

**New perspectives on digital marketing,
social entrepreneurship and serendipity in
entrepreneurial marketing**

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In 2016, our publisher Emerald made a number of positive changes to the publication scheduling of their journals, and JRME is affected by these as of 2017.

In recent years, reader behaviour has become primarily focussed on digital access, with journal content now overwhelmingly discovered at an article level as opposed to browsing of online or print issues. In the past, the editorial has often been used to draw together commentary and often expand upon themes within an issue. Online readership and discovery of articles on an individual level has seen the more traditional editorial decline in impact and readership in recent years. Instead of the conventional commentary on the contents of the issue which you will find below for this issue, the editorial may evolve into a less frequently published, longer review-type article focussing on current topics or themes at the interface of marketing and entrepreneurship. So in the future, I will have a section on our webpage called “ER - Editorial Reflections”.

The exception will be editorials for special issues which, for obvious reasons, do benefit from commentary by guest editors about the theme(s) in those issues. Thus, for special issues, we will continue to publish issue-specific editorials. You’ll be delighted to learn that we have one of those forthcoming in 2018 – Volume 20, Issue 1 on “Business Model Canvas and its use in Entrepreneurial Marketing”.

This issue features six full articles covering a wide range of topics related to entrepreneurial marketing but predominantly split into three areas: new perspectives on digital marketing, social entrepreneurship (local and national issues) and serendipity in entrepreneurial marketing (EM).

In recent years, much has been written (and published in JRME as well as others) about the rural and urban divide (Kannampuzha and Suoranta, 2016; Pane Haden *et al.*, 2016; Bijaoui and Regev, 2015; Uslay and Erdogan, 2014; Capel, 2014; Sethna *et al.*, 2013; Zampetakis and Kanelakis, 2010; McAuley and Clarke, 2009). However, the notion of rurality is further dissected by Professor William Richmond (Western Carolina University, USA), in our first paper, where Richmond *et al.* contribute to the marketing and entrepreneurship literature by showing that there is a new and different digital divide for rural small businesses based not on access to the internet, but on its use for digital marketing. This interesting and important research informs policymakers wishing to promote rural economies that they need to address not just the existence of an internet infrastructure, but also the small businesses’ willingness and ability to use it effectively.

The next two papers highlight the importance of social entrepreneurship – “the creation of organisations that address societal problems using innovative, business-based models” (Bacq and Eddleston, 2017; Dees, 1998; Lepoutre *et al.*, 2013; Miller *et al.*, 2012a). In the first of these papers by Dr Philip Roundy (University of Tennessee Chattanooga, USA), it is noted that while there has been a “steep increase” in the number of social enterprise articles levied at academic, practitioner and policymaker attention (Miller *et al.*, 2012b; McKenny, 2014), the connections made to the “critical group of stakeholders – the consumers” have not been explored. The argument, therefore, for satisfying both the two “demand-side” stakeholders is further strengthened by its findings which further the academic debate for entrepreneurial marketers working at the interface, as well as a seemingly new variant entitled “social entrepreneurship and marketing interface”. The second paper in this domain is by Dr Kesha Coker and



colleagues from the Eastern Illinois University (USA). They rightly note that national leadership culture is viewed as a social contextual factor that can either enhance or hinder social entrepreneurial activity – in other words, it is the very social fabric of a country. However, there are many gaps in the domain, with commentators noting that “much remains to be learned” (Roundy, 2014). Specifically this paper answers a call by Kraus *et al.* (2014) and Short *et al.* (2009) both of which ask for a closer examination of “leadership in social entrepreneurship research”. This paper proposes a conceptual model that measures the role national leadership culture plays as a contextual factor surrounding social entrepreneurship (by developing propositions based on the GLOBE theoretical model published by House *et al.*, 2014). It may be interesting for the JRME readership to note that the intersection between social entrepreneurship, marketing systems, institutional and leadership theory is considered once more (as seen in the earlier paper in this issue by Roundy, 2017).

In “Factors affecting outcomes of EU-supported investments in innovation among SMEs in the Greater Poland (Wielkopolska) region”, Dr Jacek Pawlak (Imperial College London) presents an analysis of 100 small- and medium-sized enterprises from the Wielkopolska region in Western Poland with respect to their investments in innovation during the early post-EU-accession years, 2004-2006. Interestingly, the analysis proffered by Pawlak and Mikolajczak expands the knowledge regarding which conditions are likely to predispose investments in innovation to become successful, and are thus valuable to both SME managers as well as policymakers. Through their findings the former can systematically explore and understand experiences of the SME in Poland, while the latter are provided with empirical findings regarding conditions which maximise the positive impact of innovation support for the SME sector. The findings are thus relevant to the countries which are already part of the EU as well as those seeking to join and, dare I say, those wishing to leave the EU.

Next, Dr Mandhachitara (Pennsylvania State University, USA) and Dr Allapach (Baker & McKenzie Co.) provide an interesting quantitative perspective on the importance of building and exercising affirmative leadership skills and behaviours in small business operations, mediated by a managed construct – marketing orientation. Empirical data from Thailand is used to prove that affirmative leadership does not have a direct impact on firm performance, and that market orientation does indeed mediate the relationship.

However, for a relationship of any kind to further develop, there needs to be an opportunity of a meeting. While the notion of luck versus own actions has been looked at before (Merton and Barber, 2004; Roberts, 1989), the *serendipitous* manner in which some entrepreneurs exploit new opportunities and markets is something which has been written about in the recent past (Sarasvathy, 2003; Sarasvathy *et al.*, 2008). Indeed, at the 2017 Global Research Symposium on Marketing and Entrepreneurship which was hosted by Babson College – San Francisco, where the theme was “30 Years of Research at the Marketing/Entrepreneurship Interface: Current Concepts and Future Directions”, Nightingale and Sethna (2017) presented their “EM and the 4_S Model” which allows the entrepreneur to make short-term decisions as well as long-term resolutions about their enterprise. The actor goes on a journey of mapping four key paths based on their own responses to the throw of the pair of dice with a focus; one will focus on “Strategy, Serendipity, Storytelling, and Software” and will be combined with the other “*action-orientated*” dice of “Thinking, Reading, Writing, Speaking”.

But what exactly is serendipity?

When Horatio Walpole (4th Earl of Oxford, 1717-1797) recollected the part of a “silly fairy tale” (The Three Princes of Serendip) in which the three Princes by “accidents and sagacity”

discern the nature of a lost camel, little did he know that his claim to fame would be the coining of the word serendipity. The fairy tale *The Three Princes of Serendip* is based upon the life of Persian King Bahram V, who ruled the Sassanian Empire (420-440). Stories of his rule are told in epic poetry of the region (Firdausi's *Shah-Nameh* of 1010, Nizami's *Haft Paykar* of 1197, Khusrau's *Hasht Bihisht* of 1302), parts of which are based upon historical facts with embellishments derived from folklore going back hundreds of years to oral traditions in Persia and India.

Serendipity goes by many other names – chance, fate, destiny, karma, providence, luck, coincidence and kismet. The definitions between these particular terms may vary slightly (Betsworth and Hansen, 1996; Eyre, 1999; Roberts, 1989), but in the main will refer to the same concept, that of finding out things without searching for them.

It is, therefore, as part of this search for truth that serendipity can play an important role. Take, for instance, Glaser and Strauss (1967) text on “the discovery of grounded theory”, which is built on ideas by sociologist Merton (1949), who in “Social Theory and Social Structure” referred to the “serendipity pattern” as the fairly common experience of observing an unanticipated, anomalous and strategic datum which becomes the occasion for developing a new theory or for extending an existing theory. Successful researchers can observe scientific results with careful attention to analysing a phenomenon under the most diverse and different perspectives. They can question themselves on assumptions that do not fit with empirical observations. Realising that serendipitous events can generate important research ideas, these researchers recognise and appreciate the unexpected, encouraging their assistants to observe and discuss unexpected events. Although, as scientific thinking is often based on logic and predictability, it [serendipity] is sometimes ignored. It should be noted here that, with a darker and quite sinister twist, the opposite of serendipity – Bahramdipity – is derived directly from Bahram Gur as characterised in *The Three Princes of Serendip*. It describes the suppression of serendipitous discoveries or research results by powerful individuals (Sommer, 1999).

This said, there are many examples of scientific discoveries which have a serendipitous beginning. Products such as Velcro tape, Post-It notes and Viagra; processes such as X-rays and microwaves; and the antibacterial effects of the penicillin mould, all have a key ingredient of unexpectedness (Darbellay *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, Napier and Young (2013) note that a firm can tap its potential creativity by using serendipity as a “strategic advantage”. Indeed, the success of Japanese enterprises is often linked to their ability to create knowledge not by processing information but rather by “tapping the tacit and often highly subjective insights, intuitions, and hunches of individual employees and making those insights available for testing and use by the company as a whole” (Nonaka, 1999).

Luckily for marketers in 2017, they have at their disposal various tools, apps, platforms and media affordances, and are sagacious enough to link together innocuous facts stemming from the aforementioned items, allowing them to come to valuable conclusions.

The “possible actions in an environment” was the definition of affordances given by Gibson (1979) in the context of early ecology studies. Later, this was applied by Norman (1988/2013) to developing an understanding of technology and human interaction. In recent years, we've seen technology facilitating some forms of human interaction and communication, and rendering other forms questionable (Jensen, 2010). The evolution of social media (Geho and Dangelo, 2012) has certainly afforded a sense of “bottom-up communication” where stakeholders are important collaborators and key actors (Jenkins *et al.*, 2013), and where there is an expectation of clear and constant “2-way” communication using the various social media platforms in existence (Jensen, 2010). However, as opposed to

broadcast media where this two-way communication is almost restricted to the participant sender and the participant receiver of the message, communication using social media (according to Boyd, 2010) is different because of what she calls “Persistence, Replicability, Scalability, Searchability” which add a level of textual flexibility. This flexibility between platforms and the technological ability for the message to be “linked and saved to a new platform” ultimately limits the control a message originator has. Jenkins *et al.* (2013) note that this is a shift from “a linear structure, where messages are sent to target audiences, to hubs of communication, where surplus audiences disturb or advance messages” (Jenkins *et al.*, 2013).

Thus, this has resulted in the power of communication residing with both entrepreneurs and individuals who can communicate their own surprise interpretation of the message as opposed to a more traditional notion of organisations with the ability to push pre-planned communications out via broadcast media. And these kinds of surprises are incredibly important for marketers to continue to excavate. In their report “CMO 2.0 Takes Charge” (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, 2015), the management consultancy Deloitte found that 82 per cent of CMOs think the challenge to transform and acquire new skills is increasing, even though 71 per cent of marketers feel harnessing data analytics is one of the most important challenges they face. This is because for an entrepreneurial marketer to find these “data surprises” it requires a lot of erudite “natural language processing” and multifaceted “data science” mining.

Intuition and serendipity are closely connected in the people that I connect with and connect with me. Serendipity relates to the interesting people that I meet via social media, whom sometimes I get to meet in real life (Cragg, 2017).

In our last paper, Dr Sussie Morrish and Dr Saeed Mirvahedi investigate the distinctive role of serendipity in opportunity exploration. Using multiple case studies, cross-country approaches and causal mapping method, the findings suggest that serendipity is likely to take place at the early stage of firm formation.

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