Call for Papers: Qualitative Approaches to eMarketing and Online Consumer Behaviour

Special issue of the Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research

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The Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research is planning a special issue on Qualitative Approaches to Research in the field of eMarketing and Online Consumer Behaviour.

The new possibilities offered by the Internet facilitate advanced forms of exchange and interaction between consumers and businesses. Thanks to the Internet, consumers are presented with new opportunities to enhance their power in their relationships with businesses. As well as having access to an unprecedented amount of information, online consumers can compare a vast range of products, access independent and professional sources of expertise, and interact in an efficient and productive manner with firms and institutions. As a result, online consumers may play an active role in both marketing communication programmes and the design of products and their related sets of benefits and values. These consumers are more willing and prepared to disseminate their opinions about brands and products –whether supportive or unfavourable, and even to sanction firms among far-reaching audiences. Online consumers benefit from a collective intelligence, demand greater control over their shopping experience and the design of ‘value propositions’ in terms of their own individual interests.

In the context of the Internet, businesses are better prepared to face the challenges of satisfying online consumers. As well as benefiting from Internet-based processing systems to manage great masses of consumer data, firms may adopt advanced customer-centric paradigms and define and develop e-marketing strategies and programmes that are more precise and more closely matched to customers’ needs.

The potential of the Internet to transform the marketing environment has resulted in a great deal of research on the online consumer and the business strategies and orientations which companies adopt in order to build relationships with consumers through this channel. Initial research has mostly focused on developing consumer profiles and identifying online segments in this digital marketing environment. However, the expansion of e-commerce in general and the widespread adoption of the Internet as a marketing channel led to the appearance of a broad and varied array of research topics on consumer behaviour and e-marketing. This includes the e-shopping decision, online consumer satisfaction and loyalty, and trust in purchasing decisions on the Internet.

Interest in qualitative approaches to research in e-marketing and online consumer behaviour has increased in recent times, thus facilitating a more in-depth analysis of the motivations and perceptions of connected consumers. Qualitative approaches enable researchers to access online consumer behaviour, often through direct observation, in its natural environment. They facilitate the analyses of how consumers shop and interact with one another on the Internet. In this way qualitative research on the online consumer tends to be consumer rather than researcher-centric. Qualitative research allows gaining deep insights and a better understanding of consumer behaviour which might not otherwise be possible by adopting solely quantitative approaches.
Thus, nowadays qualitative methods may be considered as important elements in the Internet researcher’s ‘toolbox’. In fact, with the development of social networking, qualitative and mix methods approaches may emerge as important contributors to the field: in ways such as helping to discover the new forms through which the Internet empowers consumers; facilitating the exploration of new routes for co-creation of value and for consumer participation in the innovation processes; aiding with the evaluation of the impact of personalization practices developed within eCRM programmes on consumers; and promoting the analysis of consumer behaviour in virtual consumption communities.

Hence, there is a need to reflect on and discuss the use of qualitative techniques within e-marketing research, in order to facilitate further exploration through the qualitative lens and to consider the contribution of qualitative approaches to the growing knowledge on the issues surrounding the behaviour of people as online consumers.

This special issue of JTAER aims to encourage and gather high-quality theoretical and/or qualitative-empirical analysis, which examines this research topic.

**Subject Coverage**

Particular topics to be addressed in this issue might include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Perspectives on qualitative methodologies in research on e-marketing and online consumer behaviour
   - Critical appraisals of qualitative approaches to research on e-marketing, including the identification and analysis of opportunities and challenges of using qualitative techniques.
   - Critical perspectives on ecological validity, rigor and credibility in qualitative research around the online consumer.
   - Systematic comparisons and assessment of qualitative and quantitative methods in research on the e-consumer.
   - Insights into qualitative research on the online consumer in terms of new data and methods, including emerging methodological issues and researcher experiences.
   - Critical analyses of specific instruments and techniques employed in qualitative research on the online consumer such as:
     - Online instruments or environments
     - The mixed approach
     - Observational techniques
     - The online consumer diary

2. Comprehensive overviews of the contributions of qualitative empirical research to e-marketing and online consumer behaviour
   - Insights into the main contributions made by e-qualitative empirical research to the wide domain of e-marketing and online consumer behaviour, enhancing its body of knowledge, significance or impact.
   - Overviews of sub-fields or main issues on e-marketing and online consumer behaviour, which include major findings and directions for further research from qualitative empirical approaches:
     - Online consumption motivations and flow
     - Trust towards online shopping
     - e-Loyalty
     - e-Service quality
     - eCRM and personalisation
     - Virtual brand communities and social media marketing
     - Co-creation and e-innovation
3. Focused qualitative empirical studies, on specific topics within the field of e-marketing and online consumer behaviour
   • Empirical studies of online consumer behaviour carried out using qualitative methodologies.

Notes for Intending Authors

We are seeking original manuscripts on conceptual and methodological issues related to qualitative research on e-marketing and online consumer behaviour, as well as papers which report on the results of qualitative empirical research in the field.

Submitted papers should not have been previously published nor be currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Author guidelines can be found at http://www.jtaer.com/author_guidelines.doc. All submissions will be refereed by at least three reviewers. Submissions should be directed by email to irodriguez@uoc.edu with copy to gerard.ryan@urv.cat and ugretzel@uow.edu.au.

For more information, please visit the following web site: http://www.jtaer.com.

Important dates

- Full paper submission: No later than 30th November 2011
- Notification of acceptance: No later than 30th January 2012
- Revisions: Due by 15th March 2012
- Final acceptance notification: No later than 15th April 2012
- Camera ready version of paper: Due by 15th May 2012
- Publication: August 2012

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