culminating in the Conference itself. At the same time, organising AM2007 has given us the opportunity to ask ourselves whether our more recent lives as marketing academics have been beneficial, or a hindrance, to the practical tasks of marketing and managing the Conference. Having become academics and having attended many Academy of Marketing and other conferences in the past, certainly meant that we knew our target market well. However, were we practising what we preached in the classroom and were we applying the theoretical knowledge derived from our research? The theme of “Marketing Theory *into* Practice” seemed very appropriate, not only to our personal histories and current circumstances, but also to the wider debate regarding the divide between academia and practice and to the apparent failure of academics to make their research known and relevant to marketing practitioners. Why has it “*become respectable to dismiss*

\*Correspondence details and biographies for the authors are located at the end of the article, p. 391.

*the output of academics as irrelevant to the real world of marketing?* (Edwards 2005). Is it because of the “*tortuous language*” of marketing academics, their over complicated statistical models, their lack of understanding of the real world and of the practical implications of their findings? Would marketing practitioners benefit from the knowledge of the models, frameworks and methodologies devised by academics? In her recent article in the trade magazine Marketing, Edwards (2005) suggested that a “*working knowledge of the best of these tools could save businesses hundreds of hours of consultants' fees.*” Is it then simply a matter of lack of communication between the two communities of marketing academics and marketing practitioners? If so, as marketing academics we all have an important role to play, in translating Marketing Theory *into* Practice. Firstly, we need to take into serious consideration and to develop fully the practical implications of our research. Secondly, we need to be more effective in communicating, in an accessible and relevant manner, the benefits of our findings to marketing practitioners.

In this spirit, for this Special Issue we have selected a number of articles which either directly debate the theme of the conference or which explicitly address the relevance of marketing theory to marketing practice (or vice-versa).

In the first article, “Theory *into* practice: meditations on cultures of accountability and interdisciplinarity in marketing research”, Brownlie, Hewer and Ferguson address the theme of the conference directly. The multifaceted construct of ‘relevance’ is used by the authors as the fulcrum of their discussion. The marketing academic community needs to reconsider and expand their perception of ‘relevance’ in order to take into account not only any shifts that may occur over time in the agenda of ‘relevance’, but also the ‘relevance’ to different stakeholders – managers, funding bodies, students and, importantly, other academic disciplines. To this end, the authors advocate “*a conscious effort and the investment of time and resources towards the development of interfaces between knowledge producers and users which enhance communication and interaction*”. The authors conclude with the suggestion that a very important channel of communication should be established with other disciplinary areas, with the aim not only of learning good practice in communicating and making knowledge ‘relevant’ to different stakeholders, but also of “*making possible more interdisciplinary research of the sort that generate relevance by building interfacing processes into the research activity itself*”.

Insight from a different angle on how the conduit of moving Theory *into* Practice can be understood better and hence facilitated is offered by the paper by Tregear, Kuznesof and Brennan “Critical approaches in undergraduate marketing teaching: investigating students’ perceptions”. The channel in this case is marketing modules and the audience is business students. The paper examines marketing modules which use critical approaches in teaching and learning, and importantly the students’ response to these approaches. It highlights students’ problems in developing skills in critical thinking, and the challenges in understanding complex journal articles compared to management reports. However, somewhat reassuringly, while students perceive modules adopting a critical approach to be more labour intensive, intellectually demanding and thought provoking, they consider them to be as oriented towards real world relevance and employability skills as other modules. The latter is found to be the case especially for students with work experience. Perhaps we should think of Theory *into* Practice and of Practice *into* Theory as two sides of the same coin?

Indeed, the approach of the third paper “Advertising agency planning – conceptualising network relationships” by Grant and McLeod is a Grounded Theory one: the direct investigation of how agency practitioners involved in the process

of advertising planning (advertising account managers and creative, independent media planners and researchers) perceive the scope and nature of the relationship and collaboration between the parties. The Grounded Theory approach enabled the authors to unearth “*the shift from dyadic relationship in advertising planning*”, leading to the conceptualisation of a theoretical model “*based on collaborative, networked relationship between involved parties*”. Agency purpose and philosophy, personal chemistry, power relations and trust are proposed as the pillars of the agency planning networked relationships.

With the next two papers in this Special Issue we move from an inductive approach to a hypothetico-deductive approach towards the quest of Theory *into* Practice.

In their paper “I am, ergo I shop: does store image congruity explain shopping behaviour of Chinese consumers?” He and Mukherjee address the important question of the predictive power of theory developed and tested in a specific context, when applied to a very different environment. Specifically, the validity of the four dimension model of self-congruity in predicting store satisfaction and loyalty is tested in a Chinese context. While the overall results demonstrate the predictive validity of self-congruity theory in a non-Western culture, consumer attitudes and store loyalty of Chinese shoppers are found to be driven mainly by self consistence and social confirmation, rather than by self-enhancement or esteem. This finding has important practical relevance for Western retailers moving into the Chinese market, particularly with regards to the management of store image. Given the apparent difficulties with the internationalisation of retailing, not only from West to East, but also within Europe and between Europe and the US, the practical implications of He and Mukherjee’s research are topical and important. Perhaps these findings should be included in the list of tools that would save practitioners millions in consultants’ fees and losses from unsuccessful ventures?

In the next paper “An investigation into the mediating influence of consumer expertise on the antecedents and consequences of affect within professional service markets”, we continue the theme of the application of existing theory to a different context. Garry starts from the observation that the literature (Theory) on the role of affect upon the formation of consumer satisfaction judgements may fall short in the context of professional services, which “*may be consumed by individuals who, in varying degrees, posses the ability to form expectation and performance assessments about the service they are consuming and have pertinent technical qualifications, knowledge and experience that enable them to do so*”. Indeed, the findings support the importance of considering differing levels of consumer expertise when assessing the relative impact of different components of satisfaction on affect and on the overall satisfaction with professional (legal) services. The results have practical implications also with regards to the commonly used classification system of professional services based on the ‘search, experience and credence’ typology, particularly as the ‘credence’ element is concerned. Garry notices that while, “*according to the extant theory, credence attributes are not assessable even after purchase*”... “*this may not always be the case and the consumer expertise will be a determinant factor as to how service expectations are set and evaluations of service delivery are made.*” Therefore, how consumers of differing expertise assess a particular service should be taken into consideration by practitioners in the delivery of that service.

Affect, but this time from the point of view of affective commitment to a team, is at the core also of the next paper: “Buying a sponsor’s brand: the role of affective commitment to the sponsored team”, by Lings and Owen. In tackling the important issue of the measurability of the effectiveness of sport sponsorship, the authors argue

that existing conceptual and operating models of sponsorship have overlooked an important intermediary variable, affective commitment, in the relationship between individual affiliation and social identification with the team. Indeed, empirical results suggest that affective commitment is an important intermediary variable between club prestige, level of association and participation and team identification. Affective commitment to the team has both a direct and an indirect (via team identification) effect on the purchase intentions of the sponsor's brand when the team is winning. However, no matter whether their team is winning or losing, fans are found to maintain an affective commitment to the team and at least some degree of identification with the team itself. The key lesson for practice here is that understanding which team the target market identifies with and feels emotionally attached to is crucial to maximising the effect of sponsorship.

We come back to the evaluation of consumer expertise and competence in the next paper of this Special Issue: "Consumer savvy: conceptualisation and measurement", by Macdonald and Uncles. Here the authors revisit the e-marketing and e-management literature to develop a conceptual model of "Consumer Savvy", as a function of four competency-related and two expectations-related variables. Noting that there has been a great deal of conjecture in the literature, but little formal measurement, they proceed to develop and empirically validate a scale of the Consumer Savvy concept, based on the six previously identified competency and expectation characteristics of the savvy consumer. The development of the Consumer Savvy scale offers a number of practical implications. Firstly, a better understanding of the characteristics of the Savvy Consumer. Secondly, the scale allows managers to test the effect of their marketing tactics and strategies on consumers with different patterns of scores on the six SAVVY characteristics. Identification of the latter can be used for segmentation and targeting purposes. Relevant implications are drawn also from the perspective of public policy, in terms of tracking savviness amongst socially disadvantaged consumers.

Finally, in the last paper of this Special Issue, Grant, Clarke and Kyriazis offer us "A review of factors affecting online consumer search behaviour from an information value perspective". The authors start from the practical observation that the internet as a means of purchasing products and services seems to have fallen short of initial expectations. The 'abandoned chart' syndrome appears to be rife, with many enquiries not resulting in a purchase. Hence, the authors argue, the need to understand better the consumer information search process in the context of the Internet. In their review of the consumer information search behaviour literature, Grant et al. identify three main research streams, relating to: information source utility, personal factors (some related to savviness) and product factors. The review uncovers a number of issues relevant to practice, such as "*consumer frustrations from information that is inaccurate, poorly presented, insufficient or of dubious credibility*", diminishing the perceived value of the information available online. Hence the need for academics and practitioners alike to fully appreciate the information needed by consumers wishing to purchase online, particularly in the context of subjectively evaluated "experience" type products.

The papers included in this Special Issue illustrate various approaches to translating Theory *into* Practice and even Practice *into* Theory: from an inductive to a hypothetico-deductive approach, from the empirical generalisation of theories to scale development and, finally, by means of a critical evaluation of the literature. Whatever the approach, all the papers featured here remind us that three essential characteristics of good (and publishable) research: 'interesting', 'important' and

'relevant' should equally apply to theory development AND to marketing practice application. If we kept this in mind, the accessibility and communicability of our research would improve greatly.

Francesca Dall'Olmo Riley  
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## **REFERENCES**

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## **ABOUT THE EDITORS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

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## CONFERENCE ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the hundreds of reviewers who volunteered to help us with the selection of papers for the Conference, for this Special Issue and for 'Best in Track' prizes. The reviews we received were thorough and detailed, so much so that often our online system crashed, unable to cope with the length of the comments! We are very grateful to all referees and so are the authors who received such insightful feedback. While we cannot acknowledge all individual reviewers here, a list of AM2007 referees will be available in the Conference bag.

We are also indebted to the numerous Track Chairs and co-Chairs who assigned papers to reviewers, helped us with acceptance/rejection decisions, made recommendations for 'Best in Track' Prizes, asked Journal Editors to sponsor Track prizes and Track related Special Issues and of course reviewed a great number of papers themselves! Thank you, we could not have done without you!

Our sincere thanks go to the sponsors of the Conference and of the Doctoral Colloquium: the Chartered Institute of Marketing and the Institute of Direct Marketing. We are also grateful to the British Academy of Management for their contribution. We are indebted to the many Journals, Publishers and Editors who sponsored Track prizes and Special Issues. A list of prizes, special issues and their sponsors is available on the Conference website: [www.am2007.org](http://www.am2007.org)

Finally, we should thank Kingston Business School for supporting us in our work as hosts of this year's conference and the people at Royal Holloway Conference Centre, where the conference was held.

Francesca Dall'Olmo Riley  
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Helen Robinson

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