

# MarketingNews

QUARTERLY

AMERICAN MARKETING ASSOCIATION

AMA.ORG

FALL 2022

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FALL 2022  
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## MarketingNews

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Marketing News (ISSN 0025-3790) is published quarterly by the American Marketing Association, 130 E. Randolph St., 22nd Floor, Chicago, IL 60601.

Circulation: (800) AMA-1150, (312) 542-9000  
Tel: (800) AMA-1150, (312) 542-9000

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**AMERICAN MARKETING  
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# Return to Normalcy?

Leading marketing in a post-COVID era

The 29th edition of the *CMO Survey*, sponsored by Deloitte, American Marketing Association and Duke University, highlights the indelible mark COVID has left on marketing as a whole, for better or worse.

BY CHRISTINE MOORMAN

**T**he past three years have disrupted life and business as we know it. Now that the world is emerging from a pandemic, what's next? For insight, let's flash back to 1920.

The U.S. has just come through a deadly influenza pandemic and a world war, and it was experiencing both substantial labor unrest and race riots across the country. It was in this context that then presidential candidate Warren G. Harding adopted the campaign slogan "Return to Normalcy" to point voters back to "better days." And while there were disputes about what was "better" about those days—similar to debates today—there is no escaping the remarkable similarity of these historical periods.

We don't know what's ahead for the U.S., as the country likely heads into a recession, constraining business investment and growth. However, we can address the question of how the pandemic has changed marketing. The CMO Survey has been collecting and disseminating the opinions of marketing leaders since 2008. This 29th edition examines how marketers are approaching strategies, spending and organization in a post-COVID environment. Results show that some aspects of marketing have changed quite a bit over the last three years, while other aspects that changed dramatically during COVID have returned to pre-COVID levels.

These results are based on our most recent survey of 273 marketing leaders at for-profit U.S. companies, 95.6% of whom are VP-level or higher.



## Hedging Economic Optimism

Optimism for the U.S. economy hit 57.2 (out of 100)—up from 50.9 at the height of the pandemic in June 2020 and the all-time low of 47.7 in February 2009 during the Great Recession. This level is lower than the 66.8 reported in February 2022, which is not surprising as many marketers are concerned about growth prospects this year and next.

## Shifting Customer Priorities

While trusting relationships were most important to customers before the pandemic, respondents shifted their focus to product quality during the pandemic. This priority holds as most important, but low price has now emerged as a secondary priority given inflationary pressures. Both B2B and B2C buyers will be seeking to balance quality and price, as they manage budgets buffeted by inflation.

## Changing Use of Channels

The pandemic has changed the use of channels—65% of marketers are now using a larger number of channels, and 41% are using social channels to sell. Surprisingly, only 10.5% of marketers report their former face-to-face channels are now all digital, and half report their companies are returning to or opening up face-to-face channels. This finding reflects buyers' growing appetite to embrace traditional channels after two years of all-digital interactions.

## Strengthening Role for Marketing

The pandemic's acceleration of digital marketing investments has pushed marketing budgets as a percentage of company budgets up to the highest level in CMO Survey history. This level also corresponds to the growing importance of marketing in organizations, which has increased in more than half of all companies over the past two and half years.

## Flattening Spending Across Categories

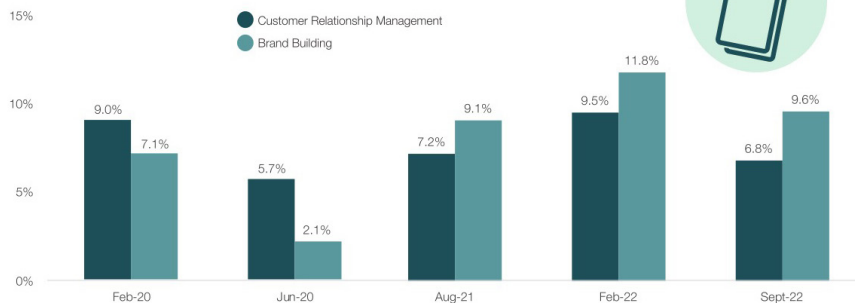
Marketers report 10.4% growth in marketing spending over the last year but predict this level will decrease and start trending toward the pre-COVID level of 5.8% growth in the next year. Brand, CRM and innovation investments follow the same pattern—all growing but reverting to levels closer to pre-COVID levels. Traditional advertising spending returns to negative growth after temporary lifts across the last two surveys, restarting a decade-long decline. Mobile spending as a percent of marketing budgets is flat at 13.7% and has returned to pre-pandemic levels (13.5%) after climbing to a high of 23% during the pandemic. Spending on social media has also been flat at 14%–15% of budgets over the last 18 months, coming off a June 2020 COVID splurge when spending reached 23.2% of marketing budgets. Both mobile and social continue to disappoint marketers in terms of contributions to company performance, showing no improvement over time.

## Surging Use of Marketing Analytics

Spending on marketing analytics as a percentage of the marketing budget hit an all-time high of 8.9% after a decade-long level of 6% to 7%. Marketing analytics is now being used in nearly half of all marketing decisions, rising

## Brand and CRM spending growth drop closer to pre-Covid levels—Brand spending outpaces CRM spending

Relative to the prior 12 months, by what percent do you expect your marketing budget to change in the next 12 months in each area?



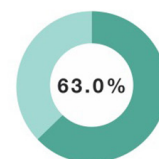
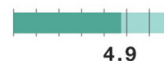
## Senior marketing leaders more likely to be asked by C-suite to sit at the table than participate in preparation for earnings calls

How often is the senior marketing leader asked by the CEO or CFO to participate in board meetings or preparation for earnings calls? (1=never, 7=all the time)

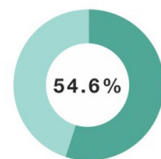
Average participation

% of companies above average participation

**BOARD MEETINGS**



**EARNING CALLS**



© Christine Moorman

from 38% just before the pandemic. Companies have also made good progress attributing marketing analytics to company performance. We expect to see analytics use continue to rise, enabling teams to defend investments and make more precise decisions across the marketing landscape.

## Growing Quality of Marketing Knowledge

Marketers have invested in building their knowledge resources through the pandemic. They have nearly

doubled investments in developing knowledge about marketing strategy and operations and tripled investments in marketing research and intelligence. These investments have paid off with the quality of all marketing knowledge resources rising during this period. As one might expect, market research has also changed quite a bit during the pandemic, with more companies studying online consumer behavior (63.3%) and using more video interviews (57.8%). Only 18% are doing more text analysis, which is somewhat surprising given its availability to most marketers.



### Assessing Work from Home Trends

The size of marketing organizations grew by 15.1% in the past year but is expected to drop to 7.3% growth in the next year, reverting closer to growth rates reported before the pandemic. Work from home is now prevalent across industries and economic sectors, with 57.5% of marketers reporting their teams working from home at least some of the time and 48.7% working from home all of the time. Overall, marketing leaders are confident in team productivity in both arrangements, with 50% reporting no change in worker productivity levels.

Marketing leaders are more worried about company culture, with more than a third reporting that working from home has weakened it. For example, 45% of marketing leaders report that young marketers are socialized less within the company in work-from-home settings. Remote working provides workers with greater flexibility but can harm engagement for these newer workers over time.

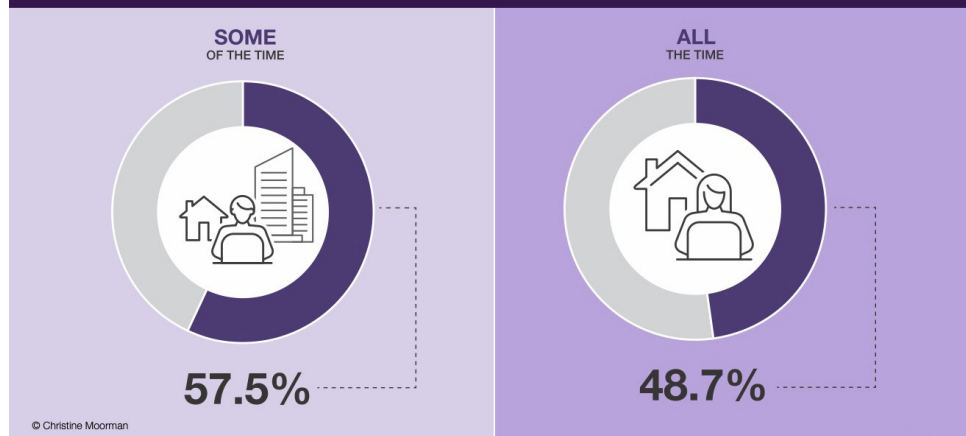
### Elevating Marketing Leaders

The frequency with which marketing leaders were invited to attend board meetings averaged 4.9 on a 7-point scale where 1 = “not at all” and 7 = “very highly,” with 63% of marketers reporting participation levels above the midpoint of the scale (5 or more). These numbers show that marketing has a reasonably strong seat at the table at many companies.

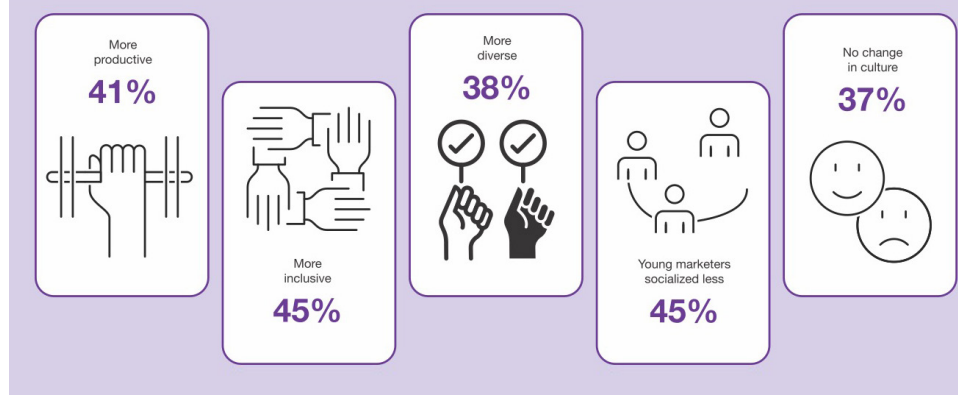
### Increasing Political and Ecological Activism

The percentage of marketing leaders who report that their companies would use their brands to take a stand

#### What percent of your marketing organization is working from home?



#### How has working from home influenced the following outcomes in your marketing organization?



on politically charged issues reached a CMO Survey high at 30.2% of companies up from the pre-COVID level of 18.5%. However, when asked about actions to reduce the negative impact of marketing-related activities on the ecological environment, levels show increases from last year but have not yet rebounded to pre-COVID levels, except in changes to the brand. **MN**

Complete results of the 29th edition of CMO Survey, including detailed marketing and performance trends across industries, can be found at [cmosurvey.org/results](https://cmosurvey.org/results).

*Christine Moorman is T. Austin Finch Sr. Professor of Business Administration, Duke University, USA, AMA Irwin/McGraw-Hill Award recipient and AMA Fellow, founder and director of The CMO Survey, and former Journal of Marketing editor-in-chief.*



## Think It Over

Technology adoption done well allows humans to do what we do best

BY HORST FELDHAUSER | INFOTOOLS

**F**or years, I've been interested in the ever-blurring line between humans and technology in the market research industry, maintaining that there is a deft balance to be found. However, I'm also cognizant of the fact just how (for the lack of a better word) time-poor people are, which is often the excuse or reason for failed technology implementations.

I'll start out with a bold statement: if you're working in market research and insights and you're NOT willing to embrace and use the power of technology, you may not have a job in 10 years time. This is probably true for nearly any industry at this point in time.

But it isn't that simple. And it's not just using technology for the sake of it. We all know that the industry is growing and is evolving extremely quickly, but we still need the human aspect of market research to succeed: our ideas, our intuitions, our feelings and those uniquely human activities that no technology can duplicate (not even AI, yet). And most importantly, our curiosity.

I'm a researcher at heart, and I can honestly say that we (at Infotools) want to provide the kind of insights that are foundational to successful business decisions. We've been doing this for over 30 years and it's truly remarkable when it happens. Interestingly, one common thread that connects these projects that I've noticed over the years is "human interference." Technology, for all its potential, still needs people pulling certain strings, providing oversight to make sure ideal outcomes are met. Even in the age of "AI" people claim we are in, it's humans that bring the smarts; technology brings the muscle.

I often use music, something I'm very passionate about, to illustrate what this looks like. I play my own music, I write quirky lyrics and I listen to a lot of music.

Today, there is software out there that can help musicians write and produce music, without even picking up an



instrument. But we lose something in that process, don't we? Can technology really capture the authentic human element—the feelings, the pain, the joy—that we have when composing and writing music?

There's still no substitute for playing and grooving and jamming when it comes to bringing emotions into music and making it a reflection of the human soul. Yes, there are many things that technology can facilitate. Musicians don't need a big record label, contract, or lots of money, in order to produce and distribute their music. But for the best results, there is a blend of the very human aspect of music and the technology to take it to the next level.

This is so similar to the insights industry. As market researchers, we are called upon to bring our views, expertise and sometimes even our "gut feelings" to the insights we uncover. But the truth is that we are facing new, increased pressures for speed and efficiency that humans are ill-equipped to meet on our own. We need technology to do the things it is really good at, so that we can be allowed to do what we're good at. When the right technology speeds up our processes, we have more time to really examine the data and bring our skills to the table. After all, I believe most of us are in market research because we are curious people. Technology gives us back the extra time we need to feed that curiosity.

There is a delicate balancing point where technology can help us manage the repetitive, mundane parts of our jobs. Smart technology can even point us in the right direction by telling us where to dig further, where more insights might lie within the data itself. But how can companies adopt solutions with both technology and people in mind?

### Involve all stakeholders in the process

I'm a big proponent of involving the people who will be on-the-ground using the technology from the beginning—even in the consideration stage. Rather than an IT team making a unilateral decision of what type of platform to use across departments, input from those who will be using it to improve their workflow is key. They must identify exactly where the roadblocks and inefficiencies are in current processes and then identify how the technology can improve those sticking points. There's nothing more demoralizing than suddenly asking people to start using a solution that's been dumped on them, without their input.

### Minimize workflow disruption

This is a huge consideration for companies looking to adopt new technology. Everyone clearly wants to minimize upheaval so deadlines can continue to be met and client expectations can continue to be delivered upon during

technology implementation and onboarding. I say start small. Use the new solution for a single project, take those learnings and then build upon that, gracefully and in stages. I've seen how taking a staged approach can streamline technology implementation, gain more buy-in from entire teams and, ultimately, deliver better results.

### Leadership and project support

You will definitely need a senior leadership sponsor and a dedicated project manager for the implementation of any new technology. Not only does this nurture a sense of responsibility, but senior level buy-in can help the whole company become more receptive to change. Find someone who understands that you need the efficiencies that technology brings, but that also knows change doesn't happen overnight. A project manager can help set expectations and integrate the tool into the business, rather than just presenting a tool to users with no guidance. Over-communication among all parties is key. Once you're sick of communicating a message, it's only then that it's starting to resonate with people.

### Answer the right questions for your business

Where are the sticking points in my current workflow when it comes to delivering quality insights, faster and at a better price? Where can the technology implementation impact these key deliverables? What level of disruption am I comfortable with? Do my current team members have the right skills and appetite for a new solution? Can I motivate and upskill them if needed?

Technology can give us back the "cool" part of market research – giving us the space to do things that feed our curiosity and find out what's going on behind the data. Insights are exciting. They help businesses make better decisions and move forward in a landscape that is undergoing constant, fast-paced change. The data we uncover can, in many ways, contribute to the greater good of everyone. Far from replacing our uniquely human contributions to the insights ecosystem, technology can support us in making our jobs faster, better and easier.

Technology implemented and adopted well in your organization won't just help you do more of what you do best, but also do more of what you really want to be doing. Think it over. **MN**

*About the author: Horst Feldhaeuser is Group Services Director for Infotools. He is a multi-award-winning research professional with more than two decades' experience in market research, marketing and business consulting. He is actively involved in the research industry and is a sought-after conference presenter and contributor to industry publications. [www.infotools.com](http://www.infotools.com)*



## How to Think Like a Strategist

Intentionally building a strategic point of view

**JENNIFER MURTELL** | VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGY, ASIA PACIFIC  
AT MARKS PART OF SGS & CO.

If you wanted to improve your strategic thinking skills, where would you begin? What defines the actions and approaches of strategic thinking, and how do you improve? Strategy doesn't live in the realm of wizardry or magic. Certainly, there are cognitive predispositions that lead more intuitively to a strategic role in an organization, but the brain science of cognition is best left to the scientists. We can't control the kind of brain we

are born with; however, what we can control, and indeed master, are a few tangible skills that will inevitably make you a better strategic thinker, a better systems thinker, and ultimately a better critical thinker in the realm of solving big problems for clients and their brands.

### Anticipate Everything

To improve your ability to anticipate, you have to be constantly looking. You need to reactivate your naked observational skills, the skills we had as children to observe, without judgment, and truly see something for what it is. You could call this lens through which we observe the world through a “child’s mind,” or “outside-in perspective” or “alien eyes.” The net is that you have to do it more—and talk about it less—to make it an embedded part of our practice.

Certainly, have proactive and provocative conversations with clients, suppliers, and other stakeholders to understand their need-states and challenges. But you also need to embrace the unconventional—a spontaneous conversation with a stranger, an emerging subculture, the outliers that exist outside the system or outside the norm, to really begin to anticipate the future. This kind of observation takes time, but if you turn it into a part of your work ritual, it will provide you the vision and perspective to see the future and avoid future shock.

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*“The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.”*

—Albert Einstein

### Make Time for Thinking

I often block out deep thinking time in my calendar, only to be faced with irrational feelings of guilt or insecurity about my need for synthesis. But without taking the time to synthesize what we read, observe or uncover, the repository in our brains is simply data—static, inactionable and ultimately meaningless. It’s an “amorphous blob of undoability,” to use a term from *Getting Things Done* author David Allen.

Rich Horwath, CEO of the Strategic Thinking Institute, discovered that 44% of managers spent most of their time firefighting in cultures that rewarded reactivity and discouraged thoughtfulness. How many innovative, disruptive, or paradigm-shifting ideas does this culture produce? He also uncovered a huge barrier—that 96% of leaders claimed they lacked time for strategic thinking, because they were too busy dealing with the immediate, regardless of its importance. His research points to a fundamental flaw in the way we value thinking, even in organizations that ostensibly “think for a living.”



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*"There are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say: we know there are some things we do not know."*  
—Donald Rumsfeld

### Answer Your 'Known Unknowns'

In finding solutions to tough challenges, there is rarely one correct answer. The decisions we make to get to a solution aren't made with complete information. In fact, if we had access to perfect data sets, there would be far fewer problems to solve. The answer would be self-evident. It's why we call it a strategic point of view: we are providing an expert, educated perspective. And points of view come with inherent risks. Get comfortable with risk, because to take anything from average to amazing, you will get things wrong in the process of getting to right.

Filling the gaps in your knowledge is the best way to bolster your courage in the face of risk.

What don't we know about a consumer target who is radically different than ourselves? What emergent ingredient trends are about to tip into our category? What landscape positions are truly unoccupied? What category norms might be exploded to uncover newness? These kinds of questions can uncover deep wells of insight and opportunity that rarely show up in a brief.

---

*"Forget about best practices. Best practices are usually common practices. And common practices will never add up to a zag, no matter how many of them you apply."*  
—Marty Neumeier, Zag

### Challenge Convention

Challenging convention, in whatever sphere, can unlock incredible disruptive possibilities. It can also ruffle feathers of people for whom convention provides a sense of security. They like their "known knowns"; asking them to question the orthodoxy feels like asking them to jump out of a plane. One way to bring your teams along for the ride is to focus on the root causes of a problem rather than the symptoms. We can complain day after day about the symptoms of dysfunction, but the needle doesn't move. The simple "Five Whys" principle, popularized by Toyota founder Sakichi Toyoda, is a Socratic way to find new solutions by revealing the problem's root cause. Let's see it in action applied to an internal problem.

*"We never get a proper brief!"*

*"Why?"*

*"Because we are afraid to tell the client that the brief is bad."*

*"Why?"*

*"Because we don't know what a brief looks like when it's good."*  
*"Why?"*

*"Because we haven't been trained to identify gaps in briefs."*

Bingo. On or before the fifth 'Why?' you will discover a root cause that is tangible, actionable and precise. The above example halts an endless cycle of hiding a deficient skillset that can easily be taught, and with the right amount of diplomacy, passed onto clients as well. It's a win-win. Problem solved.

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*"Success is a lousy teacher. It seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose."*  
—Bill Gates

### Interrogate Your Own Assumptions

With a fresh view of trends, current and future-state issues, practice your strategic skills by challenging your own assumptions about a problem. Ask yourself, "How do I broaden what I am currently considering?" or "What am I ignoring or undervaluing in this equation?" to illuminate natural blind spots. Questions are the language of strategy; don't be afraid to use them, even if you develop a habit of talking to yourself.

"Specialization" (e.g., digital, retail, communication strategy) provides us a hyper-focused strategic lens. But if you're repeatedly solving one type of problem, you can lose your ability to see the bigger picture. The remedy is to elevate your commitment to observation ("alien eyes") and anticipation (future-state reading). Pulling input from a broad view of the world and seeking out its points of intersection hones our systems thinking skills, and your solution may lie in another part of the system. A mastery of systems thinking is crucial, because it reveals the interconnectedness of everything—the systems or frameworks within which the gears of culture, as well as brands, turn.

By carving out time for curiosity, suspending judgement and looking at information from diverse or unexpected points of view, you will uncover fresh possibilities, optimized approaches, and new outcomes.

Developing your strategic thinking skills takes three things: time, perseverance and courage. It can be a struggle to lift yourself out of the weeds and feed your curiosity. It can be tough to maintain a commitment to a practice. It can be daunting to take a risk and decide to attempt a new way, especially when the old ways aren't in urgent disrepair. Creating a more disciplined system of using these tools can make you a better brand builder and a more well-rounded strategic thinker. It can also expand your view of the world and your ability to envision how to make it better. **MN**

*About the author: Jennifer Murtell is Vice President of Strategy, Asia Pacific, at Marks, part of SGS & Co.*



## Foundation

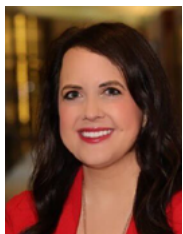
The American Marketing Association Foundation (AMAF) champions individual marketers making an impact in our profession and community. We recognize marketing visionaries who have elevated the field, and we support the next generation of marketers who will transform the profession. Congratulations to our most recent award winners!

## 2022 4 Under 40 Emerging Leaders Award

This award recognizes individuals who have already made significant contributions to the field of marketing and its sub-fields and have demonstrated leadership and continuing service.

---

### WINNERS:



**Allie Dicken**  
Director, Brand and  
Influencer Marketing,  
San Francisco 49ers



**Danilo Tauro**  
Product Leader  
for CTV AdTech,  
Amazon Advertising



**Dustin York**  
Associate Professor  
and Consultant,  
Maryville University



**Julia Low**  
Brand Marketing  
Director, Tropicana  
Brands Group



# 2022 Nonprofit Marketer of the Year Award

This award recognizes extraordinary leadership and achievement in the field of nonprofit marketing.

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## WINNERS:



### NATIONAL NONPROFIT

#### **Cindy Rahman**

Senior Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer,  
March of Dimes



### REGIONAL NONPROFIT

#### **Katie Ferrell**

Director of Marketing & Communications,  
Make-A-Wish Ohio, Kentucky & Indiana

## #GivingTuesday is November 29!

Mark your calendar and plan to participate in #GivingTuesday on November 29.

Help support diversity in the marketing field by donating to the AMA Foundation on #GivingTuesday. Your donation will go toward one of our many programs that help widen the opportunities for underrepresented populations and support diverse future generations!

Find out more at [ama.org/GivingTuesday](https://ama.org/GivingTuesday)

# Outstanding Academic Marketing Awards

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## 2022 Robert J. Lavidge Global Marketing Research Award

This award recognizes a marketing practitioner or educator who has devised and successfully implemented a research/insight procedure that has practical implications for use by others.



### **WINNER:**

#### **Daniel McCarthy**

Assistant Professor of Marketing,  
Emory University's Goizueta Business School

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## 2022 Williams-Qualls-Spratlen Multicultural Mentoring Award of Excellence

This award recognizes world-class marketing scholars and mentors of color, while carrying on the legacy of the late Jerome Williams, Bill Qualls and Thaddeus Spratlen.



### **WINNER:**

#### **Tonya Williams Bradford**

Associate Professor of Marketing, Paul Merage School of Business,  
University of California, Irvine

---

## 2022 Charles Coolidge Parlin Marketing Research Award

This award is the oldest and most distinguished award in the field. This award is given to leading scholars and practitioners in honor of Charles Coolidge Parlin who is considered the pioneer of marketing research.



### **WINNER:**

#### **V. Kumar**

Salvatore Zizza Professor of Marketing,  
Tobin College of Business at St. John's University

# Journal of Interactive Marketing Award

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## Best Paper Published in 2020

**Lena Hoeck** and **Martin Spann**

🔗 “An Experimental Analysis of the Effectiveness of Multi-Screen Advertising”

# Journal of International Marketing Awards

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## 2021 S. Tamer Cavusgil Award

**David A. Griffith**, **Tereza Dean** and **Jessica J. Hoppner**

🔗 “Choices and Consequences: Recommendations for an Improved Understanding of Cultural Distance in International Marketing Research”

## 2022 Hans B. Thorelli Award

**Fabian Bartsch**, **Petra Riefler** and **Adamantios Diamantopoulos**

🔗 “A Taxonomy and Review of Positive Consumer Dispositions toward Foreign Countries and Globalization”

# Journal of Marketing Awards

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## 2021 AMA/Marketing Science Institute/H. Paul Root Award

**Stephen J. Anderson**, **Pradeep Chintagunta**, **Frank Germann** and **Naufel Vilcassim**

🔗 “Do Marketers Matter for Entrepreneurs? Evidence from a Field Experiment in Uganda”

## 2021 Shelby D. Hunt/Harold H. Maynard Award

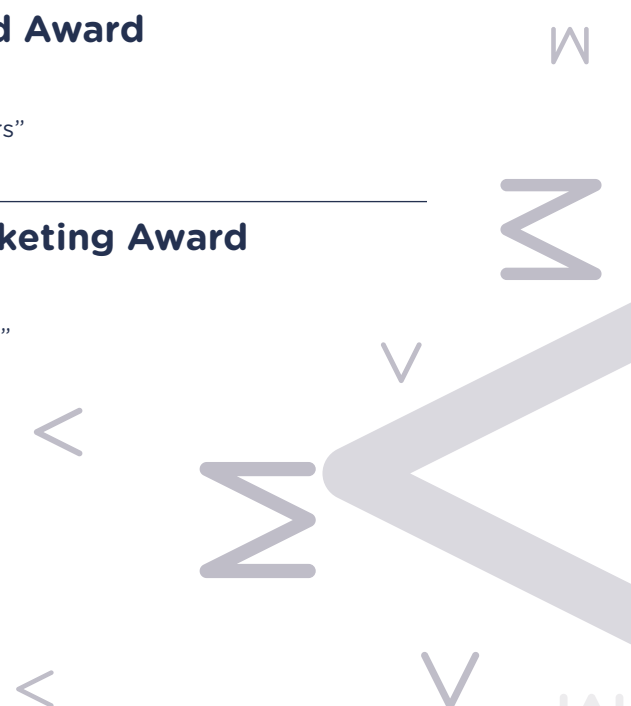
**Joseph C. Nunes**, **Andrea Ordanini** and **Gaia Giambastiani**

🔗 “The Concept of Authenticity: What It Means to Consumers”

## 2022 Sheth Foundation/Journal of Marketing Award

**Kelly D. Martin**, **Abhishek Borah** and **Robert W. Palmatier**

🔗 “Data Privacy: Effects on Customer and Firm Performance”





# Journal of Marketing Research Awards

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## 2021 Paul E. Green Award

**Srinivas Tunuguntla** and **Paul R. Hoban**

 “A Near-Optimal Bidding Strategy for Real-Time Display Advertising Auctions”

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## 2022 Weitz-Winer-O’Dell Award

**Garrett A. Johnson**, **Randall A. Lewis** and **Elmar I. Nubbemeyer**

 “Ghost Ads: Improving the Economics of Measuring Online Ad Effectiveness”

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# Journal of Public Policy & Marketing Award

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## 2022 Thomas C. Kinnear Award

**Melissa G. Bublitz**, **Jonathan Hansen**, **Laura A. Peracchio** and **Sherrie Tussler**

 “Hunger and Food Well-Being: Advancing Research and Practice”





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# Epicurean Food Marketing

BY PIERRE CHANDON

**F**ood marketing works too well. It has created and pushed a vast variety of cheap, delicious, convenient food products, invariably claiming to be healthy but contributing to a worldwide obesity epidemic with consequences ranging from increased vulnerability to COVID-19 to stigmatizing overweight children. While winning the battle for our stomachs, the food industry has lost public support. Most people around the world now firmly favor tougher food industry regulations.

Fortunately, work published in the *Journal of Marketing Research* and other academic journals offers innovative solutions to help practitioners and policymakers align food marketing and health.

## Reformulation's Limits

In response to the global obesity epidemic, the food industry and academia traditionally suggested removing fat, salt and increasingly sugar from products. But reformulation has limitations, even when it is possible to improve a food's nutritional profile without impairing taste.

First, reformulation can create a "health halo" around foods, prompting people to eat more than they otherwise would. One *Journal of Marketing Research* study showed that labeling chocolate candies "low fat" led to a 28% increase in actual, but not perceived, calorie intake compared to labeling the candies "regular" (Wansink and Chandon 2006). A recent study replicated the effect, showing the health halo was stronger for obese people, unless they had undergone weight-loss surgery, which aligned their responsiveness to marketing framing effects with that of lean people (Cornil et al. 2021). Second, consumers increasingly equate healthiness with preserving food's natural properties, not its nutritional profile (André, Chandon, and Haws 2019). "Clean eaters" have therefore joined forces with nostalgic consumers against the reformulation of brands they know and like.

## Healthy Eating Nudges Can Work

What should food marketers mindful of public health do? A recent meta-analysis identified the most effective interventions for encouraging healthier food choices, whether in supermarkets or restaurants (Cadario and Chandon 2020). The researchers group the “nudges” into three broad categories:

1. Cognitive nudges provide information about food product healthiness, often employing a nutrition label or symbol. A recent *Journal of Marketing Research* study (Bollinger et al. 2020) and France-based randomized controlled trial (Dubois et al. 2021) both showed informative nudges have limited influence on food choices; they reduce a person’s daily energy intake by an amount equivalent to five to nine sugar cubes.
2. Affective nudges attempt to motivate consumers to eat better using written or oral encouragement. They highlight a healthy food’s taste, not its nutritional value (e.g., “twisted citrus-glazed carrots”). Affective nudges are twice as effective as cognitive nudges, reducing daily energy intake by as much as the equivalent of 13 to 17 sugar cubes.
3. Behavioral nudges seek to impact consumers’ actions directly without necessarily changing what they think or want. In other words, they emphasize convenience by making healthy choices easier than unhealthy choices, e.g., by precutting and pre-plating fruit or placing healthy food at the start of a self-service line. The most effective behavioral nudges change the amount of food people put on their plate. They are three times as effective as cognitive nudges on average, leading to a reduction in daily energy intake equivalent to as many as 32 sugar cubes.

## Epicurean Food Marketing: Less Size, More Pleasure

A growing number of researchers have examined alternative ways to encourage people to eat better using affective and behavioral, rather than cognitive, interventions. Some researchers call the interventions “epicurean,” as they are consistent with the instructions of Epicurus, who wrote, “The wise person does not choose the largest amount of food, but the most pleasurable.”

The behavioral epicurean approach attempts to make small food portions seem “normal.” Portions and food packaging have grown enormously but look smaller in weight and volume than they are. One *Journal of Marketing Research* study showed that people underestimated the energy in a 1,000-calorie meal by 25%, despite accurately estimating the calories in a smaller meal (Chandon and Wansink 2007). The researchers found underestimation bias

was related to portion size, not body size, as people with normal weights were as inaccurate in their judgments as the overweight. Other research has shown size perceptions increase more slowly than actual size for children and adults alike and even among professional chefs and dietitians (Chandon and Ordabayeva 2017). Consumers therefore choose cheap, supersize portions that are larger than they realize, leading to overeating and food waste.

Why don’t more companies downsize their products? Because shoppers notice size decreases more than increases and react negatively (Chandon and Ordabayeva 2017). An effective strategy to encourage smaller portion choices is to downsize products by elongating them (increasing height while reducing base), as first shown by Raghurir and Krishna (1999). In a later study, researchers downsized a product by 24% using elongation without participants noticing, even when they were incentivized for accuracy and able to weigh the product (Ordabayeva and Chandon 2013).

The affective epicurean approach draws on a consumer’s tendency to choose large portions because they provide value and are satiating and neglect to consider how he or she will feel while eating. Sensory pleasure is at its peak during the first bites of food and diminishes with each additional bite. Consumers do not realize that their overall experience rating is influenced by average, not sum, pleasure per bite. Both adults and children tend to choose portions that are too large from a pleasure standpoint, as their last bite denigrates the average experience (Schwartz et al. 2020).

In a series of studies published in the *Journal of Marketing Research*, researchers primed consumers with sensory imagery, asking them to imagine eating hedonic foods (Cornil and Chandon 2016). In one study, the strategy reduced the dessert size chosen by 367 non-restrained adult women by 24%, leading them to select relatively small portions for optimal eating enjoyment. Another study conducted among hungry children found that sensory imagery led to reasonable snack portion selection (Lange et al. 2020).

## Summary

Rather than selling food as fuel as if they were in the energy business, food marketers concerned about public health and the obesity epidemic should consider focusing on eating’s pleasure. The strategy can also lead to improved firm performance. Instead of making more money by selling more food to more people more often, firms could profit from selling smaller portions offering more pleasure. The result would be a win for consumers’ health and enjoyment, as well as for business. **MN**

*Pierre Chandon is the L’Oréal Chaired Professor of Marketing, Innovation and Creativity at INSEAD in France and the Director of the INSEAD-Sorbonne University Behavioural Lab.*



# Grab a Coffee Before Shopping?

You may want to think twice

**DIPAYAN BISWAS, PATRICK HARTMANN, MARTIN EISEND, COURTNEY SZOCS, BRUNA JOCHIMS, VANESSA APAOLAZA, ERIK HERMANN, CRISTINA M. LÓPEZ AND ADILSON BORGES**

**H**ow does drinking a caffeinated beverage influence shopping behavior? Are customers prone to impulsive purchases after consuming coffee, tea or soda at retail stores or car dealerships?

We explore these questions in a new *Journal of Marketing* study and find that drinking a caffeinated beverage before shopping leads to more items purchased at the store and increased spending. Our studies also show that the effect of caffeine is stronger for “high hedonic” products such as scented candles, fragrances, décor items and massagers and weaker for “low hedonic” products such as notebooks, kitchen utensils and storage baskets.

This shopping behavior is further facilitated by stores such as New Seasons Market and Trader Joe’s, as well as many Mercedes dealerships, which provide customers with complimentary caffeinated coffee. Other stores, such as Target and Barnes & Noble, house coffee bars where consumers can purchase coffee, tea or other caffeinated drinks. Of late, large chain stores and small boutiques are using in-store coffee bars to differentiate themselves from online retailers.

Understanding how and why caffeine consumption influences spending is important since caffeine is one of the most powerful stimulants that is both legal and widely available. About 85% of Americans consume at least one caffeinated beverage every day, with coffee being the primary source of caffeine, followed by tea and soda. Caffeine is also found in energy drinks, chocolate and many over-the-counter and prescription medications.

Several studies have demonstrated that caffeine intake enhances arousal, which is experienced as a state of activation and alertness that can range from extreme drowsiness to extreme excitement. Arousal can be a positive hedonic state – referred to as excitement or energetic arousal (such as when one feels active, energized and excited) or a negative hedonic state – referred to as “tense arousal” (such as when one experiences tension and

nervousness). Energetic arousal enhances the perception of product features and, in turn, increases purchase intentions for hedonic products such as buttery, salty popcorn, chocolate candy, and luxury vacations.

Prior research has shown that consuming caffeine in the range of 25 mg to 200 mg enhances energetic arousal with practically no effects on tense arousal. We examine effects of caffeine intake in the range of about 30 mg to 100 mg since most caffeinated beverage servings have caffeine content in this range. As part of our studies, we set up an espresso station near the entrance of a retail store in a major city in France and outside a department store in Spain. Upon entry, half of the 300 shoppers were handed a complimentary cup of coffee containing caffeine, and the other half offered decaf or water. We found that the first group spent about 50% more money and bought nearly 30% more items than those who drank decaf or water.

We also find that caffeine impacted the types of items bought at the stores. The group that took in caffeine bought more nonessential items such as scented candles and fragrances. However, there was very little difference between the two groups with regard to utilitarian purchases such as utensils and storage baskets. Also, the effects of caffeine on spending hold for those who drink two cups of coffee (or less) daily and is attenuated for heavy coffee drinkers.

Overall, we conclude that retailers can benefit financially if shoppers consume caffeine before or during shopping and that the effects are stronger for high hedonic products. This is important for retailers to factor in to determine the proportion of hedonic products in their stores. Policy makers may also want to inform consumers about the potential effects of caffeine on spending.

Our research can be extended in several directions. Can arousing elements such as loud music influence the effects of caffeine on shopping behavior? It is possible that high levels of arousal induced by a combination of caffeine and ambient elements can alter shopping behavior. What if shoppers consume coffee along with some food like chocolate cake? Several interesting findings could emerge from research involving caffeine and these variables. **MN**

## READ THE FULL ARTICLE.

From: Dipayan Biswas, Patrick Hartmann, Martin Eisend, Courtney Szocs, Bruna Jochims, Vanessa Apaolaza, Erik Hermann, Cristina M. López, and Adilson Borges, “Caffeine’s Effects on Consumer Spending,” *Journal of Marketing*.



# How does culture affect vaccination acceptance?

BY JAMES M. LEONHARDT

**W**hy do some people vaccinate against COVID-19 while others do not? Our recent work, published in the *Journal of International Marketing*, addresses this question through the lens of culture, empathy and homophily—i.e., the extent to which we share similarities with others.

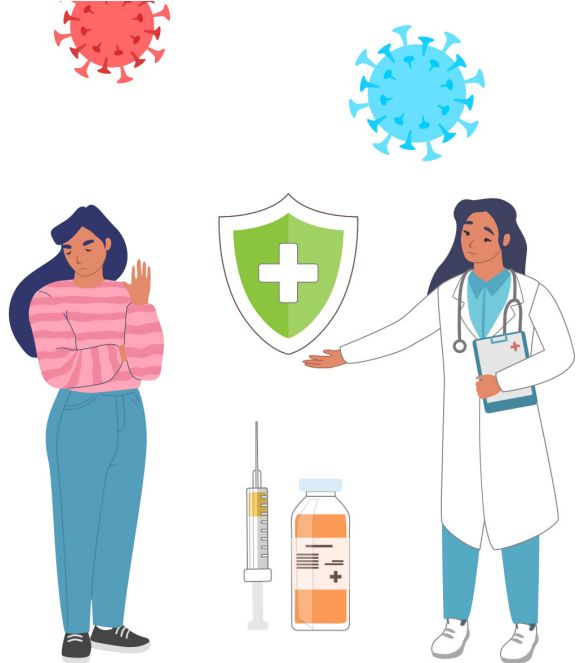
The debate between pro- and anti-vaxxers is not new to COVID-19. In 2019, the World Health Organization considered vaccine hesitancy the leading cause of measles outbreaks among schoolchildren and a significant threat to global health. Likewise, vaccine hesitancy continues during the COVID-19 pandemic and remains a significant threat to consumer wellbeing worldwide.

In our paper's first study, the prominent cultural dimension of collectivism accounted for significant variability in COVID-19 vaccination acceptance across countries. Our sample consisted of more than 50 countries and 400,000 people who responded to the COVID-19 Beliefs, Behaviors, and Norms Survey administered by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In our subsequent studies, we probed the relationship between the endorsement of collectivistic values and COVID-19 vaccination acceptance to understand how collectivism increases vaccination acceptance. In each of these studies, the endorsement of collectivistic values was found to increase vaccination acceptance by increasing empathic concern for those afflicted by COVID-19.

Higher empathy for those afflicted by COVID-19 helps explain why endorsing collectivistic values leads to a higher willingness to inoculate against the disease. The finding aligns with prior work suggesting that the interdependent self-view fostered by collectivism promotes empathy, increasing the likelihood of engaging in preventative health behaviors, such as handwashing and mask-wearing.

We also assessed whether collectivism's positive effect on empathy depends on one's homophily or similarity with those afflicted by the disease. In the experiment, participants read about an apparent victim of COVID-19 who had similar characteristics (versus different) as



themselves (e.g., political affiliation, lifestyle, personality). We found that empathic concern and vaccination intentions among those higher in collectivism were especially strong when a victim's characteristics were similar to those of the participants.

Returning to our initial question, these findings help to answer the question of how to encourage worldwide acceptance of vaccines and COVID-19 vaccines, in particular. First, given the robust positive association between collectivism and vaccine acceptance, we suggest that public health messaging be targeted toward those relatively lower in collectivism with the messaging strategy of enhancing recipients' sense of interdependence, reliance, and similarity with others.

Second, given the positive association between empathy and vaccine acceptance, promotional strategies should strive to enhance our empathic concern for the pandemic victims. As we demonstrate, empathy can be enhanced by portraying victims who share similar characteristics with the message recipients. Similarly, storytelling and using an "identifiable victim" versus mere statistics should also help heighten empathic concern.

Vaccine hesitancy continues to threaten the suppression of COVID-19, and curbing outbreaks from vaccine-preventable diseases, such as measles, remains an ongoing public health challenge. Several strategies have been proposed to address vaccine hesitancy in general. Building on the present research, there remains the challenge of identifying ways that enhance feelings of interdependence and responsibility for the well-being of others to encourage prosocial preventative health behaviors, including vaccine uptake. **MN**

*This article originally appeared on SAGE Publishing's Perspectives blog and is reprinted with permission.*

## READ THE FULL ARTICLE

James M. Leonhardt and Todd Pezzuti (2022), *Vaccination Acceptance Across Cultures: The Roles of Collectivism, Empathy, and Homophily*, *Journal of International Marketing*, 30 (2), 13-27.



# Hitting the Bottle Infrequently but Heavily

Alcohol consumption during recessions

BY NAREK GRIGORIAN AND SERKAN SAKA

**T**ackling unhealthy consumer behavior such as alcohol consumption and promoting positive consumer choice and welfare has increasingly drawn the attention of public health authorities as well as marketing practitioners. Accordingly, a couple important questions remain to be investigated: (1) do economic downturns change alcohol

consumption habits, and (2) does consumption differ among different consumer groups?

In a recent *Journal of Marketing Research* article, Hailey Hayeon Joo, Minki Kim, Jungmin Lee and Pradeep Chintagunta revisit these questions by decomposing alcohol consumption into drinking frequency and intensity in relation to consumer heterogeneity. The authors employ consumer-level panel data containing the brand name and the number of bottles consumed daily. In particular, Joo et al. use individual-level data on beer consumption in the United States from 2003 to 2007 and break it down by number of days with drinking incidents (frequency) and average quantity of consumption (intensity). They then pair it with behavioral tracking questions. This methodological approach enables researchers to capture richer information and, as such, depict consumer behavior accurately by shedding light on intensive drinking more directly.

The authors find that alcohol consumption, in general, is procyclical. Specifically, they show a negative relationship between unemployment and drinking frequency but a positive relationship between unemployment and drinking



intensity. They find that for about half of drinkers, the increase in intensity leads to the decrease in frequency. In other words, they drink more overall in poor economic times. In addition, the authors find support that low-income consumers and those 61 years of age and older tend to be more vulnerable to recessions by engaging in intensive drinking.

This study provides significant implications for practitioners and policy makers who seek effective ways to promote consumer welfare and tame vice product consumption during recessions. The authors demonstrate that a tax policy intervention in the form of a slight alcohol tax increment, from \$0.40 to \$0.60 per 12 ounces, is effective to protect vulnerable groups such as low-income consumers and the elderly from intensive drinking. Given that more intensive drinking is observed in regions with a higher unemployment rate, zone pricing strategies can be another impactful public policy measure to implement. The authors suggest that policy planners design appropriate messages to sensitize vulnerable consumers to the harmful consequences of heavy drinking, and brand managers are encouraged to employ socially desirable marketing campaigns to avoid the brand image being associated with intensive drinking.

### Q&A WITH AUTHORS HAILEY HAYEON JOO, MINKI KIM, JUNGMIN LEE, AND PRADEEP CHINTAGUNTA

**Q** Your research focuses on the USA. What do you think is the role of culture in this research context? Have you considered expanding the scope of your research to countries with a different cultural background than that of the USA?

**A** Even in the USA, alcohol-related laws and cultural conditions are not necessarily uniform across countries. For example, some counties are wet and others are dry. Also, the level of average alcohol consumption varies considerably depending on religious or ethnic compositions in the local markets. Nonetheless, we found that alcohol consumption frequency decreases and intensity increases during economic downturns. Therefore, our findings are likely applicable to other countries. At the same time, this is a hypothesis based on what we have found, so we believe that exploring other countries would be an interesting research topic.

**Q** How does this research challenge current marketing practices and public policy measures to tackle alcohol consumption (during recessions)?

**A** It is clear that interest in understanding the role of marketing on consumer welfare and governmental policies is on the rise. Hence, both marketers and policymakers are seeking effective ways to promote positive consumer choices and deter vice product purchases.

The main practice that our study hopes to challenge is the treatment of all consumers as being identical when considering approaches to deal with the problem of drinking. Specifically, ignoring heterogeneity might lead to unintended consequences of actions to reduce the consumption of junk food, alcohol, and tobacco. Likewise, looking at average alcohol consumption without considering consumer heterogeneity may be misleading from a policy-making perspective. We show that understanding not only average levels of consumption in a given time period but also intensity per episode, along with differences across consumers, can better predict consumer behavior with regard to alcohol consumption. For example, a different level of tax is required to effectively nullify a potential increase in intensive drinking for the elderly and low-income consumers whose health statuses may be vulnerable during business downturns.

**Q** Alcohol by volume (ABV) can range quite drastically for different types of beers. Was this range taken into consideration or did most of the beer reported contain similar levels of ABV?

**A** The raw data include not only daily total ounces consumed at the individual level but also detailed information on beer containers such as types (e.g., aluminum can, glass bottle, etc.) and volumes (e.g., 8 ounces, 12 ounces, 16 ounces, etc.). However, we did not use the information on containers but focused on the daily total ounces reported. For analysis, we converted the consumption ounces into serving sizes on the basis of the standard serving size of 12 ounces, in line with previous studies in the alcohol-relevant literature. Clearly, further work in this area should take the ABV into account, especially if there is substantial variation for the brands consumed in the data.

**Q** The years used in the data were 2003–2007. Do you believe anything post-2007 occurred that might have changed the behaviors of consumers in regard to drinking frequency or intensity?

**A** The Atlantic (2021) reports that Americans drank more to cope with their stress during this pandemic, and frequency of drinking also rose. We believe that our findings are timely and potentially helpful to policymakers across the globe in the current lockdown recession that the U.S. and other countries are going through due to COVID-19 pandemic. **MM**

### READ THE FULL ARTICLE HERE:

Hailey Hayeon Joo, Minki Kim, Jungmin Lee and Pradeep Chintagunta, (2021) "Drinking Through Good Times and Bad: The Role of Consumer Differences," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 58 (4), 721–41. DOI:10.1177/00222437211017460



# Grocery Shoppers Spend Differently During Economic Change

How manufacturers and retailers can adapt and navigate

BY THOMAS P. SCHOLDRA, JULIAN R. K. WICHMANN, MAIK EISENBEISS AND WERNER J. REINARTZ

**H**ow does grocery shopping change with economic conditions? A recent *Journal of Marketing* study suggests that micro (i.e., individual income) and macro (i.e., the business cycle) conditions substantially influence grocery shopping behavior, but in very different ways.

Households experience constantly changing economic conditions. These changes may take place at a personal, microeconomic level, such as if the main breadwinner receives a pay raise or a household member loses a job (micro conditions), or at a macroeconomic level, as the business cycle experiences recurring expansions and contractions or changes in response to global events such as the Great Recession or the COVID-19 pandemic (macro conditions). While changing micro conditions directly affect households' ability to purchase, changing macro conditions, all else being equal, affect only households' willingness to purchase. Accordingly, households' response to changing conditions depends on whether they are affected at a micro or macro level (or both) and may manifest in very different shopping outcomes.

Our research team analyzed seven measurable shopping outcomes reflecting how households allocate their budgets across brand types and store formats—their shopping basket allocation (in terms of private label and national brand spending in discounters and non-discounters)—as well as how much they spend and purchase—their shopping basket value (in terms of total spending, purchase volume, and an index of prices paid). We characterize the differential effects of micro and macro conditions on households' shopping behavior by addressing the following research questions:

1. To what extent do micro (i.e., income) and macro conditions (i.e., the business cycle) affect households' CPG shopping behavior?
2. How do micro and macro conditions differ in terms of their effects on households' shopping basket allocation and shopping basket value?
3. Do asymmetries exist between negative (i.e., income losses/economic contractions) and positive (i.e., income gains/economic expansions) conditions? And, if so, do these asymmetries differ between micro and macro conditions?

We used a unique, comprehensive data set with detailed information about daily consumer packaged goods (CPGs) transactions as well as demographic and psychographic information for more than 5,000 households in Germany over a period of eight years including the Great Recession. We then identified what and where households shop, how much they purchase, what prices they pay, and how much they spend.

We found that micro and macro conditions both have a substantial impact on households' shopping behavior. Importantly, households adjust their shopping behaviors without a concrete change in their budget constraints. In addition, micro and macro conditions differ substantially in their effects on households' shopping behaviors. Whereas micro conditions primarily have an impact on households' basket value, macro conditions affect households' basket value and also cause shifts in households' basket allocation. During adverse micro conditions, households buy lower volumes and spend substantially less in total but do not shift spending to other brands or store formats. In contrast, as macro conditions change, households shift spending to private labels (from both discounters and non-discounters) during contractions and to national brands during expansions. In addition, they increase their total spending and purchase volume during contractions. We argue that the shifts during macro conditions are driven by a greater society-wide acceptance of frugal consumption that does not emerge during changing micro conditions.

**We found that ... shifts during macro conditions are driven by a greater society-wide acceptance of frugal consumption that does not emerge during changing micro conditions.**



We see several implications for practice. To buffer the negative effects of when and where wages are expected to decrease, manufacturers and retailers, particularly hard discounters like Aldi and Lidl, whose overwhelming majority of revenues stem from their own private labels, can profit from listing national brands in discounters. During economic contractions, retailers can use the opportunity to extend their private label portfolio into higher price tiers and product categories with high involvement and complexity. In addition, they may narrow their price gap to national brands and strengthen their branding to preemptively counteract households' shifts back to national brands during subsequent expansions. During expansions, they can then offer more attractive and profitable price promotions. Especially non-discounter private labels may get away with raising prices because they are unaffected by increasing budgetary constraints. **MM**

#### READ THE FULL ARTICLE.

*From: Thomas Scholdra, Julian Wichmann, Maik Eisenbeiss, and Werner Reinartz, "Households under Economic Change: How Micro- and Macroeconomic Conditions Shape Grocery Shopping Behavior," Journal of Marketing, 86 (4), 95-117.*



# Parental Preferences Shape Junk Food Choices for Kids

The way parents view their own self-control when it comes to junk food is a contributing factor in what they choose to feed their kids and how their food preferences influence their children, researchers report

BY MARKETING NEWS STAFF

**F**ood systems heavy in calories and light on recommended nutrition are a major factor contributing to global obesity and are a major challenge to parents of young children, says T. Bettina Cornwell, chair and head of the marketing department in the University of Oregon's Lundquist College of Business.

Research in the *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* explored the underlying dynamics of parental food preferences and how they are passed along to children by parental food choices for meals.

"A parent's preference for sugar, fat, and salt in their diet influences the amount of junk food they provide children in a typical week and in turn, this influences the child's preference for sugar, fat and salt," Cornwell says. "We show that regularly providing 3- to 5-year-old children with junk food influences their preferences for the same tastes. It also makes them less willing to eat vegetables."

The researchers developed two studies to explore how rigid parents are toward strategies of growth, learning, and self-control. These mindsets, or lay theories, underlie everyday ideas about behavior, she says. At play is how limited or unlimited self-control is seen and whether it is fixed or malleable.

In the first study, researchers used self-report surveys from the parents of 81 preschool children to assess whether the frequency of exposure to junk food helps transmit parental tastes to the children. The researchers found a solid connection, Cornwell says.

The second study dug deeper to see if parents' mindsets influenced how often they exposed their children to junk



food and what their children ate at school. Researchers drew from survey responses from 122 parent-child pairs and direct observations of preschoolers choosing vegetables during lunchtime.

Again, the researchers identified strong results. Children who were often exposed to fast and highly processed food at home were less likely to eat vegetables at preschool.

"A parent's preference for sugar, fat, and salt in their diet as well as their views of self-control come together to influence their choice to regularly give a child junk food," Cornwell says. "Parents with a lower preference for sugar, fat, and salt and with a growth mindset regarding developing self-control tend to limit the amount of junk food they provide to their children."

The overall findings, Cornwell says, are clear: What parents do at home when it comes to meal selection influences the food choices their children make away from home.

Parents, she says, should explore their own beliefs about self-control to understand how they influence their children's developing food preferences. Doing so, she says, may help parents improve their own diets in a way that benefits how their children eat.

There also are implications for the food industry.

Food manufacturers and brand managers, meanwhile, need to recognize that their heavy reliance on hyperpalatable products—those high in fat, salt, and sugars that combine to override the ability to control consumption—often make it hard for children to meet guidelines for healthy daily diets.

"Eating even a single fast food or processed meal as currently found in the marketplace makes it hard, if not impossible, for children to fall within the US dietary guidelines for the entire day," Cornwell says. "Products should be reformulated to be less hyperpalatable and new, healthier products should be developed. **MN**"

# Consumer Nutrition and the Minimum Wage

Is there a connection?

BY BRANDON HOLLE AND MICHAEL WU

**F**ood insecurity, or the lack of ability to acquire healthy or enough food, is a major concern across much of society. It has been linked to many negative outcomes for individuals, including poor physical and mental health. Past research on food insecurity has suggested that a lack of financial resources drives increases in food security. However, an increase in financial resources may lead households to spend more money on food and purchase

a wider variety of foods. Thus, Dr. Mike Palazzolo and Dr. Adithya Pattabhiramaiah investigate this phenomenon by studying how a change in the minimum wage influences the quality and quantity of food consumption for a given household.

The study examines households over a ten-year period and uses econometric analysis to examine how an increase in the minimum wage changes household food consumption. The authors find that, for households that consume the least amount of food, raising the minimum wage increases a household's propensity to purchase more calories. However, they also find interesting results regarding the nutritional aspects of food purchased: When the minimum wage increased, the unhealthiest households purchased more healthy calories, but the healthier households selected more unhealthy calories. In addition, the results suggest that when the minimum wage increased, households purchased more new items, such that one in three of the items purchased are items they had purchased for the first time.

When the minimum wage increased, the unhealthiest households purchased more healthy calories, but the healthier households selected more unhealthy calories.



**When the minimum wage increased, the unhealthiest households purchased more healthy calories, but the healthier households selected more unhealthy calories.**

We were able to ask several questions to these authors, who kindly provided interesting insights into this article.

**Q** This study contains behavioral conclusions related to several factors including overall caloric intake, consumption of healthy foods, and the number of items in one's dietary selection. What was the most interesting finding for you in this research and why did it surprise you?

**A** We assumed when we began this work that we would see a bigger impact on healthy foods. Perhaps it is difficult to ignore one's desire for optimism while conducting research. Much of the work on food insecurity posits that healthy eating is inhibited by a lack of budget, but we found: (1) no change in healthy eating as budget dwindled over the course of the month, and (2) a much more limited effect of the minimum wage on healthy eating than we anticipated (and, for some households, a negative effect). In retrospect, this is largely consistent with the literature in that it has shown that it's very hard to change what people eat. Interestingly, however, this was inconsistent with what food insecure households tell us about their behavior when responding to surveys.

**Q** This study possesses strong public policy implications, which have become increasingly more common in the academic marketing literature. How was the idea development process different than when writing a "traditional" marketing paper?

**A** We're not sure that it was all that different, beyond the initial question of interest having the policy bent. Prior research had argued that when minimum wage earners experience higher wages, they are more likely to spend them on durable goods (cars, television sets, etc.). On the other hand, at the time when we started writing the paper, policy makers in Washington had begun referring to minimum wages in America as "starvation wages," even though there wasn't much empirical research examining the degree to which higher wages could drive down food insecurity. This motivated our focus on this topic. But once you know which question you're answering, the process thereafter largely remains the same.

**Q** The study finds that increasing the minimum wage prompts unhealthy households to consume more healthy choices, but that the

healthiest households respond by consuming less healthy options. Do you think any related policy exists to increase the minimum wage while simultaneously preventing the reduction of healthy foods for households who were ex ante the healthiest?

**A** Although it may be wishful thinking to hope to curtail any and all indulgence, on balance, our findings do seem like a win for consumer welfare. You can think of it almost like income inequality. If you can transfer \$1,000 from someone who makes \$1 million to someone who makes \$20k, that is probably a win; the former person will not miss the \$1k, but it may lead to huge improvements in the latter's life. Although even in our dataset, the "healthiest" people still aren't necessarily eating as healthily as the USDA or other agencies would recommend.

**Q** As cost-of-living increases have begun to rise rapidly due to increased inflation, how does this impact the findings of this study?

**A** It indeed has, and our analyses pay special attention to carefully accounting for cost-of-living changes at the local level. Overall, the "real" minimum wage is effectively decreasing, so the ability of minimum wage-earning households to purchase food (and healthy food) is no doubt declining.

**Q** Are there any other policies, aside from minimum wage changes, that you think may increase the consumption of healthy foods?

**A** Our takeaway from the bulk of the prior literature we cite is that restricting or discouraging unhealthy eating may be more effective than encouraging or subsidizing healthy eating. Attempts at boosting nutritional benefit awareness (via informational campaigns and product labeling) are also known to have limited success. While it may seem hard to nudge households to choose more nutritious food items, this is definitely a promising and active area for further research. **MN**

**READ THE FULL ARTICLE:**

Palazzolo, Mike and Adithya Pattabhiramaiah (2021), "The Minimum Wage and Consumer Nutrition," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 58 (5), 845–69.  
DOI:10.1177/00222437211023475

# Social Media Groups Can Jeopardize Health and Wellness Goals

The paradoxes of social support

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Imagine finding yourself on a path to a new health and wellness goal. Something—a health scare, new life circumstances, doctor’s advice—has brought you to a place of desiring change. As if getting to this place wasn’t complex enough, you now might be feeling overwhelmed with information, confused, and unsure exactly where to take your first steps. What do you do next?

Well, millions of consumers turn to social media. On average, U.S. adults spend approximately 90 minutes a day on social networks, including over 30 minutes on Facebook. It is not surprising that earlier in 2021, Facebook revived their Groups campaign that was originally aired during Super Bowl LIV in 2020, promoting Groups as online places to “meet new people, share knowledge or get support.” Around that time, 1.8 billion users used a Facebook group every month, and tens of millions of active communities were available for





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people to connect to talk about their interests, to learn new things, and to be entertained. From parenting to health and wellness, the number of these virtual support communities keeps growing. And, most academic studies on these topics have documented the positive social dynamics of virtual support: communities provide informational and socio-emotional support that helps members achieve their goals.

Yet, our recent research published in the *Journal of Interactive Marketing* concludes that within such online gatherings, connections are not always as constructive as Facebook hoped, even in virtual support communities built on the premise of communal accountability and accomplishment. We explored the social dynamics in these virtual communities through three methods: a netnography—a cultural approach to the study of social media—of a large (over 50,000 members) nutrition-focused Facebook group, a set of interviews to document members' experiences of a virtual support community and its complex social dynamics, and a national survey of members of a large number of health- and wellness-related virtual support communities. The findings from these studies provide evidence of many paradoxical social dynamics of virtual support communities and document their outcomes in terms of how people feel about the community and how much they engage with or disengage from the community.

For one, we find evidence of both social empathy and social pressure. Social empathy is helpful: it ensures the group provides informational value that can assist the members in accomplishing their goals. But social pressure is two-sided: some pressure is helpful if it increases social empathy but pressure can become detrimental if it turns into angst. We've observed that these anxieties often cause members to disengage from the community.

Our study shows that virtual support communities are complex environments and that achieving one's goals might need a healthy dose of pressure. Overall, while virtual communities can be very powerful and jump-start positive change among members, they can also incite insecurity and jeopardize mental health and the sense of belonging to a community. Because social pressure can have undesired effects, our study signals that these social networks may require traditional monitoring and moderation.

Our findings are also in line with the October 2021 Facebook whistleblower testimony—appearing in front of the U.S. Senate, Frances Haugen tried to illuminate gray areas of social media, where online social interactions can jeopardize the mental health of individuals, groups, and communities. In this research, we are similarly identifying these gray areas, specifically in support communities on Facebook, where social media can be helpful but also damaging. As people's reliance on online networks for social interaction continues to increase, it is important to continue to be aware of virtual support communities' internal social dynamics and to understand their many paradoxes. **MN**

*Editor's Note: This article originally appeared on SAGE Publishing's Perspectives blog and is reprinted with permission.*

Ana Babić Rosario, Cristel Antonia Russell and Doreen Ellen Shanahan (2022), "Paradoxes of Social Support in Virtual Support Communities: A Mixed-Method Inquiry of the Social Dynamics in Health and Wellness Facebook Groups," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, First Published February 10, 2022. DOI: 10.1177/10949968221075819



