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Ph.D. Candidate, Imperial College London

**Lecturer, London Campuses of
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EDUCATION

Imperial College Business School PhD in Marketing	2024 (expected)
Imperial College Business School Master of Research	September 2020
University of Law, London LLB	August 2018
Imperial College Business School MSc Strategic Marketing	August 2016
Queen Mary University of London BSc Business Management	July 2015

SUMMARY

I am marketing Ph.D. candidate at Imperial College Business School, United Kingdom. I specialize in consumer-based marketing/brand strategy. My research uses interviews, field, and lab experiments, and econometric analysis of observational data. I thus consider myself as a multimethod researcher for whom questions precede methods.

I was born and raised a Hungarian minority within the country of Slovakia (in Eastern Europe) and later moved to the United Kingdom for my university education. I have taught in undergraduate, masters, and executive MBA programs at Imperial College and the London campuses of Boston University's Questrom School of Business and ESCP. The courses I have taught include introduction to marketing, marketing strategy, and marketing research.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

I have two streams of research. The first one studies consumer-brand interactions in the context of brand transgressions. Specifically, I study how a brand's transgression induces in its consumers the tendency to ruminate, which leads to toxic consumer behaviors intended to punish the brand at the expense of one's mental peace.

The second stream examines how stakeholders make sense of an emerging marketing phenomenon. I apply this interest to the phenomenon of influencer marketing, studying how social media users, brand managers, and advertising agencies make sense of and bestow legitimacy on a social media influencer.

Keywords: Influencer marketing, brand transgression, rumination

PUBLICATIONS

Barbara Duffek, Andreas B. Eisingerich, and Omar Merlo (2023), “Why so Toxic? A Framework for Exploring Customer Toxicity”, *AMS Review*, 13, 122–143. (Dissertation Essay 1).

Customers are increasingly empowered in their interactions with firms. Sometimes they help firms but, unfortunately, they can also become “toxic” and hurt them. Customers are toxic when they engage in deliberate and potentially harmful acts towards a firm driven either by a reparatory or damaging mental state following a transgression. Whilst the existing literature has studied customers’ negative actions against organizations, critical questions remain as to how and why customers become toxic. We structure a fragmented field of research on customer toxicity and explore customers’ mental state before they decide to do nothing (non-complainers), avoid the brand, act against firms with either a reparatory mental state—and, thus, often constructive in nature (e.g., to initiate change)—or with a toxic mental state and destructive objectives (e.g., to harm and punish a firm). We highlight that the impact of these actions on a firm can still be “toxic” even without intention of harming and punishing. Furthermore, we outline the conceptual domain of customer toxicity and shift the focus from negative behavior to customers’ mental state, by integrating the marketing, aggression, and psychology literatures. We discuss the theoretical implications of our study and explore how future work may further examine organizations’ interactions with toxic customers. Finally, we provide managerial recovery techniques depending on customers’ mental state at a particular time.

Astvanish, Vivek*, **Barbara Duffek*** and Andreas B. Eisingerich* (2022), “How Can Companies Recover from Liability-Invoking Failures? Exploring the Role of Uncertainty Avoidance in Facilitating Consumer Compliance Across National Cultures,” *Journal of International Marketing*, 31 (3), 1–18.

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Experiments in four countries and using as participants managers and graduate students show that a company’s message to its consumers elicits greater compliance if it emphasizes prevention of risk as opposed to promotion of benefit. Further, a prevention-focused message is more effective with consumers from high uncertainty avoidance cultures, whereas a promotion-focused message is more effective in low uncertainty avoidance cultures. Perceived compatibility of prevention or promotion goals with low or high values of uncertainty avoidance mediates the interaction effect on compliance. The findings help companies overcome consumer apathy to product recall or data breach notices and offer managers ways to promote consumer safety and protection.

Barbara Duffek, Andreas B. Eisingerich, Omar Merlo and Guan Aik Lee, “What is Influencer Authenticity, and How Can Brands Work with Influencers to Create Authentic Branded Content?” (Dissertation Essay 3).

Status: **Invited for 3rd round resubmission** at the *Journal of Marketing*

Using exploratory in-depth interviews, I explore how consumers, influencers, brand managers, and advertising agencies determine the authenticity of an influencer and their content, providing institutional legitimacy to this emerging marketing phenomenon. The research defines *influencer authenticity* as a highly contextual attribute that is perceived differently depending on a stakeholder’s position in the marketplace. The findings indicate that different stakeholders stress different dimensions of authenticity because of their unique point of view and vested interest. The differences in the dimensions of authenticity create tensions amongst the stakeholders. These tensions influence the perceived authenticity of the branded content too. Further, advertising agencies can help manage the tension of authenticity inherent in the influencer-brand relationship. Knowledge of these tensions and the mechanisms to mitigate them can aid brand managers to work with influencers to create authentic branded content.

Barbara Duffek, Omar Merlo, Wayne Hoyer and Andreas B. Eisingerich, “The Deflation Effect: How to Reduce the Vengefulness of Negative Reviews” (Dissertation Essay 2).

Status: **revise & resubmit** at the *Journal of Marketing*

This paper investigates whether and why the way a review is collected impacts consumers’ tendency to turn to vengeful behavior. The authors propose that rating a negative experience first, as opposed to writing a written review first, decreases the vengefulness of the written review itself. The authors reason that the decrease in vengefulness occurs because of rumination refocusing. When consumers rate various aspects of their experience, before being prompted to write a written review, consumers shift the focus of their rumination away from the failure to their overall experience. By establishing that collecting ratings before reviews can reduce consumers’ vengeful behavior, the authors contribute to the literature stream that investigates how the way a written review is collected can reduce vengeful behavior. Second, the authors contribute to rumination literature by shedding light on the importance of rumination following a transgression. Last, establishing that refocusing rumination can reduce the impact of rumination on vengeful behavior, the authors contribute to the literature on the cessation of rumination and thus provide managerial guidance on how to collect less vengeful and less negative written reviews.

Adnan Yusuf, Anish Nagpal, Omar Merlo and **Barbara Duffek**, “Marketing Capabilities for Successful Customer Participation in B2C”

Status: **reject & resubmit** at the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*

Over the past few years, research on the impact of customer participation (CP) on business outcomes has led to conflicting findings, with some studies showing positive outcomes and others inconclusive or negative ones. The current study posits that these inconsistent findings are partly explained by the presence or absence of firm capabilities to support CP management. In

essence, firms need specific capabilities for CP to work, and these capabilities vary depending on the type of CP (mandatory, replaceable, or voluntary), and the resources contributed by customers (tangible vs non-tangible resources). This study uses a framework of CP based on prior research and provides a comprehensive review of the literature on capabilities pertaining to CP, to determine what capabilities are required according to different CP combinations (i.e., variations in the type of participation and the resources contributed by customers). The paper concludes with a set of managerial and theoretical implications.

SELECTED RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Barbara Duffek Omar Merlo, Andreas B. Eisingerich and Simon Bell, “How Can Digital Offerings Enhance Consumers’ Quality of Life”

Status: data collection in progress; 3 studies conducted (in-depth interviews with 91 consumers, lab experiment, survey with consumers of an online music streaming provider).

This research develops and tests a model that shows how benefits provided by a digital service can improve consumers’ quality of life most effectively. Using a multi-method approach and involving three studies, the research theorizes and demonstrates that productivity benefits, sensorially pleasing benefits, and cognitive benefits of a digital service improve consumers’ quality of life through three mechanisms: (1) dependability, (2) entertainment, and (3) flow. Among these three, flow—i.e., an optimal psychological state of engagement with and immersion in a digital service—has the greater explanatory power. The research guides digital service providers how they can boost consumers’ quality of life.

Barbara Duffek and Andreas B. Eisingerich, “Can Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Based Service Make People Less Selfish? Exploring Symbolic Benefits Offered by AI in Service and Customer Outcomes”

Status: data collection in progress (3 lab experiments conducted).

Symbolic benefits “symbolize” or represent aspects of one’s identity to the self and others. The research posits that for Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based services of the future, distinct types of symbolic brand benefits can be identified: (1) status, (2) aesthetics, and (3) universalist benefits. We develop novel theory and provide empirical evidence regarding the emotional and behavioral effects of a service AI’s universalist benefits relative to status and aesthetic benefits. The current findings show that universalist benefits are more effective in reducing people’s selfishness and have a stronger impact on customer pro-firm behaviors than status or aesthetic benefits do because the former uniquely evoke feelings of elevation. One boundary condition for these effects is the belief that a service firm’s AI actions are (vs. are not) self-serving. The current study offers novel theory and empirical findings that indicate AI-based services of the future may offer key symbolic benefits to reduce customer selfishness and enhance pro-firm behavior. Questions pertinent to these issues for AI and service researchers, marketing academics, and managers are highlighted.

Barbara Duffek, Thomas Foscht and Andreas B. Eisingerich, “How Can Customer Switching to Another Service Be Reduced?”

Status: data collection in progress (2 lab experiments conducted).

This research (1) articulates the conceptual meaning and measurement of three foundational service brand benefits; (2) delineates and empirically tests the process by which key service brand benefits lead to customer attachment to a service; and (3) shows how and when brand attachment can defend a service brand against an equivalent and even superior new market entrant. A key managerial takeaway from the current findings is that in addition to investing in benefits that offer empowerment and gratification to customers, service brands stand much to gain from exploring enriching benefits, which boost customers’ self-esteem to enhance customer loyalty and reduce willingness to switch to an objectively superior competitive offering.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND INTEREST

Teaching experience: Marketing strategy, Marketing research, Marketing analytics, Consumer Behavior, and International marketing

Teaching interest: Introduction to marketing, Consumer behavior, Retailing, and Brand management

Evidence of teaching excellence and student evaluations can be accessed here:

https://www.barbaraduffek.com/_files/ugd/c9d917_69de044477234c0e8a233e89557da574.pdf

Lecturer, Boston University Questrom School of Business (on-campus, London)

CM521 British & European Marketing Strategy, undergraduate (2021 – current)

MK467 Global Marketing Management, undergraduate (2021 – current)

CM744 British Media in the Digital Age, graduate (2022 – current)

CM334 Advertising in the UK, undergraduate (2024 – current)

LM Advertising and Marketing Seminars, undergraduate (2020 – current)

Lecturer, ESCP (on-campus, London)

MSc Management

Data-Driven Marketing (2022)

Teaching Assistant, Imperial College Business School

Global MBA, Executive MBA (online and on-campus)

Marketing Management (2019 – 2023)

Brand Management (2019 – 2021)

MSc Strategic Marketing (online)

Consumer Behavior (2022)

Strategic Market Management (2020 – 2022)

Strategic Brand Management (2022)

Digital Marketing (2020)

Services and Customer Relationship Management (2021 – 2022)

Applied Strategic Marketing (2021 – 2023)
Machine Learning Applications in Marketing (2022 – 2023)
Effective Crisis Management (2021 – 2023)
Strategic Marketing Innovation (2023)

MSc Strategic Marketing (on-campus)
Markstrat Simulation Coaching (2022)

MSc Business Analytics (online and on-campus)
Retail and Marketing Analytics (2022)

AWARDS AND HONORS

- AMA DocSIG Financial Support Grant winner (2023)
- **AMA Sheth Foundation Doctoral Consortium Fellow** (2023)
- Travel Stipend for AMA Global Marketing SIG Doctoral Consortium (May 2022)
- **Teaching Excellence Award Nomination** (Teaching Assistant), Imperial College Business School (2022, 2023)
- **INSENDI/FOME E-learning Award Nomination**, Imperial College Business School (2021)
- EMAC Doctoral Colloquium Fellow (2021 – 2023)
- **GTA scholarship**, Imperial College Business School (2019 – present)
- **Dean’s Award for Academic Achievement**, Imperial College London (July 2016)
- **Imperial Business Scholarship**, winner of £10,000 stipend (June 2015)
- Leverhulme Prize for best dissertation, Queen Mary University of London (July 2015)
- Mentor of the Year Award, Queen Mary University of London (March 2015)
- College Prize Award for finishing top of the class, Queen Mary University of London (June 2014; June 2015)
- Alvaro Angeriz Memorial Prize for outstanding academic achievements, Queen Mary University of London (June 2013)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (* Presenter)

Barbara Duffek*, Andreas B. Eisingerich, Omar Merlo and Guan Aik Lee, “How Can Brands Work with Influencers to Create Authentic Branded Content?”

- AMA Summer Academic Conference, San Francisco (August 2023)
- European ACR, Amsterdam (July 2023)
- EMAC, Odense (May 2023)
- PhD camp, London (February 2023)

Barbara Duffek*, Omar Merlo, Wayne Hoyer and Andreas B. Eisingerich, “The Deflation Effect: How to Reduce the Vengefulness of Negative Reviews”

- AMA-Sheth Doctoral Consortium, Oslo (June 2023)
- Job Market Simulation, EMAC (May 2023)

- EMAC Doctoral Colloquium, Odense (May 2023)

Vivek Astvansh, **Barbara Duffek*** and Andreas B. Eisingerich, “How Can Companies Recover from Liability-Invoking Failures? Exploring the Role of Uncertainty Avoidance in Facilitating Consumer Compliance Across National Cultures”

- AMA Summer Academic Conference, virtual (August 2022)
- Society for Consumer Psychology, Singapore (July 2022)
- AMA Global SIG Conference, Crete (June 2022)

Barbara Duffek*, Omar Merlo and Andreas B. Eisingerich, “Rumination: a process mechanism behind hostile and instrumental aggression”

- EMAC Doctoral Colloquium, Budapest (May 2022)
- PhD camp, London (May 2022)

Abhishek Borah, Marton Varga, **Barbara Duffek*** and Vivek Astvansh, “Effect of Product Recalls on the Price of the Recalled Product—A Contingency View”

- EMAC Doctoral Colloquium, virtual (May 2021)
- PhD camp, virtual (May 2021)

Barbara Duffek*, Omar Merlo and Andreas B. Eisingerich, “Consumer Toxicity - A Process Model”

- AMA Winter Academic Conference, San Diego (February 2020)

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

- Reviewer:
 - AMA Summer and Winter Academic Conferences (2021 – current)
 - Academy of Consumer Research Conference (2023)
 - MIT Press (2023)
 - Trainee reviewer, Journal of Consumer Research (2023)
 - Ad-hoc reviewer, Journal of Business Research, Production and Operations Management (2023 – current)
- Conference session chair:
 - AMA Summer Academic Conference, International and Cross-Cultural Marketing track (2022)
 - EMAC Odense, Digital Media and Social Media track (2023)

AFFILIATIONS

Society of Consumer Psychology (SCP)
American Marketing Association (AMA)

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Research Assistant, Imperial College London (2019 – present)
Research Assistant to Abhishek Borah, INSEAD (2018 – 2019)
Marketing Consultant (2017 – 2019)

SELECTED DOCTORAL COURSEWORK

Marketing

Consumer Behavior, Imperial College London (Bhargave)
Consumer Behavior, LBS (Berman and Chen)
Strategic Management, Imperial College London (Mishina)
Digital Marketing Analytics, Imperial College London (Talluri)
Retail and Marketing Analytics, Imperial College London (Yildirim)

Methodology

Systematic Literature Review, Imperial College London (Autio)
Experimental Research Design, Imperial College London (Criscuolo and Bhargave)
Data Analysis Tools, Imperial College London (Bhamra)
Applied Microeconometrics, Imperial College London (Kacperczyk and Hansman)
Qualitative Research Methods, Imperial College London (Hampel and Perkmann)
Probability Models in Marketing, LBS (Hardie)
Empirical Marketing Models, LBS (Manchanda and Zhang)
Meta-Analysis, Erasmus University Rotterdam (van Essen)
Econometrics, LSE (Wang, Otsu, Hidalgo and Pischke)

REFERENCES

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