Editorial

As editors, we firmly believe that Marketing ZFP as a journal provides the Marketing community with an outlet to explore new forms of publishing in a high-quality environment. One new form of publishing is *registered reports*. Before giving an overview of the three papers in this issue (none of them are registered reports yet), we want to delve deeper into how we want to handle registered reports in Marketing ZFP.

Registered reports and Marketing ZFP

Registered reports differ from traditional studies by being submitted in two stages (e.g., Briker and Gerpott 2024, p. 589). In the first stage, researchers submit a completed front-end of the paper, including motivation, positioning, theory and hypotheses. Additionally, it needs to include a detailed plan of the empirical study the researchers want to conduct to test their hypotheses. Importantly – and in a clear distinction to traditional research – this happens before the empirical data has been collected. In a way, it is a very(!) detailed pre-registration. This "stage-1 submission" undergoes a regular review process. After this review process, the researchers may receive an "in-principle acceptance". This "... commits the journal to publishing the final paper regardless of whether the hypotheses are supported, provided that the authors adhere to their approved protocol and interpret the results in line with the evidence" (Chambers & Tzavella, 2021, p. 29).

The second stage of the submission process starts after the researchers have conducted their empirical study. Subsequently, they submit their manuscript to the journal again. It is then the reviewers' task to check whether the authors have faithfully adhered to the methodological plan they outlined in the paper that was accepted in principle. In a review round, the authors may be asked to clarify issues or conduct additional analyses. Very importantly, this is independent of the outcome of the research. If the study was conducted as planned, it will be accepted for publication.

Registered reports are part of the larger endeavor for reproducible research results (Munafò et al. 2017) to restore trust in the outcomes of the behavioral sciences, especially given the large numbers of not-reproducible results that are often-reported (and even more often encountered when trying to build on earlier empirical research in our labs and offices). Registered reports address at least two of the problems behind the reproducibility issues.

- They act like super-preregistration, where the research publicly commits to specific hypotheses and a detailed methodological plan. Hence, by strongly reducing the flexibility of researchers in their choices in data collection, analysis, and writing of the paper, they strongly reduce the risk of producing false-positive results (Simmons, Nelson, and Simonsohn 2011).

- They address the file-drawer problem (i.e., studies that fail to find significant effects are less likely to be published) because they create an environment where it is possible to publish null findings. It is pretty easy for researchers to produce null findings through lazy theorizing, unconvincing experimental stimuli, and sloppy execution. Therefore, reviewers are traditionally quite reluctant to accept research with null findings. Registered reports address this issue because research is not selected based on its results but on the merit of theory and empirical design.

Do registered reports change this? Initial evidence suggests that they do. For instance, Soderberg et al. (2021) asked researchers to rate several registered reports and a control group of traditional research articles to compare them along several quality criteria. They find that registered reports outperform the control group on twelve of nineteen quality criteria (e.g., methodological rigor and paper quality). At the same time, they do not differ regarding novelty despite this being a fear associated with registered reports (Soderberg et al. 2021).

Despite their obvious appeal, registered reports are much less prevalent in the marketing literature than they should be. Therefore, we focus on targeting registered reports as being standard in Marketing ZFP. To this end, we will also edit a special issue on "Customer Relationships in the Age of Generative AI" consisting only of registered reports (please see call for papers in this issue for further details).

What do we expect from registered reports? We ask researchers interested in submitting a registered report to adhere to the guidelines developed for journals in the "Nature" ecosystem, especially the journal "Nature human behavior" ("Registered Reports Nature Human Behavior" n.d.) – with a hint of flexibility stemming from our position as a smaller and more collegial outlet. Notably, instead of asking researchers to establish that their planned study comes with a statistical power of 95 %, we will work with the more conventional 80 % – reducing the sample-induced financial burden of publishing a registered report with Marketing ZFP.

Congratulations

The acting editors, in close cooperation with the senior editors, assigned the **best paper award for 2024** to Anne T. Coughlan, Michael Gerke, and Manfred Krafft: Drivers and Moderators of Direct Selling Business Outcomes: Why I Participate Affects How I Perform, published in Volume 46, Issue 1 (p. 4–19).