Preface

It is a great pleasure and honour to introduce the first book of the *International Journal of Online Marketing* (IJOM) to academic societies and scholars in the field of marketing. The book endeavours to extend the quality of research results presented in each issue of the IJOM 2011 volume. Although it was a huge challenge to introduce a new journal to the world, the IJOM has lived up to its potential and helped online marketing (as a new marketing phenomenon and philosophy) to grow in a very dramatic and dynamic way.

Without a doubt, the Internet has not only changed the way businesses interact and deal with their customers and clients, but it has also changed ways of conducting business. Within this context, marketing activities on the Internet are no longer limited to the use of plain text messages. Today, the WWW allows interactive marketing because the user is actively involved in responding to vendors’ promotion campaigns (Gogan, 1997, p. 93; Poon & Jevons, 1997, p. 29). This interactivity is not usually found in traditional marketing techniques that use broadcast and print media. The most recent developments of the Internet and the WWW allow full multimedia interactive animations to carry out marketing activities on the Internet almost instantly and offers great potential for direct marketing and early stage marketing (Berthon, et al., 1996a, 1996b). According to Chaffey (2007), Internet Marketing is: “Achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies of the Internet” (Chaffey, 2007, p. 1). On the other hand, according to eBusiness Connection (2012), Internet marketing is: “The component of marketing that deals with the planning, pricing, promotion, and distribution of products and services online” (eBusiness Connection, 2012, p. 2). They also argue that good Internet marketing strategies clearly communicate a firm’s unique selling proposition, or the unique collection of benefits that create value for its customers. Moreover, Eid (2003) defined Internet Marketing as: “The use of the Internet to achieve marketing objectives and support marketing activities” (Eid, 2003, p. 5).

The possibility of using the Internet as an instrument for conducting marketing, commercial, and business activities has been widely investigated and recognised in marketing literature (see McCole & Ramsey, 2004; Oliva, 2004; Chaston & Mangles, 2003; Siddiqui, et al., 2003; Martin & Matlay, 2003; Collins, et al., 2003; Adam & Deans, 2001; McGowan, et al., 2001; Poon & Swatman, 1996, 1997a, 1997b; Chaffey, et al., 2000; Wilson & Abel, 2002; Kiang, et al., 2000). This recognition of the potential of the Internet as a marketing tool rose from the great benefits that any company, regardless of its size, can gain from using the Internet in conducting its marketing activities. Within this context, the adoption of the Internet as a commercial intermediate and marketing tool has provided some companies with pioneering ways of marketing products in an intensively competitive environment. On the other hand, Berezai (2000) argues that companies have been forced to consider the Internet as a business and marketing tool in response to the growth in customers’ usage of the Internet for almost every day-to-day activity.
In fact, the revolutionary developments in IT, computer science, and communications have expanded the role of the Internet beyond its simple use as a communication tool to become a unique and extremely important means for communicating with customers, providing services on a 24/7 basis, entering new markets, reducing costs, and increasing sales. Moreover, one of the main characteristics of the Internet is its ability to be used both as a direct sales channel and as an interactive communications tool. Consequently, the Internet can affect company marketing performance in two different ways, directly through increasing direct sales and indirectly by providing a higher level of customer satisfaction. This improves relationships with customers as well as productivity.

According to Papazoglou and Tsalgatidou (2000), Online Marketing involves more than simple online transactions. They argue that Online Marketing facilitates activities such as market research, identifying opportunities and partners, cultivation of relationships with customers and suppliers, document exchanges, and providing a facility for joint design (Papazoglou & Tsalgatidou, 2000, p. 301). In addition, Greene (2012) demonstrates that the Internet provides a lot of benefits for any company in terms of marketing activities. According to him, the benefits of Online Marketing include: low start-up costs, low operating costs, cheap and free resources, time freedom, and high profit margin. Moreover, Epsilon (2009) states that Online Marketing reimbursement includes a 24/7 presence as well as convenience, added value and satisfaction, the ability to standardise sales performance, improved credibility, promotion of brick and mortar presence, growth opportunity, two-way communicative marketing, cheap market research, and flexibility. Within the same line, Ghosh (1998) illustrates that the Internet can widen markets, increase efficiencies, and lower costs by bringing companies and customers together (Ghosh, 1998, p. 125). In more detail Gogan (1997) argues that the expected benefits for most companies includes improving seller competitive position, adding new markets, reducing seller costs, improving seller capabilities, and improving customer service and relationship (Gogan, 1997, p. 96).

Additionally, Skinner (2000) argues that the Internet provides four different types of opportunities for different firms. According to his arguments, the Internet can establish a direct link among companies and customers to complete transactions or trade information more easily, lets companies avoid other parties in its value chain through selling directly to customers, helps the business to develop and deliver new products and services for current and prospective customers, and finally, allows companies to possibly use the Internet to become the main leader in a specific industry or segment and to set new business rules (Skinner, 2000, p. 127). Moreover, Lancioni (2000) argues that continual growth of Internet usage has provided businesses with a lot of important opportunities for reducing costs and improving IT services. This can be achieved through the unique characteristics of the Internet, which allow enterprises to keep track of different customer preferences, and enables them to adapt these preferences into enterprise marketing activities such as advertising and promotions to satisfy these preferences and needs. This in turn will lead to increasing marketing productivity through the linking of enterprise expenditures with its results. On the other hand, use of the Internet for commercial communications, such as sharing business information, maintaining business relationships, and conducting business transactions, plays a very important role in today’s marketing practices.

Based on all of the above, we can see that Online Marketing can be viewed as a modern business practice associated with buying and selling goods, services, information, and ideas via the Internet and other electronic means. However, the review of the related literature exposes that one of the main obstacles in the literature is the unclear way of dealing with the concept and definitions of E-Business, E-Marketing, E-Commerce, and Online Marketing. Within this context, the majority of researchers within the field misuse the term E-Business, the mainstream of researchers are using the terms: E-Business and
E-Commerce as equivalents or a different wording for the same meaning, which is incorrect because these terms are different. For most of the researchers, the term E-Business is generally regarded as the application of Information Technologies (IT) into business processes (El-Gohary, 2009).

El-Gohary (2009) argues (based on the various definitions of E-Commerce and E-Business) that the concept of E-Business goes beyond the narrow understanding associated with the term E-Commerce. Within this context, E-Commerce characteristically relates to the process of buying and selling products, services and information through the use of the Internet and/or computer networks (Chaffey, 2007; Lesjak & Vehovar, 2005; Laudon & Laudon, 2004; Greenstein & Feinman, 2000; Turban, et al., 2004). Moreover, according to the arguments of Rodgers et al. (2002), E-Commerce principally focuses on the organisation customers while E-Business expands the connectivity of the organisation to include not only its customers but also the organisation suppliers, employees, and business partners. Accordingly, E-Commerce and E-Business are not only two different concepts but also E-Commerce is a subset of E-Business, in line with the findings of Dalton (1999), Kalakota and Robinson (1999), Chaffey (2007), Lesjak and Vehovar (2005), Laudon and Laudon (2004), Jelassi and Enders (2008), Greenstein and Feinman (2000), and Turban et al. (2004). Accordingly, E-Business, E-Marketing, E-Commerce, and Online Marketing are not equivalents or a different wording for the same meaning as observed in the literature, where there is a blurring of the distinction between the terms. Within this context, E-Marketing is broader in scope than Online Marketing since it refers not only to digital media such as the Web, e-mail, and wireless media, but also includes the management of digital customer data, Mobile Marketing, Intranet Marketing, Extraneat Marketing, and electronic customer relationship management systems. In contrast, E-Commerce and E-Business have a wider and broader scope than E-Marketing (El-Gohary, et al., 2008).

To help in achieving a better understanding of Online Marketing, the International Journal of Online Marketing (IJOM) is an applied research, refereed, international journal that provides complete coverage of the opportunities, challenges, and current trends encountered by researchers and practitioners in the field of online marketing. The journal offers an important and critical platform for researchers, practitioners, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and educators to present and discuss their experiences and perspectives on important issues and current trends related to marketing activities and research in an online context. The International Journal of Online Marketing (IJOM) publishes original research papers, case studies, conference reports, management reports, book reviews, notes, and commentaries on all aspects of online marketing.

With the intention of positioning the IJOM as one of the most valued and respected journals within the field of online marketing, a group of highly respected scholars have agreed to join the IJOM editorial board. I am honoured to have two associate editors: Prof. J. J. Asongu (American Academy of Business and Public Policy, USA) and Dr. Riyad Eid (Wolverhampton University Business School, UK). I am also delighted and honoured to have a highly regarded group of International Review Board Members consisting of high profile academic researchers and professionals from 15 different countries all over the world that are actively researching the field of online marketing. The IJOM would not exist without the endless efforts, enthusiasm, and commitment of the IJOM editorial board and IGI Global’s dedicated staff.

The mission of the International Journal of Online Marketing (IJOM) is to provide broad and comprehensive international coverage of subjects, issues, and current trends relating to all areas of online marketing. Emphasis is placed on publishing research articles, case studies, and book reviews that seek to connect theory with application, identifying the best practices in online marketing. In this respect, the journal links both theoretical and practical approaches of online marketing to make a proactive contribution to the field.
This book includes twenty chapters. The lead chapter, written by Stuart J. Barnes (of University of East Anglia, UK) and Jan Mattsson (Roskilde University, Denmark), discusses segmenting brand value perceptions of consumers in virtual worlds. This chapter examines the spectrum of perceptions of consumers of four major real-life brands (Armani, Dell, Mercedes, and Hublot) that have established operations in Second Life. A survey was conducted using an avatar survey bot (n=1,039). Using the FIMIX-PLS procedure, an axiological measurement instrument for brand value and formative modelling techniques, the authors identified segments of consumers with different perceptions of value for each brand. The analysis shows a clear difficulty in establishing emotional rapport with consumers in Second Life.

The second chapter, written by Vrontis and Melanthiou (of University of Nicosia, Cyprus), explores the different factors influencing online shopping using three airline company websites as an indicative example. The results show that airline companies appear to perform relatively well on issues of website best practices.

The third chapter of Simeon and Sayeed (of San Francisco State University, USA), presents and extends a proven framework for examining the strategic orientation of winery websites. By treating winery websites as intensive information environments, the chapter shows how they can have a strategic impact on perceptions. Using a modified AIPD framework and statistical analyses, the chapter shows how certain California wineries are able to fully project the wine tourism experience online while targeting strategic perception goals that are effective at building virtual brand equity and boosting winery visitations at the same time.

The intention of the chapter of Eid and Hughes (of Wolverhampton University, UK), is to present empirical research that investigates the factors driving and inhibiting online social networks usage. It gives a brief overview of the academic literature on the diffusion of online social networks. The findings show that online social networks in general, and Facebook in particular, will become an extremely important marketing tool in the future.

The chapter of Millman and EI-Gohary (of Birmingham City University, UK), considers the concept of innovative marketing within the context of micro firms, exploring how such firms’ marketing activities and practices can take advantage of the new digital media. Within the article, factors that influence a micro firm’s innovative activities are examined; the development and implementation of new digital media in the firm’s marketing practice is explored. The findings show that in practice much of the marketing activities within micro firms are driven by incremental innovation.

Chapter six, written by Millman (of Birmingham City University, UK), discusses E-Commerce adoption by micro firms within the UK tourism sector. Depending on a qualitative investigation, she focuses on the next stage of Internet usage by micro-businesses in the tourism sector. She examines the different motivations for E-Commerce adoption among UK tourism micro firms. Preliminary results show that there are a number of “push” and “pull” factors, which reinforce business owners’ decisions in adopting E-Commerce. The findings have implications for researchers and policy makers, since understanding the diversity of small firms has shown the need to tailor policy initiatives and training programmes for such firms.

Chapter seven, written by Treiblmaier (of Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration, Austria), Neale (of Queensland University of Technology, Australia), and Chong (of Curtin University of Technology, Australia), explores how cultural differences influence the way potential customers perceive companies’ (which operate globally) websites. They present a model, which highlights the importance of ease of use, enjoyment, content, and brand trust for website loyalty. The model is subsequently tested in four countries: Australia, Japan, Mongolia, and the USA. The results show that perceptual differences
exist: while ease of use is crucial for website loyalty in all four countries, the importance of content, perceived enjoyment, and brand trust varies across different cultures.

Chapter eight of Dyerson (of University of London, UK) and Spinelli (of Università Degli Studi Di Genova, Italy) analyses the strategic, organisational, and structural conditions for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to fully exploit the potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). They build a conceptual framework relating ICT readiness to two more common dimensions, namely strategic vision of ICT and ICT maturity. Using this framework, the authors identify four distinct groups of SMEs, associated with different degrees of readiness, and analyse possible evolutionary and regressive development paths among these groups. They argue that the framework represents a valid tool of diagnosis and intervention, especially in those circumstances where SMEs are not able to fully exploit the potential of ICT. Indeed, the framework helps to identify the underlying causes of limited ICT readiness and can support owners, managers, and consultants in choosing and implementing appropriate interventions.

The intention of chapter nine of Taufique (of Presidency University, Bangladesh) and Shahriar (of Leading University, Bangladesh) is to present an investigation of Buzz Marketing, which has been considered an alternative strategy of creating preference and demand among prospective customers by the theoreticians and practitioners. The study focuses on the users of the online social media and creates profiles of these buzz riders. Depending on a qualitative nature, the chapter also proposes some strategic implications for the different categories of online social media users to elicit positive responses of companies’ buzz marketing efforts.

The chapter of Žižka and Rukavitsyn (of Mendel University, Czech Republic) considers the use of a Machine-Learning (ML)-based approach to automatically process and classify E-Shopping customers, blog authors, reviewers, and other Web contributors’ opinions of a purchased item. The chapter results show that depending on this Machine-Learning (ML)-based approach improves the accuracy of this classification by 70%.

Chapter eleven, written by Saastamoinen (of University of Eastern Finland, Finland) discusses retail markets in online comparison shopping websites. The main objective of this chapter is to study competition and seller profitability in comparison shopping markets. Saastamoinen proposes a model where two profit-maximizing sellers sell a homogeneous good to Bayesian risk-neutral buyers. The model shows that a seller’s profit depends on the distribution of buyer beliefs. The model is tested using data collected from Pricegrabber (a popular comparison shopping website). The chapter results provide evidence that a good reputation supports price premiums, as the model suggests.

Chapter twelve, written by Leung and Knottenbelt (of Imperial College London, UK), explores Internet auctions, which have become an increasingly common method for exchanging goods and services across the world, both among consumers, as well as between businesses and consumers. These Internet auction mechanisms have the scope of incorporating procedures of much greater complexity and variety, and they exhibit characteristics and properties that are quite distinct from conventional auctions. In this chapter, Leung and Knottenbelt provide an experimental study of the performance characteristics and operational behaviours of a number of online auction models, including the fixed time forward auctions, the Vickrey auctions, as well as models with soft close variable auction times. These online auction models are studied through systematic simulation experiments, based on a series of operational assumptions, which characterise the arrival rate of bids, as well as the distribution from which the private values of buyers are sampled. Leung and Knottenbelt provided suggestions for efficient online auction design and procedures for improving auction performance; moreover, the behaviour of the average auction income and average auction duration are quantified and compared.
The following chapter of Chang (of Hwa University, Taiwan) and Chin (of Asia University, Taiwan) analyses Social Network Sites (SNSs) as new communication channels within which people can share information, view each other’s social networks, and search for common friends or interesting content. The main goal of this study is to gain insight into the different factors that affect user intention to use social network games. The study uses an extended technology acceptance model and focuses on combining personal innovativeness, personal involvement, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation to explain usage intentions for social network games. Chang and Chin propose a model that is tested with data collected from potential users of social network games. Using a multiple regression analysis and MANOVA analysis, they identify the key causal relationships among these factors. The chapter findings illustrate that personal innovativeness and personal involvement have positive effects on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and ultimately influence usage intentions with regard to social network games.

As competitive advantage is at the heart of any firm’s performance in today’s challenging and rapidly changing environment, the main purpose of the chapter of Bal, Bal, and Demirhan (of Yıldız Technical University, Turkey) is to investigate the importance of gaining knowledge for organisations in today’s competitive environment through analysing data mining not only as one of the methods used in the decision making process but also as an innovative technique for organisations to achieve competitive advantages by creating new knowledge and transferring it across various levels of the organisation. The results show that managing the knowledge system within the firm facilitates the decision making process of the organisation. The results also confirm that data mining can be seen as a very effective tool to explore the essential data to create competitive advantage in the changing environment.

The chapter of Rozar (of University Malaysia Pahang, Malaysia), Bin Ibrahim (of Kuala Terengganu Teachers’ College, Malaysia), and Bin Razik (of Open University, Malaysia) is a response for the demanding change of work environment. As most organisations not only depend on traditional training, but also on e-learning and online training, this study is investigating the effectiveness of e-learning training in comparison to traditional training. Within the study, a framework to measure comparative effectiveness between these two learning environments is developed based on Kirkpatrick’s four-level evaluation model, and then a case study approach is applied to test all the levels of the framework. These four levels include: participant reaction, learning achievements, behaviour of employees, and results. The chapter results indicate that there is no difference in the rating of the effectiveness of the two training methods based on Kirkpatrick’s model.

As the impact of social media on the travel industry is predicted to be tremendous, especially on its holiday travel segment, chapter sixteen by Fotis (of University of Bournemouth, UK), Buhalis (of University of Bournemouth, UK), and Rossides (of MASMI Research Group, Cyprus) investigates social media impact on holiday travel planning focusing on the Russian and the FSU markets. Although there is a plethora of studies concentrating on the role and impact of social media in travel related decisions, most of them are medium and community specific, or focus on a specific stage of the decision making or the travel planning process. This chapter attempts to present a comprehensive view of the role and impact of social media on the whole travel planning process: before, during, and after the trip, providing insights on usage levels, scope of use, level of influence, and trust. The study was conducted through an online structured questionnaire on a sample of 346 members of an online panel of Internet users from Russia and the other Former Soviet Union (FSU) Republics who had been on holidays in the previous 12 months. Findings reveal that social media is predominantly used after holidays for experience sharing. It is also shown that there is a strong correlation between level of influence from social media and changes made to holiday plans. Moreover, it is revealed that user-generated content is more trusted than official tourism websites, travel agents, and mass media advertising.
Chapter seventeen, written by Eid (of Wolverhampton University, UK), El Sharief (of King Abdul Aziz University, Saudi Arabia), and Hussein (Tanta University, Egypt) investigates different factors affecting the success of online branding. As online branding has become a crucial part of companies’ activities, the challenge for organisations today is to advance their online business activities. To address this challenge, organisations need to understand the critical success factors for building an online brand. This chapter discusses the above issues and proposes 9 critical factors classified into two categories and validated empirically through a sample of 150 university students. The significance, importance, and implications for each category are discussed, and then recommendations are made.

Chapter eighteen, written by Binsaleh (of Prince of Songkla University, Thailand) and Hassan (of University Utara Malaysia, Malaysia), discusses systems development methodology for mobile commerce applications. The chapter illustrates that although there are several systems development methodologies, including traditional and agile methodologies, being utilised in current systems development, it is argued that when developing mobile commerce applications, suitable development framework should be investigated as these applications are utilised in different contexts from fixed e-Commerce applications. The chapter aims to identify suitable system development methodology framework for mobile commerce applications. In order to achieve this aim, practitioners from seven organisations were surveyed. Binsaleh and Hassan found that there were several development methodologies being used in mobile commerce application development, and they classified it into two different development frameworks, which are heavyweight/traditional and lightweight/agile methodologies.

The intention of the chapter by Santos (of Minho University, Portugal) was to explore the promotion of wine on the Internet by investigating the Portuguese wine blog community. His chapter focuses on the content of Portuguese wine blogs and addresses two main questions: (1) which content and design elements of Portuguese wine blogs have more impact on the promotion of wine, and (2) how can the content and design quality of wine blogs be assessed and improved? To answer these questions, a number of features of wine blogs were examined, and an initial attempt is made to describe the profile, uses, and practices of Portuguese wine bloggers. Strong correlations were found between performance measures (posts, comments, and traffic). In addition, it was found that one of the main marketing features that bloggers can offer was related to wine rating. Presentation features, on the other hand, were found to have small impact on the performance of the blog. The chapter findings also illustrated that accessibility features (such as cross-references and RSS/Feeds that tend to increase blog traffic) are only used by a minority of Portuguese bloggers.

The final chapter by Economides and Kontaratou (of University of Macedonia, Greece) provides a good investigation of hotel pricing at travel search engines. They aimed to compare travel search engines and to determine whether the cheapest and most complete can be determined. The chapter focuses on analysing hotel prices presented on their official websites and on eight tourism search engines, namely: Booking.com, Expedia.com, Hotelclub.com, Hotels.com, Orbitz.com, Priceline.com, Travelocity.com, and Venere.com. Data related to four-hundred-eighty-six hotels (eighteen for each one of the twenty-seven European Union capital cities selected by the list of Tripadvisor) were collected. The chapter findings showed that only 23% of the hotels that Economides and Kontaratou examined are found on all the search engines. In addition, the search engines were more complete for the 5-star hotels than for the 4-star or the 3-star hotels. Furthermore, the price analysis showed that there are differences among the search engines. Although some search engines statistically give lower prices, there is not a single search engine that always gives the lowest price for every hotel. Consequently, travelers should evaluate all the sources during their travel planning decisions to determine the most profitable solution.
Due to the editorial efforts within the *International Journal of Online Marketing* and IGI Global’s dedicated staff, Professor Philip Kotler (of Northwestern University, USA) agreed to be the guest editor for the IJOM inaugural issue. Professor Kotler is a very high profile academic, and his contribution to the *International Journal of Online Marketing* in this way underlined the significance of the journal. Moreover, as a result of the high quality of the research studies published in *International Journal of Online Marketing*, the IJOM is now considered a high profile peer reviewed journal which embraces applied research in the field of online marketing and is accordingly now listed in the Information Resources Management Association Database (http://www.irma-international.org/journal/international-journal-online-marketing-ijom/41737/).

In relation to future trends of the coverage, the *International Journal of Online Marketing* will continue to be an applied research, refereed, international journal that provides complete coverage of the opportunities, challenges, and current trends encountered by researchers and practitioners in the field of Online Marketing. The journal will continue to offer an important and critical platform for researchers, practitioners, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and educators to present and discuss their experiences and perspectives on important issues and current trends related to marketing activities and research in an online context. The *International Journal of Online Marketing* (IJOM) will continue to publish original research papers, case studies, conference reports, management reports, book reviews, notes, and commentaries on all aspects of online marketing. The editorial board will continue to conduct all the possible efforts to achieve the *International Journal of Online Marketing* objectives and maintain its success story.

**Hatem El-Gohary**
*Birmingham City University Business School, UK*

**REFERENCES**


