

AFM Special session: The role of marketing for a more inclusive society

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## AFM Special session: The role of marketing for a more inclusive society

### Abstract

"By asserting that marketing must serve the goals of society, Lazer (1969) was one of the first to evoke the social responsibility of marketing. Then, Kotler (1973) proposed to use marketing in order to promote social change. However, for a long time, the prevailing marketing paradigm was to satisfy consumers' needs in ever more competitive and consumerist ways, with a strong focus on economic growth, whatever the resources used and the wastes produced. Influenced by scholars such as Gundlach (2006) and then encouraged by changes in the consumer society (Wilkie and Moore, 2012), marketing researchers question the role of their discipline. In 2007, the American Marketing Association (AMA) changed its definition of the discipline to include society as a stakeholder. The French Marketing Association (afm) also revised its definition and invited the community of marketers to question the impact of their research on society. The afm, under the leadership of its current president Alain Decrop, reinforced such a paradigm shift, namely by creating in 2020 a new commission dedicated to "societal engagement". Its aim is to develop critical thinking about the identity of marketing, to rethink marketing teaching and research around more sustainable and ethical grounds, to promote marketing in the sake of society and the common good, and to provide the community with a number of tools to turn this paradigm shift into reality. Since a few years, the afm identifies a number of « hot topics » in the field of marketing based on a survey among both academic researchers and practitioners (in a similar vein to the "research priorities" developed by the Marketing Science Institute). Among the hot topics, "the role of marketing in a well-being society" was a key theme. This was the starting point of a number of projects and discussions in the afm community around questions such as: How can marketing be more inclusive? While many research questions having an impact on society mobilize marketing researchers (including in the EMAC community) and appear in top-journals nowadays (including IJRM), this special session focuses on a research theme that is maybe more typical of the afm and the French marketing community, i.e., "vulnerable" consumers (e.g. Hamilton, Dunnett and Piacentini, 2016; Visconti, 2016; Wang and Tian, 2014). This special session showcases a sample of the best productions of afm researchers which have in common to deal with vulnerability, understood as a "state of powerlessness that arises from an imbalance in marketplace interactions or from the consumption of marketing messages and products" (Baker, Gentry and Rittenburg, 2005). These papers are either new research projects or papers building on recently published articles in our French top-journal *Recherche et Applications en Marketing* (Beudaert and Nau, 2020; Dion and Tachet, 2019; Dubost, 2018; Sengès, Guiot and Chandon, 2019). While one paper seeks to highlight the methodological aspects of research carried out with "vulnerable" people, the other papers deal with different vulnerable people: disabled, overweighted, aging and modest consumers. Beyond these targets, they all underline the growing interest of marketing research, and of the discipline itself, for "social" topics promoting well-being (Gorge, Özçağlar-Toulouse and Toussaint, 2015) and fitting in the Transformative Consumer Research stream, which aims to "encourage, support and publish research that contributes to the well-being of the consumer and the quality of life of all individuals concerned by consumption through the world" (Mick, Pettigrew, Pechmann and Ozanne, 2012). The five papers below offer managerial leads to companies that should play a role in creating an inclusive society and in developing products and services adapted to the needs and concerns of such consumers. As a whole, this session aims at enriching the marketing literature about vulnerability that has been developed since 2000s. Anthony Beudaert and Jean-Philippe Nau, in their proposal entitled "The contribution of social time to consumer vulnerability: a research agenda", are interested in the notion of 'time' as experienced by people with disabilities. They draw up a research agenda about the contribution of time to consumer vulnerability in order to create a better well-being of this population. In her article "Market dynamics: the role of managers in the inclusion of stigmatized consumers. The case of curvaceous women in the fashion market," Béatrice Tachet reveals how managers try to propose a more inclusive offering towards stigmatized consumers, making them more visible. Nathalie Dubost contributes with a methodological article: "Vulnerable consumers: A call for participatory research". Conventional approaches to marketing research are ill-suited to vulnerable consumers because of their departure from prevailing consumer norms. The article presents the

rationale and major principles of participatory approach, which aims at conducting research with and not (only) on the vulnerable consumer. Eloïse Sengès, Denis Guiot and Jean-Louis Chandon, in their article “Desired Aging Well for consumers aged 50 to 80: An integrative framework and a bifactor measurement” are interested in another type of vulnerability related to age. Driven by the wish to contribute to improving the living conditions of seniors, the authors develop an integrative framework of the concept of “desired aging well,” (DAW) which refers to the psychological, physical, social, and financial objectives of aging well, and they report the development of a scale measuring DAW. Finally, Patricia Gurviez, Ophélie Mugel et Mahaut Seitre, in their article “Unfolding food literacy to improve food well-being: An exploratory study of the roles of the food app Yuka for modest to vulnerable families” propose a study whose aim is to identify the roles of the use of a French food app, Yuka, by deprived families in improving their food practices and food well-being.”

**Keywords:**

**Track:**