

IJRM Special Issue on “The Path to Digital Conversion”

Guest Editors: P. K. Kannan (University of Maryland), Werner Reinartz (University of Cologne), Peter Verhoef (University of Groningen & BI Norwegian Business School)

The *International Journal of Research in Marketing* is inviting submissions for a special issue on **The Path to Digital Conversion**. Firms make significant investments in online, mobile, and offline media and channels such as search engines, referral channels, social media, e-mail, display advertising, etc., to draw in customers to their websites and convert by requesting information, downloading content, and purchasing products and services.

Traditionally firms have used aggregate metrics that award the last touch point leading to conversion without considering the more involved roles these channels may play in the purchase funnel. With the availability of path data of customers detailing their interactions with different touch points in their purchase funnel, there is an emerging academic and practitioner interest in “attribution modeling,” where online and offline channels in a customer’s purchase funnel are attributed the appropriate credit for the conversions and revenues that may ultimately result. Given the path data, some firms use first-touch attribution, some use equal attribution across all touches assuming all touches play equal role in conversion or fractional attribution. Determining the real impact of these touches can help firms answer questions such as: Where should the firm invest? Which ads are driving conversions? Which keywords are driving acquisitions? Which channels should they target customers? What is the incremental value of an online channel? What is the incremental impact of mobile channels? Are there differences between devices? How do social interactions (within social media) affect the purchase funnel? Answers to these questions have important implications for measuring marketing ROI and determining optimal online and offline marketing investments.

This special issue focuses on new thinking and research that is enabled by the increasing availability of data on customer touch points both online and offline thereby affording the opportunity to understand how these touches/channels contribute to conversions and its implications for optimal targeting and allocation of marketing investments. The special issue encourages submission within a broad scope, agnostic of the research methodology, focusing on key research questions that include, but are not limited to:

- What do firms lose by ignoring the interactions in the purchase funnel and defining success of channels solely based on the some specific (e.g., last touched, or first touched) stimuli?
- What is the nature of carryover and spillover of online channels/touch points such as search, social media, display, e-mail, mobile apps, etc. in the purchase funnel?
- What roles do the different channels play in the different stages of the purchase funnel? How does this vary across product/service categories?
- What are the differential roles channels play in acquisition versus retention and expansion of customers and what are the implications for attribution modeling and/or CRM strategies?
- How does offline marketing activity (such as advertising, branding, etc.) interact with online marketing channels in assessing attribution?

- What roles do search keywords play in the purchase funnel in leading to conversions?
- How can firms incorporate attribution metrics in developing optimal marketing budget and customized targeting strategies to impact consumers' purchase funnel?
- How do the various sales and marketing activities interact along the purchase funnel and across acquisition, retention and expansion?
- How do social interactions in social media affect the journey through the purchase funnel?

The deadline for initial submission to this special issue is April 30, 2014. The review process will feature a maximum of two rounds and final decisions will be made before April 2015. Given the limited time-window for revising papers, the editors' aim in most cases is to make a decision on the first round. It is therefore important that submissions are as polished as possible. When submitting a paper (<http://ees.elsevier.com/ijrm>), authors should choose "SI: Attribution" for Article Type. Inquiries can be sent to editor-ijrm@idc.ac.il.
