

MSI

MARKETING
SCIENCE
INSTITUTE

2012

*Research
Priorities*

Contents

Introduction 1

2010–2012 Research Priorities

Using Market Information to Identify Opportunities for Profitable Growth 3

Understanding Customer Experience and Behavior 4

Developing Marketing Capabilities for a Customer-focused Organization 5

Identifying and Realizing Innovation Opportunities 6

Delivering Value Through Enhanced Media and Channels 7

Managing Brands in a Transformed Marketplace 8

Allocating Resources to Marketing Activities 9

Leveraging Research Tools and New Sources of Data 10

Acknowledgments 11

Academic Trustees 12

Executive Directors 12

MSI Member Companies 13

Introduction

This booklet is addressed to the research community in marketing and related fields. It describes the marketing topics considered by the Marketing Science Institute (MSI) to be in greatest need of study. We invite academic researchers to submit proposals for research projects on these priority topics. We also invite the submission of completed papers on these topics for publication in the MSI working paper series. Beyond directing the generation and dissemination of knowledge, these research priorities guide MSI when we undertake special research initiatives and competitions, sponsor workshops and conferences, and develop publications.

The 2010-2012 MSI Research Priorities were developed against a backdrop of significant changes in the global marketplace. These changes in markets, customers, and technologies are enabling new business models, capabilities, and products, such as the infusion of services (i.e., “solutions”), into goods-dominant firms, products co-created with customers or network partners, and offerings customized to customer behavior observed over time. Consequently, this booklet uses the word “innovation” to refer (broadly) to innovation in business models, processes, and products. Moreover, “products” refers (broadly) to goods, services, solutions and applications.

The research priorities are based on input from our member company trustees and academic thought leaders. The criteria used to select the 2010-12 priorities included:

1. Importance to marketers, including the potential for new research to affect business decisions

2. Need for more research-based knowledge
3. Potential for achieving a more powerful conceptualization of a topic or issue, with generalizable implications that extend beyond a single brand, product, firm, or industry
4. Extent to which the topic can benefit from MSI’s capabilities in fostering collaboration between practitioners and academics

These selection criteria led to eight priority topics, which can be grouped into two broad areas of inquiry: (1) marketing strategy that anticipates and responds to changing conditions and (2) marketing management and practice in a transformed landscape.

Marketing Strategy That Anticipates and Responds to Changing Conditions

Successful firms must anticipate changing marketing conditions, be responsive to customer needs, and compete by offering superior value. To achieve these goals, marketers are required to provide decision-relevant information about which strategies will be effective under different future conditions. Consistent with this notion, research is required on four priority topics to help firms:

- Use Market Information to Identify Opportunities for Profitable Growth
- Understand Customer Experience and Behavior
- Develop Marketing Capabilities for a Customer-focused Organization
- Identify and Realize Innovation Opportunities

Marketing Management and Practice in an Evolving Landscape

Successful firms must develop a coherent marketing plan that delivers value to customers and captures value for shareholders. To achieve these goals, marketers must manage an expanded and complex marketing mix—using increasingly sophisticated marketing tools and practices. Hence, research is required on four priority topics to help marketers:

- Deliver Value through Enhanced Media and Channels
- Manage Brands in a Transformed Marketplace
- Allocate Resources to Marketing Activities
- Leverage Research Tools and New Sources of Data

The priority topics are substantive; the researcher is free to select appropriate methods, and multiple methods are encouraged. Each topic includes research questions that are relevant to many markets: consumer (B2C), business-to-business

(B2B), manufacturing, services, online and offline, and emerging and mature, as well as global. The research questions listed under each priority topic are *not* listed in order of importance. In addition, they are not intended to be exhaustive. Our aim was to offer diverse examples of the compelling questions raised by our trustees in the priority-setting process, and to suggest possible research directions.

For information on **obtaining research support** and **submitting a working paper** to MSI, go to the *Research* section of www.msi.org.

Contact Research Director Ross Rizley, Rizley@msi.org, with **questions** about research priorities and programs.

Using Market Information to Identify Opportunities for Profitable Growth

To improve firms' strategies and decisions, marketers must provide timely and relevant information regarding opportunities for growth. Changes in economic, social, technological, and regulatory conditions have altered sales growth rates and market potential across different industries, sectors, and markets. For example, there has been substantial growth in emerging and under-served markets, unanticipated shifts in consumer preferences, behavior, and values, a proliferation of technologies that enable new value propositions, and new government regulations in many nations.

Research is needed to guide firms on how to integrate and manage market information in complex and turbulent environments, ultimately yielding successful marketing strategies for evolving, "game-changing" conditions. In addition, basic research is still required on how managers process and interpret information when they make decisions. The research questions fall into three areas.

Identifying Opportunities Enabled by Technology

How can marketing develop compelling value propositions that leverage new technologies? Improvements in research methods are required to help marketers understand how new, evolving, and/or converging technologies (e.g., mobile devices, "cloud" computing) provide value to customers and lead to long-term shifts in shopping and consumption behaviors. Research is also encouraged on how marketers can more effectively work with other business functions to leverage technologies, as well as firms' strategic foresight capabilities.

Identifying Opportunities Arising from Economic Conditions

How can firms improve their understanding of the impact of economic conditions, demographic shifts, and generational changes on market opportunities? Firms are looking to improve their environmental scanning, sense-making, scenario planning, and decision-making capabilities. New research methods are required to identify and assess market opportunities created by short- and long-term changes in customer preferences, values, and consumption behavior.

Social Issues Shaping Marketing Practice

Social issues have contributed to the uncertainty surrounding firms' decisions—especially decisions about environmental sustainability (e.g., waste disposal, energy efficiency) and consumer privacy. For example, there are social, ethical, and regulatory issues relevant to firms offering customized services that utilize personally identifiable information. In addition, health care, financial services, and energy sectors face significant regulatory changes—which create challenges for firms in designing and delivering services, as well as communicating with consumers. Research is needed on consumers' responses to social issues and regulatory changes as well as consumers' expectations regarding corporate behavior. Managers also need better models and frameworks to anticipate and respond to opportunities and challenges arising from social issues.

Understanding Customer Experience and Behavior

Firms create value by being responsive to customer requirements. Research is needed to develop conceptual frameworks and methods for understanding customer experience and behavior in an increasingly complex landscape. Real-time, granular information about customers' search, social, consumption, and purchase behavior provides opportunities for firms to customize or co-create products, communications, and prices for individual customers at specific points in time. These opportunities are evident both in B2C markets and B2B markets.¹ The research questions fall into three areas.

Market Segmentation and Target Marketing

Firms require new ways to leverage information about customer preferences and behavior (including from “addressable” social and mobile media) to enhance or supplant conventional strategic planning, market segmentation, and targeting approaches. They also require conceptual frameworks and methods that integrate the many factors that influence customer preference and purchase over time. In B2C markets, these factors might include need states, motivations, cognitive and emotional responses, conscious and non-conscious processes, self-regulatory behavior, and social identities. In B2B markets, firms are especially interested in the buying process of large and complex decision-making units characterized by multiple, dispersed influencers. Firms also need predictive models that leverage “real time” behavioral and contextual data to successfully develop and execute marketing strategies.

Customer Engagement

We consider customer engagement to be customers' behavioral manifestation toward a brand or firm *beyond purchase*, which results from motivational drivers including: word-of-mouth activity, recommendations, customer-to-customer interactions, blogging, writing reviews, and so forth. Many firms see customer engagement as a route for creating, building, and enhancing customer-firm relationships and (ultimately) improving

business performance. There are many research questions here, including but not limited to: How should firms measure and assess customer preferences for engagement? Under what conditions can firms use customer engagement programs to build loyalty? How can firms assess the economic value of customer engagement programs? How do product, channel, relational, and market characteristics moderate the effects of customer-to-customer interactions on customer purchase behavior?

Marketing Actions That Influence Shopper Behavior

Firms in many industry sectors—including consumer packaged goods, durable goods, services, and retailing—are seeking ways to allocate their resources more effectively to influence a shopper along the entire “path to purchase,” from when the motivation to shop first emerges through purchase, consumption, and repurchase. Research is required to develop new conceptual frameworks and methods for understanding how marketing actions at various points along the entire path to purchase (outside as well as inside the store) interact and jointly influence shoppers along this path. For example, how are mobile devices, the internet, and peer-to-peer interactions (online and off) affecting shopper behavior? What resources should firms contribute to customer communities or networks to facilitate co-creation?

¹ We use the word “customer” generically to apply to both B2B and B2C firms. When necessary, we distinguish research priorities relevant to B2C and B2B by noting them. Sometimes, we distinguish between the shopper (or buyer) and consumer (or end-user). Note that these terms can refer to groups (e.g., households or buying units) as well as individuals.

Developing Marketing Capabilities for a Customer-focused Organization

This topic is important for two reasons. First, marketers increasingly recognize that customers and firms can collaborate to create value, and that customers can be an important source of competence. Second, a firm's marketing capabilities enable it to collaborate with suppliers, intermediaries, and network partners—as well as with customers. Firms must make changes in their organizational culture and structure and in how they deploy resources to serve customers better. The relevant research questions fall into three areas.

Organizational Structure

How do organizational structure and marketing capabilities influence business performance? What are effective strategies for firms that are transitioning from a brand, product (e.g., line of business), or technology emphasis to a customer-focused organization? Research is also needed to identify ways for firms to improve business processes, especially processes that cut across functions, to better understand and serve customers in near real time.

Marketing Capabilities for Collaboration

Research is required to improve methods of measuring and communicating the effectiveness of marketing strategies in the long run—that is, beyond existing metrics based on return-on-investment, links to shareholder value, and so forth. For example, in B2B markets, research is needed concerning effective ways to develop a customer-focused organization through the motivation, engagement, management, and appraisal of teams of employees working in collaborative environments. What are effective ways to manage employees and sustain their focus on customers when they are operating in turbulent, ambiguous, or uncertain environments?

Research is also needed to improve firms' capabilities for co-creation, especially for complex business solutions or consumer service experiences. What platforms, processes, systems, and tools enable firms to collaborate effectively with individual customers, networks, or communities?

Compelling Value Propositions

Research is required to develop ways to identify, develop, and deliver compelling value propositions that incorporate customers as collaborators and sources of competence. In B2C markets, for example, firms can foster healthy eating choices, environmentally sustainable behaviors, and sound financial planning practices. How do these strategies and value propositions create, sustain, and enhance profitable long-run relationships with consumers? In B2B markets, identifying, developing, and delivering value propositions requires cross-functional coordination—in particular, coordination across marketing, sales, operations, service, and supply chains/networks. Research is needed regarding strategies and practices for co-creating and delivering solutions for business customers. What strategies are effective in enhancing customer-firm relationships across multiple channels—for both B2B and B2C contexts? When offerings are co-created, how should the firm and its customers or network partners share economic and non-economic benefits?

Identifying and Realizing Innovation Opportunities

Firms must innovate to discover new ways to create value for customers. At the enterprise level, firms must design their organizational structure, build a culture, develop capabilities, and provide rewards to encourage successful innovation. We discuss the development of innovative business models, processes, and products separately.

Innovation in Business Models

New business models can be powerful; they can create markets, disrupt markets, shift product-market boundaries, and alter competitive structures. Hence, research is required to provide frameworks and tools for firms to identify and assess opportunities for innovation in business models at very early stages (“green fields”). How should diverse innovation opportunities be prioritized? Research is also needed to identify ways for firms to collaborate with network partners. What are useful methods for assessing the innovation capabilities, resources, and activities of network partners, as well as for assigning roles? How are intellectual property rights and prices determined for products created with open innovation models?

Innovation in Business Processes

How can firms create and sustain organizational processes and cultures that anticipate, adapt to, and successfully manage innovation—especially at the marketing/technology interface? Under what conditions should firms internalize specific marketing innovation capabilities and processes such as design capabilities to obtain a competitive advantage? This issue is especially important for service organizations where service processes are a key component of the marketing mix.

Innovation in Products

Firms require new approaches to identify product concepts and forecast their market potential at a very early stage, and still account for post-launch factors such as market, category, competitor, channel, and retailer responses. Forecasts and entry strategies must also take into account economic, social, cultural, regional, and national factors. Exacerbating these challenges, the success of a new product introduction partially depends on social network effects—which firms are not yet well equipped to predict or leverage. Traditional stage-gate new product development processes that have been successful for goods do not seem to work equally well for services or good/service hybrids; hence, improved new product/service development processes are also required. Research is also required to help firms design new products dynamically in real time by learning and adapting to customer behavior.

Delivering Value Through Enhanced Media and Channels

Management of the marketing mix is critical for firms today, due to the proliferation of media and channels (including social media), as well as an erosion of traditional business models and cost structures for marketing services (such as advertising). Research is needed to provide insights on how to manage an expanded marketing mix that includes diverse products (e.g., good/service hybrids), multiple media and channels, rich marketing communications, and customized pricing strategies. In addition, people (e.g., sales and service teams), processes (e.g., co-creation and delivery), and physical elements (online and offline) can be considered part of the expanded marketing mix. The relevant research questions fall into three areas.

Leveraging New Media

What are the implications of new media and channels (especially social and mobile) for managing customer relationships, marketing communications, and branding? How should firms use new media to interact with and enhance relationships with customers and value-chain partners? How does the impact of advertising vary by context (e.g., product placement, online ads on branded content sites such as WSJ.com, ads served up in response to tracking of customers' online activities)? What is the role of traditional advertising vehicles (television, print and so forth) in this new landscape?

Marketing Communications

Most firms today do not have a detailed, cross-platform, comprehensive measurement system that can be used to provide inputs for models to guide marketing communications decisions. Marketers need conceptual frameworks and methods that provide a disciplined approach to these decisions. How do new and traditional marketing activities work together to influence consumer perceptions, preferences, and behaviors? How can firms compare the effectiveness of diverse marketing communications activities (e.g., advertising, public relations, community building, online word-of-mouth) that influence brand strength? Research

is needed to understand how different consumer groups respond to different communications activities for different categories and markets. Research is also needed to help marketers compare alternative marketing communications activities—rather than relying on activity-specific metrics—and (ultimately) integrate their effects.

Marketing Mix and Value Creation

How can an expanded marketing mix be effective in creating offerings, providing information, connecting firms with customers, and delivering value? What marketing activities are complements versus substitutes as value enhancers? In B2B contexts, how can marketers measure the effectiveness of their actions when working through intermediaries or in a multi-channel environment? What is the role of front-line employees?

Managing Brands in a Transformed Marketplace

Brand managers are facing many new challenges: Established brands manufactured in developed economies are facing a competitive threat from (1) quality improvements in brands manufactured in BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), (2) consumer perception that private label brands are comparable in quality to national brands, and (3) firms' reliance on short-run brand promotions rather than brand building during the global recession.

The role of the brand is also changing due to the emergence of social media. Brands do more than promise functional and emotional benefits; they are now facilitators of conversations about personal and social issues (e.g., identity, sustainability). Multiple touch-points between brands and customers create customer-firm relationships that are potentially more complex and diverse. For example, how should firms approach co-branding, social media, and product placements that place brands in specific contexts?

Since customers co-create brands and firms do not completely control brand equity, research is needed to identify effective brand strategies: How should firms create, sustain, and grow brands in this environment? How should all aspects of the brand — i.e., the brand system — be managed over time? How should firms approach strategic planning for a brand when execution (e.g., monitoring and managing

marketing communications) takes place very rapidly? Research is also needed on organizational issues: What are effective ways of executing a consistent brand strategy that is coordinated across different functions or strategic business units? How should firms manage brands when effective marketing requires non-traditional capabilities? Are there differences for B2B versus B2C firms? What activities should be outsourced versus addressed in-house? How does this change the role of the brand manager?

Allocating Resources to Marketing Activities

Research is needed to help firms evaluate and compare the long-run value of alternative marketing strategies so that managers can communicate this information to others within the firm. What are powerful ways of communicating the value of making substantial changes in current marketing strategies? What are effective pricing strategies, tactics, and practices for complex products in a multi-media, multi-channel environment that allow for increasingly customized pricing decisions? How should firms determine the absolute level of marketing spending and how should spending be allocated at the strategic level—that is, across products, customer groups, and geographies?

Given a complex, multi-media, multi-channel environment, marketers must expand their models to account for new media and channels. How should they account for “under-studied” media (e.g., public relations, trade shows, referral networks)? How should resource allocations be made across the media mix (including traditional and new media)—and how should they be adjusted over time? At the same time, many firms cannot use integrated marketing mix or media mix models because they do not have standardized data sources. What frameworks or methods can

help these firms allocate marketing resources? For B2B firms, research is needed to understand how much to spend on trade (e.g., distributor or retailer) versus consumer. Last, both B2C and B2B firms must consider these questions from both a short-run and long-run perspective.

Leveraging Research Tools and New Sources of Data

The changing business landscape, combined with the emergence of new technologies, has generated new behavioral data that are relevant for marketing decision-making. Despite the increasing sophistication of marketing research methods and tools, research is still required to provide conceptual frameworks, models, methods, tools, and metrics that can help marketers interpret these data to make better decisions. Marketers are especially interested in “mid-range” theories and models that link constructs from different behavioral domains.

Frameworks and methods are required for using newly relevant techniques, such as fMRI to understand consumer behavior. How should neuroscience and other physiological approaches be integrated with traditional approaches? Theoretical work is also relevant to these questions. What conceptual frameworks from other disciplines—such as behavioral economics, anthropology, sociology, psychology, network analysis, biology, and history—can enhance traditional methods of understanding customer behavior, evaluating customer responses to marketing actions, and guiding decision-making?

Research is needed to help marketers better understand consumer responses to marketing actions: What are useful metrics, robust models, and tools for evaluating communication strategies and tactics? What are new, valid, reliable, unbiased metrics for communication testing in the new business landscape? What models and metrics are useful to marketers evaluating marketing actions across cultures and nations?

With respect to customer engagement, search, purchase, and consumption behavior, online metrics have outstripped traditional measures of offline behavior. For this reason, there is a need for research approaches and tools to answer questions about shopping behavior both inside and outside the store, such as: How do marketing activities outside and inside the store work together to influence purchase decisions? How are consumers building their (offline) shopping baskets?

Marketers must integrate diverse types of data, including perceptual, behavioral, and social media data, ethnographies, online panels, in-store “shop along” data, and so forth. How can firms obtain a 360° view of customers to understand and manage the many factors that affect the path to purchase? How can marketers better understand the consumer purchase journey *over time* given the complex nature of the information environment? How is the path to purchase different for different products/markets?

We especially encourage research methods that provide a holistic view of customer experience and behavior, including the use of multiple, convergent methods; analyses of group, as well as individual, behavior; studies of multiple influences on shopping behavior over time; and integrative research that encompasses behavior in different domains (e.g., different media, channels, online or offline channels) and potential interaction effects among marketing variables. Basic research is still needed to understand how marketing professionals can better communicate marketing insights to diverse groups within organizations, and develop compelling narratives about marketing strategies.

Acknowledgments

We offer special thanks to Research Associate John Farley, Dartmouth College, and to the academics who served as guest reviewers at MSI Research Review Meetings.

Kusum Ailawadi, *Dartmouth College*

Paul Berger, *Boston University*

C.B. Bhattacharya, *Boston University*

Barbara Bickart, *Boston University*

Michael Braun, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Suchi Chandran, *Boston University*

Rohit Deshpandé, *Harvard Business School*

David Godes, *Harvard Business School*

John Gourville, *Harvard Business School*

Dhruv Grewal, *Babson College*

Sunil Gupta, *Harvard Business School*

John Hauser, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Patrick Kaufmann, *Boston University*

Praveen Kopalle, *Dartmouth College*

Donald R. Lehmann, *Columbia University*

Katherine Lemon, *Boston College*

Das Narayandas, *Harvard Business School*

Michael Norton, *Harvard Business School*

Eli Ofek, *Harvard Business School*

Drazan Pralec, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Kathleen Seiders, *Boston College*

Duncan Simester, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Shuba Srinivasan, *Boston University*

Thomas Steenburgh, *Harvard Business School*

K. Sudhir, *Yale University*

Russell Winer, *New York University*

Academic Trustees

March 2008 to March 2010

Gregory Carpenter, *Northwestern University*
Pradeep Chintagunta, *University of Chicago*
John Deighton, *Harvard University*
Marnik Dekimpe, *Tilburg University*
John Hauser, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*
Oliver P. Heil, *Universitat Mainz*
Stephen J. Hoch, *University of Pennsylvania*
Donna L. Hoffman, *University of California Riverside*
J. Jeffrey Inman, *University of Pittsburgh*
Jian Min Jia, *China University of Hong Kong*
Punam Anand Keller, *Dartmouth College*
Christine Moorman, *Duke University*
John Roberts, *Australian National University and London Business School*
Roland T. Rust, *University of Maryland*
Venkatesh Shankar, *Texas A&M University*
V. Seenu Srinivasan, *Stanford University*
Gerard J. Tellis, *University of Southern California*
David Tse, *Hong Kong University*

Executive Directors

Affiliation as of time of service

2009–2011
Ruth N. Bolton, *Marketing Science Institute*
2007–2009
Russell S. Winer, *New York University*
2005–2007
Dominique M. Hanssens, *UCLA*
2003–2005
Leigh M. McAlister, *University of Texas, Austin*
2001–2003
Donald R. Lehmann, *Columbia University*
1999–2001
David J. Reibstein, *University of Pennsylvania*
1997–1999
Rohit Deshpandé, *Harvard University*
1995–1997
David B. Montgomery, *Stanford University*
1993–1995
Donald R. Lehmann, *Columbia University*
1991–1993
Richard Staelin, *Duke University*
1989–1991
George S. Day, *University of Toronto*
1987–1989
Frederick E. Webster, Jr., *Dartmouth College*
1985–1987
John U. Farley, *Columbia University*
1983–1985
Louis W. Stern, *Northwestern University*
1981–1983
E. Raymond Corey, *Harvard University*
1972–1980
Stephen A. Greyser, *Harvard University*
1968–1972
Robert D. Buzzell, *Harvard University*

MSI Member Companies

March 2010

Allstate Insurance Company	eBay Inc.	PC World/Macworld
American Express Company	Eli Lilly and Company	PepsiCo, Inc.
Amgen Inc.	Fidelity Investments	The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc.
AT&T Inc.	General Electric Company	Praxair, Inc.
Bank of America	General Mills, Inc.	The Procter & Gamble Company
Bristol-Myers Squibb Company	General Motors Corporation	Saine Marketing
Brown-Forman Corporation	GfK Group	Starcom MediaVest Group
Campbell Soup Company	H. J. Heinz Company	T. Rowe Price Associates, Inc.
Capital One Financial Corporation	Henkel AG & Co. KGaA	Telstra Corporation Ltd.
Carlson Marketing Group	The Hershey Company	Time Inc.
CBS Corporation	Hewlett-Packard Company	Time Warner Cable
Cisco Systems, Inc.	IBM Corporation	TNS
Citigroup Inc.	Information Resources, Inc.	United Parcel Service, Inc. (UPS)
The Clorox Company	Intel Corporation	The Vanguard Group
The Coca-Cola Company	Johnson & Johnson	Visa Inc.
Colgate-Palmolive Company	Kaiser Permanente	Walmart
Condé Nast Publications, Inc.	Kohl's Corporation	Wells Fargo & Company
CVS/Caremark Corporation	Kraft Foods, Inc.	Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company
Darden Restaurants, Inc.	Liberty Mutual	
Diageo Plc	McDonald's Corporation	
Dunnhumby Limited	McKinsey & Company	
DuPont Company	Merck & Company, Inc.	
Eastman Chemical Company	MillerCoors	
Eastman Kodak Company	Millward Brown, Inc.	
	Nestlé USA	
	The Nielsen Company	

*1000 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138 USA
617-491-2060
www.msi.org*



MARKETING
SCIENCE
INSTITUTE