

FROM THE SPECIAL ISSUE GUEST EDITORS

Dear Colleagues:

One could argue that structural equation modeling (SEM) has become a dominant analytical tool applied in empirical research in marketing. This would be true at least based on the relative frequency with which SEM is applied among studies reported in the marketing journals. Certainly SEM is not without critics, but reading the marketing literature (not to mention publishing in the marketing literature) can be difficult without at least a cursory understanding of SEM procedures.

SEM is a family of statistical models that seek to explain the relationships among multiple variables, typically referred to as constructs. To do so, SEM first assesses the measurement characteristics of the data (constructs) through the application of confirmatory factor analysis. When the data have met established measurement criteria, the process continues by examining the structure of interrelationships using a process involving simultaneous estimation of the linear coefficients relating multiple exogenous constructs to multiple endogenous constructs. If applied properly, the final result is a more accurate assessment of theoretical models based on improved measurement techniques and simultaneous examination of multiple relationships.

This special issue is intended to provide a snapshot of SEM applications and practices. The papers were selected through a competitive process and we thank the members of the *JMTP* editorial team who served as reviewers during this project. The papers cover a range of topics spanning the potential SEM advantage in publishing research in marketing to some practical reminders for authors on the appropriate application of SEM procedures.

In our introductory article, we summarize research examining the question of whether SEM papers have an advantage in the review process. In the second article, Wynne W. Chin, Robert A. Peterson, and Steven P. Brown survey practices related to SEM and provide insight into important topics such as the different types of error that must be considered when using SEM and the importance of matching SEM applications to appropriate research questions. In the third article, Richard Michon and Jean-Charles Chebat give an overview of the versatility of SEM and demonstrate the ins and outs of applying SEM when analyzing experimental data. The fourth article, by John "Andy" Wood, is an application of SEM to study relational aspects such as consumer loyalty. Certainly, both beginning and experienced SEM users, and perhaps even those relatively unacquainted with the procedures, will benefit from the insights provided by the authors of these excellent articles.

To round out this issue, two additional articles are published that are not specifically focused on SEM. The first, by Jan Wieseke, Nick Lee, Amanda J. Broderick, Jeremy F. Dawson, and Rolf Van Dick, identifies the state of contemporary multilevel marketing research, finding that typical empirical approaches within marketing research may be less effective at explicitly taking account of multilevel data structures than those in other organizational disciplines. The second, a research note by Mehdi Taghian and Robin N. Shaw, provides a much needed review of the use of the marketing audit as a facility that can assist with the establishment, maintenance, and management of a market orientation strategy.

Enjoy the issue!

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