

Guest Editorial: MSI

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This special section of *Marketing Science* grew out of a 2004 Marketing Science Institute (MSI) workshop that brought together “practical academics” and “thoughtful practitioners” to map our current knowledge of high-priority MSI research topics and to suggest the most fruitful directions in which to expand that knowledge base. At that workshop, consideration of each of the priority research topics was led by an academic/practitioner team. Academic leaders associated with a topic drafted a review paper summarizing accumulated knowledge on the topic before the workshop. Given that draft, practitioner leaders responded with a list of unanswered problems related to the topic. During the workshop itself, a broader set of academics and practitioners fleshed out these draft documents. Three of the high-priority topics covered at that workshop yielded contributions to this special section. Those topics are innovation, customer metrics, and brands and branding.

Innovation is the most broadly supported of MSI’s top priority research topics. Finding pathways to sustained growth and long term competitive advantage are high priorities for both MSI’s brand-oriented member companies and for its business-to-business member companies. Hauser, Tellis and Griffin’s “Research on Innovation: A Review and Agenda for Marketing Science” provides a broad overview that is immediately useful to both practitioners and academics, covering consumer behavior, marketing, quality management, operations management, technology management, organizational behavior, product development, strategic management, and economics literatures. The authors argue that a cross-disciplinary perspective can enrich research while a marketing orientation can give that research valuable direction. Their paper develops directions for future research that are tied directly to the literatures from which they grow.

Gupta and Zeithaml’s “Customer Metrics and Their Impact on Financial Performance” addresses two of

MSI’s top priority research topics: “customer management” and “metrics linking marketing to financial performance.” They consider perceptual (e.g., customer satisfaction) and observed (e.g., customer retention) customer metrics, and organize the literature by considering the links between these customer metrics and a firm’s financial performance. They summarize the literature with a set of empirical generalizations that range from the fact that “improvement in customer satisfaction has a significant and positive impact on firms’ financial performance” to the fact that “customer metrics provide a good basis to assess the market value of a firm.” The paper ends with a rich discussion of the needed research on perceptual metrics, on observed metrics, and the links between those metrics and financial performance.

Keller and Lehmann’s “Brands and Branding: Research Findings and Future Priorities” addresses a third top research priority for MSI. Keller and Lehmann organize the branding literature by topic, covering brand positioning, brand integration, brand equity measurement, brand growth, brand management and the addition of branding main and interaction effects to choice models. While future research directions are suggested at the end of each section of the paper, the authors call more generally for a comprehensive model that links “marketing activities → product-market results → financial impact” (p. 754) and for a meta-analysis of studies that provide partial tests of those model components.

Earlier drafts of these three overview papers, circulated to MSI member companies, received high praise as useful summaries of knowledge on topics of great importance to practice. It is our hope that the readers of *Marketing Science* will also find these papers to be useful summaries of knowledge related to current, pressing business problems. Furthermore, we hope that contributors to *Marketing Science* will build from these papers, continuing to add to our knowledge base on these important problems.