Editorial

Research into salesperson and customer satisfaction as well as their antecedents and outcomes has a long tradition in marketing. However, advances and changes in databases and research methods, in application areas as well as in communication and distribution channels are opening up opportunities that have not yet been explored. The three articles in this issue of Marketing ZFP – Journal of Research and Management provide examples of such new opportunities, seized by young and established, national and international researchers.

From a database and research method point of view, Anne T. Coughlan, Michael Gerke, and Manfred Krafft, the authors of the first article, apply seemingly unrelated regression analysis to single-item measures from a large sample of direct sellers that describe the antecedents and outcomes of their selling activities. Lisa-Marie Klopfer as well as Teresa Ries and Daniel Baier, the authors of the other two articles, rely, in contrast to them, on smaller samples of respondents and on multi-item measures and structural equation modeling.

From the perspective of application areas, the contexts of the three articles range from direct sales of goods and services such as cookware, cosmetics, energy, household goods, insurance, jewelry, and nutrition to customer service in the insurance industry, and to the provision of remote medical services for health care.

The communication and distribution channels vary from door-to-door and party-plan sales to customer interaction along the customer journey with touchpoints like call centers, chatbots, mobile apps, and websites, but also include medical teleconsultation via video conferences. The three articles illustrate the importance of satisfaction as a prerequisite for success in this wide range of contexts.

To go into a little more detail, the first article by Anne T. Coughlan, Michael Gerke, and Manfred Krafft discusses "Drivers and Moderators of Direct Selling Business Outcomes: Why I Participate Affects How I Perform". The investigation was supported by a research grant from the Direct Selling Education Foundation (Washington, D.C.), which also provided the data. n = 16,388 direct selling distributors across 68 goods and service providers responded to a survey where drivers and performance outcomes of their sales activities were investigated. The respondents described their reasons for being a distributor, their commitment to direct selling and their satisfaction, as well as their corresponding income and their downline size (the number of recruited and dependent additional direct sellers) as measures for performance outcome. The analysis supports some well-established hypotheses. So, e.g., higher education, job satisfaction, as well as job tenure have a positive impact on performance outcomes. As an additional new finding, however, it was shown that these relationships are strengthened by job commitment ("seeing direct selling as a career") and weakened by personal consumption advantages ("receiving products at a discount") as moderators.

The second article by Lisa-Marie Klopfer, "Evaluating Customer Experience Management in the Insurance Industry: Empirical Studies of Company and Customer Perspectives," provides a closer look at customer interaction in the insurance industry. In this nowadays highly competitive market, insurers offer high-quality customer experiences beyond competent service to be successful. Touchpoints along the customer journey (e.g., call centers, chatbots, mobile apps, websites) have to provide information in a consistent, context-sensitive, and coherent way but also should stimulate curiosity, emotions, and senses. The article contains two studies, one with a focus on the companies' customer experience management (CEM) efforts, and one with a focus on the customers' evaluation of these efforts. The first one is based on a survey among n = 48 insurance company managers and tries to answer the questions of how mature the companies are in terms of CEM. A four-stage CEM maturity model is developed and it is found that the majority of the insurance companies are on a good way: Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are measured regularly. However, more CEM efforts are needed and underway to increase customer experience along the customer journey. The second study is based on a survey among n = 396 customers who described their perceived experiences with their insurance along the customer journey including multi-item scale evaluations of effective customer journey design, brand experience, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty, and brand involvement. The results show that a thematically coherent, consistent, and context-sensitive design of the customer journey increases customer satisfaction and consequently customer loyalty. Moreover, it could be shown that brand experience also drives customer loyalty, especially when customers have a low level of involvement with the insurance brand.

The third article, "The Role of Self-Determination Theory in Explaining Patients' Motivation to Continue Using Telemedicine in a Post-Pandemic World" by Teresa Ries and Daniel Baier, discusses a very current topic in healthcare delivery, where satisfaction research from marketing helps provide answers to policymakers. The topic is the adoption of telemedicine. This provision of medical services at a distance is known to offer benefits in terms of convenience, reachability, accessibility, and costs for patients and physicians but also cost reductions for the insurance industry and the community. Here, due to infection risks and therefore repealed regulations for service providers, physicians, and patients during COVID-19, the number of first-time telemedicine users had increased considerably. However, post-pandemic, the

https://doi.org/10.15358/0344-1369-2024-1-2 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY

more important number of repeat users is assumed to decline, and many service providers and physicians have already discontinued their offerings. The authors investigate the problem from the patient's perspective: What are the drivers of telemedicine satisfaction and continuance intention? They combine the well-known Expectation-Confirmation Model from satisfaction research in marketing with the theoretical perspective of Self-Determination Theory, a macro theory of human motivation and personality that has so far been neglected in marketing. To answer the research question, a survey of n = 464 patients with teleconsultation experience was used. The patient sample shows a high level of satisfaction with telemedicine. In particular, perceived usefulness (e.g., time-saving and quick access to healthcare treatment) helps to increase continuance intention. However, psychological needs like perceived competence and perceived relatedness also play a major role and determine motivation, satisfaction, and continuance intention. Telemedicine providers and marketers should carefully optimize the patient journey while minimizing patient waiting time and focus on understanding users' health needs to differentiate their services in the market.

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ISSN 0344-1369

MARKETING
ZFP – Journal of Research and Management

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The publisher is a *offene Handelsgesellschaft* under German law with Dr. Hans Dieter Beck and Dr. h.c. Wolfgang Beck as partners.

Subscription: An annual subscription to the journal comprises four issues.

Subscription rates 2024: € 289 (VAT incl.) annual subscription rate, campus licence € 439 (VAT incl.). Single Issue: € 88 (VAT incl.), shipping charges have to be added to the rates. Subscription and rate include print issue and a licence for the online archive. The components cannot be cancelled separately. Complaints about copies not received must be lodged within 6 weeks starting at the end of the quarter. Information on price increases are available in the beck-shop general terms and conditions (AGB) under 10.4.

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Cancellation: The subscription may be cancelled in writing 6 weeks before the end of a calendar year.

Citation: Marketing ZFP – Journal of Research and Management, number of volume(number of issue), year, page.

Typesetting: FotoSatz Pfeifer GmbH, 82152 Krailling.

Printing: Druckerei C.H.Beck Nördlingen (publisher's address).

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https://doi.org/10.15358/0344-1369-2024-1-2 https://www.inlibra.com/de/page/agb - Open Access - (cc) BY