Marketing and the Macroeconomy

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Special Session Proposal

Marketing and the Macroeconomy

Session chair: Dominik Papies (University of Tübingen)

Co-chairs: Julian Ruoff (University of Tübingen); Barbara Deleersnyder (Tilburg University); Bastiaan A. van Houten (Tilburg University); Harald van Heerde (University of New South Wales)

Paper 1: "How economic inequality affects households' consumption decisions"

Julian Ruoff (University of Tübingen); Martin Biewen (University of Tübingen), Maximiliane Sick (University of Tübingen), Dominik Papies (University of Tübingen)

Paper 2: "How Do Business Cycles Shape (Un)healthy Consumption?"

Barbara Deleersnyder (Tilburg University); Minxiong Huang (University of Groningen); Maarten J. Gijsenberg, University of Groningen

Paper 3: "Inflation-Induced Consumption Smoothing in Grocery Shopping: A Cross-Country and Cross-Category Comparison "

Bastiaan A. van Houten (Tilburg University); Julian R.K. Wichmann (Tilburg University); Marnik G. Dekimpe (Tilburg University & KU Leuven)

Paper 4: "Does Inflation Curb the Consumption of Vice Goods? Evidence on Alcohol and Tobacco Spending During the Recent Inflation Spike."

Harald van Heerde (University of New South Wales); Ada Choi (University of New South Wales); Jake An (University of Technology Sydney); Marnik Dekimpe (Tilburg University & KU Leuven)

Note: presenting authors are printed in bold.

Marketing decisions and consumer spending are tightly constrained by the macroeconomic environment. Therefore, the objective of this Special Session “Marketing and the Macroeconomy” is to show how key macroeconomic conditions and constraints such as inequality, business cycles and inflation shape households' purchase decisions, brand choices and health- and vice-related consumption, and to discuss implications for firms, policy makers, and consumers. Bringing these contributions together in one special session enables an integrated discussion of how macro conditions translate into micro-level demand responses and how marketing instruments can amplify or mitigate these effects.

“**Understanding the Relevance of Income Inequality for Individuals’ and Households’ Consumption Decisions**” (Julian Ruoff, Martin Biewen, Maximiliane Sick, Dominik Papies) links IRS income distributions to NielsenIQ panel data to examine how ZIP-code-level inequality affects conspicuous consumption. The study shows that higher inequality increases visible, branded, high-priced CPG purchases, especially among lower-income households. “**How Do Business Cycles Shape (Un)healthy Food Consumption**” (Barbara Deleersnyder, Minxiong Huang, Maarten J. Gijsenberg) uses UK beverage scanner data from AiMark (2005-2023) and state-space models to trace how the business cycle affects healthy versus unhealthy beverage choices, and to separate price-driven from other mechanisms. “**Inflation-Induced Consumption Smoothing in Grocery Shopping: A Cross-Country and Cross-Category Comparison**” (Bastiaan A. van Houten, Julian R.K. Wichmann, Marnik G. Dekimpe) relies on AiMark data from 33 countries and error-correction models to study how inflation shifts spending between private labels and national brands and between discounters and conventional retailers, and how country- and category-specific factors moderate these effects. “**Does Inflation Curb the Consumption of Vice Goods? Evidence on Alcohol and Tobacco Spending During the Recent Inflation Spike**” (Harald van Heerde, Ada Choi, Jake An, Marnik G. Dekimpe) analyzes 3.9 million consumer-month bank-transaction records from Australia (2016-2023) with fixed-effects regressions to show that alcohol and tobacco inflation often raises category share-of-wallet, with moderation by prior vice usage, financial stress, and micro-level inflation experiences. Together, the four papers provide an integrated view of how macroeconomic constraints and shocks reallocate limited household budgets across status, health, and vice consumption, and how marketers and policy makers can design marketing instruments and regulatory interventions that explicitly account for macroeconomic turbulence.