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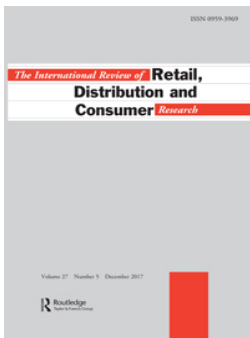
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Guest Editorial

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Guest Editorial

This special issue of *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* offers a selection of the best papers presented at the 19th International Conference on Research in the Distributive Trades of the *European Association for Education and Research in Commercial Distribution* (EAERCD). The EAERCD has continued to offer a forum for academic exchange over a 27 year period on both current and emerging issues within the distributive trades and retailing. This year the *School of Retail and Services Management, Dublin Institute of Technology* (DIT) hosted the EAERCD conference. The *School of Retail & Services Management* offers specialist retail taught programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, and is one of the founding schools of the modern DIT. The hosts were delighted to welcome 109 delegates from 26 countries, representing 64 Universities to explore a range of topics including: omni-channel retailing, consumer interfacings with in-store technologies, corporate social responsibility in retail contexts, retail marketing, branding and international retailing.

The best papers from the conference emerged from a three-stage reviewing process. An international reviewer team of more than 48 persons completed double-blind reviews at stage one, before 12 DIT staff completed double-blind reviews at stage two. The conference co-chairs completed stage three of the reviewing process. This special issue of *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research* contains seven papers presented at EAERCD Dublin 2017. The selection of papers represents a sample of topics that were addressed at the conference and are exemplars of best-practice developments that are currently taking place in retailing and distribution channel research.

The seven contributions to the special issue reflect a myriad of literatures and methodological approaches and are presented as follows. Bertrandie and Zielke examine the impact of retailers' assortment integrations on customer overload confusion, assortment perception and their consequences in multi-channel environments. Using experimental design, the authors manipulate assortment integration internally (online and offline channel of the focal retailer) and externally (online channel of the focal retailer and a competing online retailer). The results indicate that both internal and external assortment integration have an impact on overload confusion and assortment perception; consequently, the authors propose that multi-channel retailers should consider the results of this study when implementing an assortment integration strategy.

The theme of retailer performance assessment is more obviously investigated in the paper of Vyt and Cliquet who propose performance standards, underpinned by the concepts of organizational justice and store efficiency, that can be applied to more fairly to reward retail managerial performance by considering store neighbourhood characteristics. Using data from a French supermarket chain and a geo-marketing approach, the authors employ *Data Envelopment Analysis* (DEA) with existing internal retailer ranking approaches. Findings confirm that the retailer tends to favour points of sale with a more important trade area, with more employees operating in a more densely populated area with a higher buying power.

Retailers' international innovative retail mixes are investigated by Kim, Lee and Stoel, who provide a series of propositions and theoretical rationale to explain how global retailers are able to harvest multiple ideas from diverse host-markets, and add relevant new ideas into a standardized retail mix that is rolled out globally. The study adopts the term 'logalization' from the economics

literature and apply the absorptive capacity framework (i.e. potential and realized capacities) to describe how global retailers can create an innovative retail mix by exploiting heterogeneous information from various host-markets to create and sustain a competitive advantage in global markets.

Consumers' perceptions are also examined in separate studies by Skippari, Nyrhinen, and Karjaluoto and Sihvonen and Luomala. Skippari, Nyrhinen and Karjaluoto draw on institutional and social network theory to investigate the role of consumers' personal values and engagement with local communities in the determination of local store patronage. By contrast, the paper by Sihvonen and Luomala focuses on the activation of a consumer's different consumption motives immediately prior to making food choices. The research contributes to the literature on consumers' health behaviour by revealing new motivational origins for health-goal priming effects and the moderating role of consumers' values.

The last two studies in the special issue examine albeit from different perspectives how certain social development questions are addressed. Gunn et al. examine attitudes towards retail careers and reveal significant differences in career preferences based on demographic and psychosocial characteristics. Their analysis informs both practicing retail managers and retail educators on approaches to promoting better awareness of retail careers among identified groups, and improving general retail recruitment strategy effectiveness. In contrast, O'Callaghan and Murray examine the internal branding process, using a multiple case methodology, to improve the performance prospects of independent retailers operating within branded networks. Findings indicate that a perception of shared values, shared goals, common branding challenges and strategic fit with the network brand were key to internal brand identification, but it was the level of positive social identification that was significant for successful internal brand management.

As guest editors of this special issue, we would like to express our thanks to the authors for their submissions, to the anonymous referees for their careful reading of the manuscripts, and to Professor Leigh Sparks for giving us the opportunity to publish this special issue. We hope that readers will enjoy this selection that represents a small sample of the diversity of the papers that were presented at the 19th International Conference on Research in the Distributive Trades of the EAERCD, and will find in them a motivation to join the next conference that will be hosted by the University of Zaragoza, Spain in July 2019.

Slán agus Beannacht.

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