

## Special session “*Brand, ethics and digital*”

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### **10th International Research Meeting in Business and Management (IRMBAM-2019)**

Companies today operate in increasingly competitive and constantly changing environments. They can no longer simply pursue their traditional policies to address the many challenges they face. In particular, brands cannot ignore their ethical responsibility or forget that they operate in a digital world.

On the one hand, ethics and sustainability have been considered strategic priorities by many companies in recent years (Brunk and DeBoer, 2015). As matter of fact, ethics has become a decisive criterion of choice for consumers, and social responsibility is considered as a facet of the brand's personality (Madrigal and Boush, 2008). Wegererer and Munro (2018) point out that while the literature agrees that brands are a key organizing principle of post-industrial capitalism, it remains divided on their contribution to ethical issues. Some studies present brands as a potentially liberating force for ethical consumption (Newholm and Hopkinson, 2009), while others believe that they are based on the exploitation of the unpaid work of consumers and employees (Arvidsson, 2014).

To discuss this link between the brand and ethics, a special session will be organized as part of the 9th International Conference IRMBAM to be held from July 5 to 7, 2019 at the IPAG Business School Nice . To animate the conference, we will have the pleasure to welcome as **Keynote speaker Mrs. Carolyn Strong, Associate Professor of Marketing, Cardiff University, United Kingdom.**

On the other hand, digital is another great challenge facing companies. It becomes increasingly difficult for them to differentiate their brands in a highly competitive market, to attract consumer's attention and create loyalty. Traditional advertising, while still necessary to promote the brand's image, is no longer sufficient in the face of market segments that have never been so fragmented. For Kapferer (2008), strategic brand management must reflect the market in which it operates and therefore consider both the offline and online environment (mobile communications, interactive online games, interactive television, digital radio, podcasts, social media, e-mails, etc.). It becomes increasingly difficult to secure the loyalty of the customers (Japutra & al, 2018).

The development of digital has completely changed the way postmodern consumers interact with brands and therefore calls for a total review of how brands should be managed (Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Almubarak & al, 2018). Quinton (2013) proposes a shift from the relational paradigm described by Louro & Cunha (2001) to a community paradigm to better describe the current situation. By switching from conversation (top-down) to debate (multilayer interactions with multiple stakeholders), brand meaning is co-created during the consumer-brand relationship. Therefore there is a shift of power towards consumers through brand communities and co-creation, and brand communication and management are no longer exclusively internally driven. Moreover, the digital environment urges companies to break the

silos and adopt a customer-centric organization rather than focus mainly on brands and products (De Swaan Arons et al., 2014).

Overall, the development of digital technology raises multiple questions for brands: how to attract consumer attention without being perceived as disruptive? How to capture and retain customers? How to better engage with customers? How to leverage digital tools and tactics to learn more about consumers and provide better and more relevant brand experiences? How brand management should evolve? How to control brand image?

Many of those questions are linked with ethical issues. The large flow of technological innovations has made the management of personal data a major societal issue, as the difficult implementation of the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) confirms. Many consumers today are concerned about how brands use their personal data (Younan, 2018). To reassure them and maintain their trust, companies must adopt an ethical approach to the user experience. Moreover, in the vast universe of connected objects, the temptation to exclude the human component in favor of the extraordinary capacities of digital is very strong (Delpuech, 2018).

To explore all those facets of digital, **a special issue of *Journal of Strategic Marketing* will be published on the theme “brands and digital” at the end of the IRMBAM conference.** We invite proposals for paper presentation – with either qualitative or quantitative approach - on one of the following themes, without exclusivity or exhaustivity:

- The influence of digital development on brand management
- New brand strategies in the digital age
- Brands and data
- Digital interactions and co-creation
- Luxury brands and social networks
- The compatibility between digital and ethics
- Challenges of the social media or influencers marketing
- Brand content and brand identity
- Brands and the millennials target
- Brands and new technologies (Bot/IOT/Augmented Reality)
- Brands and the consumer journey

### **Submission**

Authors are invited to submit their complete papers – no more than 6000 words- in English, no later than April 7, 2019, at midnight Paris time, via the conference website: <http://ipag-irm.sciencesconf.org/submission/submit>.

Informal queries regarding guest editors’ expectations or the suitability of specific research topics should be directed to Dr. Mohamed Akli Achabou (ma.achabou@ipag.fr) or Dr. Isabelle Aimé (i.aime@ipag.fr).

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