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## Editorial: Relationship marketing and the internet

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### Thorsten Hennig-Thurau

Department of Marketing and Media,  
Bauhaus-University of Weimar,  
Bauhausstr. 11, Weimar 99423, Germany  
Fax: +49 3643 58 3791 E-mail: tht@medien.uni-weimar.de

**Biographical notes:** Thorsten Hennig-Thurau is Professor of Marketing and Media Research at the Bauhaus-University of Weimar, Germany. His research interests include relationship marketing, services management, and media management. Dr. Hennig-Thurau's work has been published in, among others, *Journal of Service Research*, *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, *Psychology & Marketing*, and *Journal of Marketing Management*. He is editor of a book titled *Relationship Marketing* and serves on the editorial board of three journals, including the *Journal of Service Research*. His achievements include several best paper awards and the JSR Excellence in Service Research Award 2002.

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Half a decade ago I was co-author of a paper dealing with what was then the state-of-the-art of relationship marketing research (Hennig-Thurau and Hansen, 2000). The paper included a section in which we suggested areas for future research. At that time, one particular under-researched area worthy of additional attention was the 'use of information and communication technologies in relationship marketing' – largely a paraphrase for the role of the internet in developing long-term relationships with customers. It is therefore a particular pleasure for me to serve as the editor for this special issue on 'Relationship marketing and the internet'. Not just the papers included in this special issue but also the large number of submissions we received show that research on this topic has intensified significantly since my call for more activity in this field.

In the same paper, I also argued for a need to contextualise previous knowledge: "The expertise accumulated in each respective environment must be re-analysed with regard to its potential transferability into different contexts" (Hennig-Thurau and Hansen, 2000, p.13). Reflecting this, several of the papers published in this special issue draw on knowledge and constructs established in traditional (i.e., 'offline') relationship marketing and investigate their validity in an internet marketing context. Specifically, Sweeney (comparing the impact of internet banking and traditional banking on relationship marketing outcomes), Fassott (studying the influence of relationship investments on such outcomes), Bramall et al. (analysing determinants of consumer trust) and Martin et al. (addressing retail store layout characteristics) all use knowledge of relationship marketing developed in an offline context and test its applicability for internet relationship marketing. In other words, instead of developing completely new concepts, existing knowledge is transferred and contextualised. This helps prevent the domain of relationship marketing from becoming overly fragmented and will eventually contribute

to the development of an overall theory of relationship marketing, the challenge I guess many of us relationship marketing researchers are ultimately striving for.

Moreover, considering the breadth of topics addressed by the selected papers, I find it significant that five of the six papers deal with the concept of relationship quality. Several facets of this construct are addressed in this special issue, such as its conceptualisation (Sweeney, Fassott), its dimensions (Bramall et al.), as well as the determinants of relationship quality (Fassott, Kim, Rao), either directly or indirectly. In my view, this selection illustrates the core role of relationship quality for relationship marketing theory, a role that has only occasionally been recognised by marketing journals' editors and reviewers, and I applaud the authors for their choice of topic.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to thank everybody involved in the creation of this special issue. In addition to the authors whose tremendous efforts made the issue possible, my gratitude also goes to the regular editorial team of Eldon Li and Rebecca Yen for their ongoing support during the preparation of this special issue. Last but definitely not least, my selection relied heavily upon the judgements of the reviewers from 15 countries and 4 continents who dedicated their time to this special issue providing valuable feedback. My thanks go to the following persons who served as reviewers: Mohan Agrawal, Calpoly State University (USA), Joseph Chang, University of Regina (Canada), Cindy Claycomb, Wichita State University (USA), Arnaud De Bruyn, Pennsylvania State University (USA), Raj Devasagayam, Siena College (USA), Tino Fenech, Griffith University, Gold Coast (Australia), Jesus Garcia Madariaga, Complutense University of Madrid (Spain), Claire Gauzente, University of Angers (France), Dominik Georgi, University of Basel (Switzerland), J. Tomas Gomez Arias, University of A Coruna (Spain), Matthias Gouthier, Catholic University of Eichstätt (Germany), Kevin Gwinner, Kansas State University (USA), Michael Harker, Middlesex University (UK), Ming-Hui Huang, National Chung Hsing University (Taiwan), Raechel Hughes, University of Canberra (Australia), Grace Johnson, University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee (USA), Eric Karson, Villanova University (USA), Byron Keating, University of Newcastle (UK), Sandeep Krishnamurthy, University of Washington (USA), Veronica Liljander, Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration, Helsinki (Finland), Yichen Lin, Southern Taiwan University of Technology (Taiwan), Victor Morin, Edmunds.com (USA), Avinandan Mukherjee, Pennsylvania State University at Erie (USA), Matthew O'Brien, University of Arizona (USA), Monica Perry, California State University, Fullerton (USA), Vanessa Ratten, University of Queensland (Australia), Jennifer Rowley, University of Wales, Bangor (Wales), Abhijit Roy, Loyola College (USA), Sema Sakarya, Boaziçi University (Turkey), Marianna Sigala, Strathclyde University (Scotland), Peter Thirkell, Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand), Erik van Raaij, Eindhoven University of Technology (The Netherlands), Cleopatra Veloutsou, University of Glasgow (Scotland), Gianfranco Walsh, Strathclyde University (Scotland), Michael Weber, University of Miami (USA).

## Reference

- Hennig-Thurau, T. and Hansen, U. (2000) 'Relationship marketing – some reflections on the state-of-the-art of the relational concept,' in Hennig-Thurau, T. and Hansen, U. (Eds.): *Relationship Marketing*, Springer, Berlin, pp.3–27.