

The Role of Marketing in Making a Smart City Inclusive: New Technology, Urban Design and Underserved Communities

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Project Description:

Although interest in contemporary urban development and in particular smart city initiatives is an international phenomenon (see Angelidou, 2017; Giffinger, Kramar, Hainlmaier and Strohmayer, 2015; Yigitcanlar et al., 2018), little is known about the ways in which new initiatives are communicated to citizens, and the effectiveness of various communication methods. A voluminous literature surrounds the subject of smart city development, but there exist substantial gaps in knowledge concerning the suitability of smart city developments for underserved communities, including people with disabilities, the elderly, citizens with low incomes, and members of certain ethnic groups, and how pre-existing residents interact with smart city planners. Critics (e.g., Engelbert, van Zoonen and Hirzalla, 2019; Sykes, 2019; Woyke, 2019) allege that many contemporary urban designs fail to consider the many ways in which physical and social barriers limit the participation in city life of minority underprivileged residents, particularly vis-à-vis access to services. Even when people within underserved communities are considered during planning processes, it is often the case that technologies are designed “for” and not with such groups (Engelbert et al., 2019). Instead, many argue, the needs of underserved communities should be taken into account when designing technology in the first instance (Ellis and Kent, 2011, Jaeger, 2012). New ideas in **city marketing** and **citizen communication** and participation are needed in the area.

Vision of a more equal society where underserved communities are treated better, and this being enabled by use of new technologies which fit in with the smart city environment and do not discriminate – is perfectly aligned to United Nations SDGs covering aspects of living well, sustainability and tackling inequality.

Possible research projects in these areas include the investigation of:

- Exploring the potential for use of futuristic technologies such as personal robots, real time response systems, metaverse in making smart cities inclusive and the role of marketing communications in improving the adoption of such technologies.
- Marketing of new technology in general to underserved communities (special communication techniques and methods may be required for this purpose).

- Using social marketing to involve underserved communities in smart city decision making, having regard to the digital divide within urban areas (see Bennett et al., 2021).
- Marketing communications that focus on new modes of transportation (automated walkways, electric cars, driverless vehicles, etc.) and their contributions to the well-being of underserved communities (see Bennett and Vijaygopal, 2021; Bennett et al, 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Bennett and Vijaygopal, 2018).
- Co-creation of new product development prototypes for urban developments and for specific smart city initiatives (for example, science fiction prototyping) involving various citizen groups.
- Marketing communications regarding housing and healthcare facilities: which includes the application of artificial intelligence and big data to facilitate the use of housing and healthcare facilities.

Research proposals on themes other than those mentioned above are also welcome, so long as they include topical ideas that bring together new technology, social marketing and urban development. The doctoral research may explore such matters from the perspective of a particular academic discipline (e.g., marketing, innovation, technology) or could apply a multidisciplinary approach. Several strands of theories and concepts could inform the research, including Social Disability Theory, Urban Planning theories such as Regime Theory and Public Choice Theory, Open Innovation Theory, Institution Theory, Social Exchange Theory, and others.

Proposals should focus on the UK, on smart city developments and technological innovation in relation to marketing. Applicants may use qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approaches to data acquisition and analysis. While face-to-face interviews, focus groups, netnography and questionnaire survey could be used, other methods such as implicit association test, affect misattribution procedure or eye tracking are also encouraged. Whichever method is proposed, it would be helpful to explain the chosen method/s in the proposal.

About the Supervisors:

Dr Rohini Vijaygopal's research interests are New technology and social marketing, Non-profit donor behaviour and fundraising (charities, food bank, poverty), and Consumer acculturation.

Prof Gordon Liu's research interest is marketing strategy.

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