

Understanding Marketing Landscapes through Consumption Patterns, Leadership Influence, Technology Adoption, and Franchise Performance

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Special Session Proposal for 2026 EMAC Annual Conference

Proposal Abstract

Papers

1. Managing Customer Relationships Through Consumption Breaks: Evidence from Dry January in Alcohol Retail – Melissa Baucum, Johannes Habel, Colleen Harmeling, Alex Zablah, Kelly Hewett
2. Ideological drivers of Advertising Strategy: CEOs’ political ideology and media spend - Evidence from US newspapers – Anand Vijayasankaran, Rajita Varma, Aryamen Singh, Raghu Bommaraju
3. The Cold Start Problem in AI Adoption: A Vicious or Viruous Cycle of Longitudinal Firm Performance? – Arnd Vomberg, Sascha Alavi, Alexandru Oproiescu
4. Transfer Dynamics: Exploring Ownership Changes in Franchising – Amrita Mitra, Erik A. Mooi, Kersi D. Antia

The special session explores diverse facets of marketing questions ranging from the (i) effect of voluntary abstention on customer relationships, (ii) effect of CEO political ideology on advertising budgets allocation, (iii) effect of AI adoption on customer relationship management and, (iv) dynamics of franchise ownership transfers. The participants include marketing scholars representing universities from the US, Canada, Denmark, France, Australia, India, as well as industry experts. The included projects rely on archival data collection and employ cutting-edge research methods. Each of the studies addresses a real-world marketing problem and provides findings of significant managerial relevance.

Baucum et al. examine the long-term effects of voluntary consumption breaks, specifically “Dry January” on customer relationships and purchasing behavior. Participation in Dry January leads to a persistent reduction in alcohol spending for at least 12 months post-abstention, with effects varying based on gender, income, and retail environment

competitiveness. Customers who purchase non-alcoholic alternatives before or during abstinence periods subsequently reduce their alcoholic product spending even more.

Vijayasankaran et al. establish that investigate how CEO political ideology influences the allocation of advertising budgets across newspapers with different political orientations. CEOs tend to allocate more advertising spend to newspapers that align with their own political ideology. CEO age and gender moderates this relationship, with younger and female CEOs exhibiting stronger value adherence, and by organizational factors like firm performance, with the impact being stronger when firms are performing well.

Vomberg, Alavi, and Oproiescu examine the impact of adopting algorithm-based Customer Relationship Management (ACRM) systems on firm performance, focusing on the challenges of the “cold start problem” where AI systems initially lack sufficient data to function effectively. ACRM can increase firm performance, but these effects emerge after a delay of more than two years. Employees perceived replacement threats and turnover rates significantly affect ACRM outcomes.

Mitra, Mooi and Antia study franchise outlet transfers, which influence both franchisors and franchisees decision-making about outlet viability and performance outcomes. Relying on archival data from a Canadian franchisor on 302 outlets, and monthly sales data pre- and post-transfer, they find that ownership structure, ownership team composition, system age, outlet location clustering, and sales trends predict the likelihood of outlet transfers. Pre-transfer sales trends significantly impact post-transfer sales performance.

Given the eclectic range of topics covered, we anticipate our proposed session being of significant interest to marketing strategy researchers.