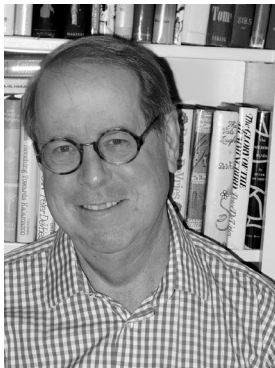


Editor's Desk

What Do We Know about Word of Mouth?

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With this issue, we welcome Dr. John B. Ford as the new Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Advertising Research (JAR)*.

Professor of Marketing and International Business and Eminent Scholar at Old Dominion University's Strome College of Business, Dr. Ford has served as Academic Executive Editor/North America for the *Journal of Advertising Research* since April of 2014. Coincidentally, he is serving as Associate Editor for Advertising Research for the *Journal of Business Research*, sits on editorial review boards for 10 advertising/marketing journals, and previously spent five years as the Comments Editor for the *International Journal of Advertising*.

The full engagement and accomplishments belie a background as the lead guitarist of The Index (a.k.a., Chicken Every Sunday), a suburban Detroit garage band. An undergraduate degree in English literature from Yale University and a doctorate in marketing from University of Georgia helped turn Dr. Ford in a more community-focused pedagogical direction. As his colleague for the last three years, I can attest to his passion and energy for the enrichment of the art and science of marketing research.

He's one of the two hardest working people I've met during my most recent term atop the *JAR* masthead. Dr. Jenni Romaniuk, Research Professor and Associate Director/International of the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science, served this publication as Dr. Ford's complement in the capacity of Academic Executive Editor/Global. *JAR* authors and readers will continue to benefit from Dr. Romaniuk's insight and experience, as she joins our Senior Advisory Board and pledges to continue as a vital member of our peer-review team.

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For the issue at hand, you will see Drs. Ford and Romaniuk's good work throughout the "What We Know about Word of Mouth" special section.

The opening paper in the package, "**Why Online Word-of-Mouth Measures Cannot Predict Brand Outcomes Offline – Volume, Sentiment, Sharing, and Influence Metrics Yield Scant Online-Offline WOM Correlations**" (please see page 132), addresses two critical questions: Does the visible conversation happening in social media accurately reflect consumer conversations about brands more generally? Is digital word of mouth a mirror onto the harder-to-measure conversation happening offline?

Two authors from Engagement Labs—Brad Fay and Rick Larkin—present evidence that legacy and digital WOM "are important to brand success, but brands rarely earn the same level of success both online and offline." And, despite the seeming alignment of the two conversation lines, that finding leads to a specific management counsel that "brands need to embrace a strategy that deliberately fosters both online and offline social sharing and recommendations."

Of course, some topics lend themselves to WOM—online and off—more than others. And, as a culture, we're certainly chatty about movies. In "**The Impact of Word of Mouth via Twitter on Moviegoers' Decisions and Film Revenues – Revisiting Prospect Theory: How WOM about Movies Drives Loss-Aversion and Reference-Dependence Behaviors**" (please see page 144), Yeunjun Yoon and Young Joon Park, two authors from Peking University, collaborated with Charin Polpanumas, a Bangkok-based data scientist at the online retailer Lazada.com. It's no surprise that the authors verify the significant role of Twitter as an important social-media platform for generating WOM among moviegoers. "In particular," they write, "marketing managers must comprehensively understand the characteristics of the WOM effect generated by social media rather than simply focusing on increasing positive WOM. They should understand, for example, the properties of loss aversion

and the reference dependence of moviegoers receiving Tweets from their friends and should recognize the type of impact these Tweets may have on the movie's box office success based on previous Tweets."

Checking in on another aspect of cinematic chatter, "**Conditions in Prerelease Movie Trailers for Stimulating Positive Word of Mouth – A Conceptual Model Demonstrates the Importance of Understanding as a Factor for Engagement**" (please see page 159), seeks to explain a fundamental truth of movie marketing: Prerelease advertising can shape box-office performance.

A global team of authors—the University of Bath School of Management's Chris Archer-Brown and Julia Kampani, as well as Ben Marder (University of Edinburgh Business School), Anjali S. Bal (Babson College/Wellesley, MA), and Jan Kietzmann (Simon Fraser University/Vancouver, British Columbia)—investigates "the extent to which trailers influence WOM in the prerelease context by testing a conceptual model separately on the three most popular movie genres." One finding: "When viewers perceive greater understanding of the movie from the trailer, the prospect of liking it is significantly increased. This leads to a substantial increase in viewers' intent to generate WOM and, ultimately, their willingness to pay to see the movie."

Whatever the subject, one WOM marketing goal is virality: Get the good word out to as many people as quickly as you can. "**What Makes Online Promotional Games Go Viral? Comparing the Impact of Player Skills versus Incentive Rewards on Game Recommendation**" (please see page 173),

focuses on another kind of entertainment: Advergaming that provide interactive, online entertainment with an embedded brand, such that players engage in a virtual experience with the brand's offerings.

Authors Damien Renard (Université Catholique De Louvain, Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium) and Denis Darpy (Université Paris-Dauphine PSL Research University) find the way to encourage WOM is to challenge consumers: "When a game mobilized players' mental skills, the intention to invite friends to join the game increased. In contrast, when the game rewarded inviters' behavior with additional chances, game recommendation did not significantly increase."

Needless to say, the viral space is never without foul play, a topic revisited in "**The Downside of Digital Word of Mouth and the Pursuit of Media Quality – How Social Sharing is Disrupting Digital Advertising Models and Metrics**" (please see page 127). The prevalence of "various forms of 'digital pollution'— from spam to fraud and 'fake news,'" write our columnists Gian M. Fulgoni and Andrew Lipsman of comScore, Inc. "has been accelerated and exacerbated by the rise of programmatic advertising.

"The fundamental metrics of media planning and campaign measurement—impressions, reach, frequency, and demographics—need a higher level of validation to ensure that the inventory being bought is clean, legitimate, and appearing in environments conducive to effective advertising." Among those layers of validation, Fulgoni and Lipsman recommend: "the measurement of viewable impressions, sophisticated detection and removal of invalid traffic, and brand-safety protections."

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In early February, the practitioner marketing-research community was rocked on its heels with the sudden passing of Dr. Sheila L. Sasser, Professor of Marketing, International Business and Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), Eastern Michigan University College of Business. A pioneer in the fields of creativity, innovation, social-media, and IMC research, Dr. Sasser's career was marked by 20 years of teaching and 30 years of global advertising management and consulting.

Dr. Sasser also was a diligent and reliable member of our Editorial Review Board. Her work appeared often in these pages and a new paper, "Drivers of Creativity within Advertising Agencies," is scheduled to appear in our December issue. As two of her coauthors on that paper—Mark Kilgour (University of Waikato/New Zealand) and Scott Koslow (Macquarie University/Australia)—recall, "Dr. Sheila Sasser was a complete scholar. Having reached the heights of the advertising industry, she decided to give back to the industry through academia.

"She was an outstanding teacher, producing many new advertising leaders. She greatly extended our understanding of the field, reviewing and publishing extensively in top marketing journals. Sheila gave her time, wisdom, warmth, and friendship to all she met. She enriched us, and was the epitome of an advertising academic; creative, strong, and generous." And industry consensus has it that the marketing-research practice never again will be as rich—or as fun—as it was when Dr. Sasser was at work. 