

Reframing Attention: A Critical Review of Marketing's Role and Agenda for Future Research

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Cite as:

Pasqualetto Brigitta, Tuan Annamaria, Visentin Marco (2026), Reframing Attention: A Critical Review of Marketing's Role and Agenda for Future Research. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 55th, (133756)

Paper from the 55th Annual EMAC Conference, Bath, United Kingdom, June 2-5, 2026



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Abstract

Attention scarcity remains one of the most central challenges in contemporary marketing, especially amid mounting concerns about the societal costs of the attention economy. This study examines how attention has been conceptualized in marketing research from 2000 to the present. Using a corpus of 645 articles from top marketing journals and applying topic-modelling techniques, we identify seven dominant framings of attention that consistently treat it as a resource to be captured, optimized, or monetized. Our findings indicate that marketing scholarship has underexplored how attentional mechanisms could instead protect human cognitive resources. Responding to recent calls from the United Nations Economist Network, we outline research avenues that reframe attention as a sustainability-oriented, ethically governed capacity. This shift positions marketing to contribute to more responsible digital ecosystems that respect cognitive limits and promote societal well-being.

Track: Social Responsibility & Ethics