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The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: Introduction to the Special Issue on Marketing Science and the Internet

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There is a revolution happening—a startling and amazing revolution that is altering everything from our traditional views of how advertising and communication media work to how people can and should communicate with each other.

That revolution is the Internet—the massive global network of interconnected packet-switched computer networks—and as the most important innovation since the development of the printing press, the Internet has the potential to radically transform not just the way individuals go about conducting their business with each other, but also the very essence of what it means to be a human being in society.

Since the introduction of the first graphically-oriented Web browser, Mosaic, in 1993, the Internet has experienced phenomenal growth, both in terms of the number of computers and devices connected to it and the number of individuals and firms providing and accessing content on it (Hoffman et al. 2000). The first significant commercial activity appeared on the Web by 1994 and in the ensuing five years, the commercialization of the Internet has exploded. There are now very few countries and territories left in the entire world that do not have at least one host computer connected to the Internet (Rutkowski 1999). At the same time, electronic commerce, as a research area, a business, and, indeed, an entire new industry, is still very much in its infancy. There is much confusion and complexity and not nearly enough solid information.

Despite its newness, e-commerce is revolutionizing many aspects of how individuals and firms engage in

the conduct of business both online *and* off, and with remarkable speed. Notable areas such as consumer behavior, media models, distribution channels, economic models, business models and competitive strategy, and performance measurement are experiencing important changes.

But something else is going on that is just as profound.

These new forms of retailing and information sharing/gathering, along with exciting new technologies, are also introducing a whole host of new issues to be addressed. They are also posing exciting new challenges to existing theories of consumer behavior and competition in the marketplace.

These seismic shifts on the competitive landscape are not only changing business practice, but also influencing classic research issues, and creating a whole host of electrifying, new research problems focused around the Web as a virtual marketplace. These include emerging topics like virtual communities, intelligent agents, online navigation, collaborative filtering, clickstream analysis, new metrics for new media, consumer behavior in interactive environments, economics of electronic marketplaces, and “clicks and mortar” strategies.

Against this tumultuous and exhilarating backdrop, this special issue on the Internet got its start. In the fall of 1997, John Little and I came upon the idea to organize a small academic conference around the theme of the Internet and marketing science. We were motivated by two observations: first, that scholarly research on the Internet seriously lagged business practice, and second, that although scholarly research on Internet marketing and e-commerce was beginning to emerge, almost none of it at that time was being conducted

(World Wide Web; Commercialization of the Internet; Internet Marketing)