

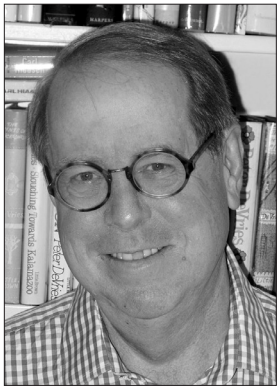
Editor's Letter

What Do We Know About Peer-to-Peer Marketing?

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FOR YEARS, Heather Locklear was the face of peer-to-peer advertising. She liked her shampoo so much she told two friends, who told two friends, who told two more friends “and so on and so on and so on.” She voiced a viral program for Fabergé Organics Shampoo decades before the tools of digital engagement enabled consumers to take word-of-mouth (WOM) messages globally in just a matter of minutes.

The legacy of that 1982 spot, however, lasted long beyond the brand. The “and so on and so on and so on” articulated a problem that still vexes marketers today: How do you put a quantitative metric against something such as peer-to-peer advertising that is, by its very nature, thoroughly qualitative?

From Australia’s Deakin University comes the notion that something seemingly intrinsically immeasurable as a full-out viral campaign actually may have a statistical component that can provide marketers insights on marketplace effects.

In “How Contagious Is Your Viral Marketing Campaign: A Mathematical Model for Assessing Campaign Performance” (please see page 205), Deakin authors Michael T. Ewing, David B. Stewart, Dineli R. Mather, and Joshua D. Newton insist that few peer-to-peer campaigns are purely viral—that marketers whose messages are reborn minute by minute on YouTube or Tweeted seemingly endlessly (far beyond Ms. Locklear’s “and-so-on” vision), there are quantifiable elements that can anchor the seemingly immeasurable programs in quantifiable, comparable metrics.

The authors begin with the assumption that “Most so-called ‘viral’ campaigns are made up of both viral and non-viral components,” the latter including seeding (“an inherently non-viral activity” and highly targeted sharing (through deliberate e-mail distribution).

“In determining what contributed to the success of a marketing campaign,” Ewing, Stewart, Mather, and Newton advise, “Managers are cautioned not to overstate the contribution made by

the viral components. Rather, they should examine the relative contribution that viral and non-viral processes make to the overall performance of their campaigns.” To that end, they offer a model that tracks viral transmission and time in order to follow the life of the campaign.

In “Consumer Moments of Truth in the Digital Context: How ‘Search’ and ‘e-Word of Mouth’ Can Fuel Consumer Decision Making” (please see page 200), Gillian Moran and Laurent Muzellec (University College Dublin/Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School) and Eoghan Nolan (Wonga.com and formerly with Google) offer a new take on the classic “Moment of Truth” espoused by the likes of Procter & Gamble and Google. As digital technology has empowered shoppers with more information (delivered more often), the authors argue that this critical juncture in the path to purchase has become both richer and more complicated. “Digital consumers’ purchasing behaviors have outgrown traditional purchase decision-making models,” they write.

New tools mean that old tools can work harder and smarter, Moran, Muzellec, and Nolan propose. WOM recommendations, in particular, add a powerful new interactive variable: “Brand managers, regularly frustrated with the lackluster ROI results of social media-marketing strategies, need to shift focus away from simply counting metrics such as ‘Likes’ and ‘+1s’ and, instead, focus on driving e-WOM activities that increase direct, customer-brand engagement.”

In theory, there’s nothing funny about violence. But, in practice, violence depicted humorously is becoming more common in advertising.

Yeuseung Kim (DePaul University) and Hye Jin Yoon (Southern Methodist University) believe that only a handful of studies have investigated the characteristics of people who are more prone to enjoy the use of humor in advertising—and that no studies have examined these characteristics with respect to comedic-violence.

"What Makes People 'Like' Comedic-Violence Advertisements? A Model for Predicting Attitude and Sharing Intention" (please see page 217) cautions marketers that there is "a threshold where comedic-violence has a positive effect depending on the characteristics of the individuals receiving the advertisements and the message perceptions that the advertisements generate."

And, to keep that threshold in practical reach, the authors suggest heavier doses of the comedic and lighter touches of the violent: "When creating comedic-violence advertisements," they offer, "depicting a low level of violence intensity may be a less risky alternative to intense violence." But, they add, in a viral ecosystem, there are no steadfast generation-crossing guidelines, and that "older participants perceived the advertisements to be more violent than the younger participants and did not find them as humorous."

We take another look at humor—certainly one of the most powerful peer-to-peer drivers—with "When Do Advertising Parodies Hurt? The Power of Humor and Credibility in Viral Spoof Advertisements" (please see page 233). Ouidade Sabri (Université Paris-Est, UPEC, IRG) and G  raldine Michel (Sorbonne Graduate Business School) address a critical question in the open-content universe of digital: How harmful is a parody to a brand?

The study echoed some previous findings on humor and claim credibility: "Parodies with strong claim credibility and humor are likely to increase the attention paid to the spoof, attitudes toward the parody, and intentions to share it with others." The bad news for marketers: Such work "can damage attitudes toward the parodied brand." The good news: "Purchase

intentions appear isolated from these harmful effects."

Sabri and Michel advanced the state of parody evidence with considerations on not just humor but the quality of the parody message. "Communication effects of parody appeals completely are mediated by attitude toward the parody, which, in turn, mainly depends on parody humor perceptions and claim credibility," they write. "Parodists, thus, must carefully consider the design of their parody if they hope to deliver important messages to target audiences."

For product and service managers, "A credible parody with humor may harm the brand attitudes of both more and less committed consumers. Therefore, brand managers and organizations should acknowledge the seriously damaging potential of parodies."

The work you see in these pages is, in good part, a reflection of Doug West, our executive editor who stepped down from his position at the end of 2013 after the fifth year of what officially began as a three-year term with the *Journal*.

Shaping our content in the near and long term will be John B. Ford and Jenni Romaniuk, two *Journal* stalwarts who bring enormous diversity of experience and a great deal of assignment as our new co-executive editors.

John was one of the recipients of the Advertising Research Foundation's 2014 "Best Paper" honor for "How Strong is the Pull of the Past? Measuring Personal Nostalgia Evoked by Advertising," a paper he co-authored with Altaf Merchant, Kathryn LaTour, and Michael S. LaTour that appeared in these pages last June.

An eminent scholar and professor of marketing and international business at

Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia, his research has focused on cross-cultural advertising strategy issues. In particular, he has specialized in viewer perceptions of gender-role portrayals in international advertising. He's been published in this journal five times and his work also has appeared in the *Journal of Advertising* and *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. And fans of academic marketing-research publishing (we know you're out there) will recall his thoughtful (and probing) time spent as Comments editor of the *International Journal of Advertising*.

As John will oversee the peer-review process for American authors, so will Jenni be responsible for non-U.S. submissions. And it's safe to say that there's no one better qualified to take on this global post, as Jenni's work has appeared in these pages more often than any other contributor in the past five years. Moreover, she already travels constantly in her role as associate director (international) and research professor at the University of South Australia's Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science, where she is involved in setting and implementing the institute's international impact strategy.

Jenni's own research focuses on brand equity, brand-health tracking, distinctive assets, advertising effectiveness, customer-base modeling, and WOM marketing. In addition to the *JAR*, she has published papers in the *Journal of Business Research*, the *Journal of Marketing Management*, *Marketing Theory*, and the *European Journal of Marketing*.

We couldn't be happier ... or more excited about the future of the *Journal*. As always, we welcome your thoughts and comments. 