

Alex Mari

Research Associate, PhD Candidate and Teaching Fellow
University of Zurich

Department of Business Administration
Chair of Marketing and Market Research
University Research Priority Program in Social Networks

Research interests

- Adoption of consumer technologies and their effect on the individual and collective decision-making processes.
- Emerging phenomena affecting marketing practices: artificial intelligence, voice assistants and social commerce.
- Strategic management and decision-making in technological multi-sided platform ecosystems (voice, social, adv).
- Experimental and qualitative methods in applied consumer-, machine-, management-oriented research projects.

Education

- 2018 - 02/2023 **UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH, SWITZERLAND**
Doctorate Candidate in Business Administration (Marketing track)
Dissertation: "Adoption of AI-based voice assistants: decision biases in managers and consumers".
Committee: Prof. Dr. René Algesheimer and Dr. Andreina Mandelli (co-examiner).
- 2021 **SÄID BUSINESS SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, UK**
Visiting PhD Program in Strategic Management (remote) *
Sponsor: Consortium for Competitiveness and Cooperation (CCC)
- 2008 **CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF FINANCE & ECONOMICS, CHINA**
Exchange Master Student in International Marketing *
- 2007 - 2010 **UNIVERSITY OF LUGANO, SWITZERLAND**
Master of Science in Marketing
- 2006 **ABO AKADEMI UNIVERSITY, FINLAND**
Erasmus Bachelor Student in Intercultural Marketing *
- 2004 - 2007 **LIBERA UNIVERSITA' MARIA SS. ASSUNTA (LUMSA), ITALY**
Bachelor of Arts in Marketing & Advertising

Selected PhD courses and executive education

- 2020 **UNIVERSITY OF ST. GALLEN**
Summer School in Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Analysis (I & II)
- 2019 **UNIVERSITY OF CALABRIA**
Summer School in Experimental Design and Analysis
- 2018 **SDA BOCCONI**
Big Data and Artificial Intelligence Marketing (auditor)
- 2017 **CANNES LIONS SCHOOL**
CMO Accelerator Program
- 2014 **CEU BUSINESS SCHOOL**
Global Entrepreneurship Fellows Program *
- 2011 **SDA BOCCONI**
Diploma Digital Marketing for Marketing Executives *

**one semester.*

Work experience

- 01/17 - 06/18 **FENNEX** (Joint Venture), *SWITZERLAND*
CEO
- 08/15 - 12/16 **SONOVA GROUP**, *SWITZERLAND*
Global Director of Digital Marketing & E-Commerce
Award: Top 50 Marketing Technology Influencers - Onalytica (2016)
- 11/13 - 07/15 **BRANDMATE**, *VIETNAM*
CEO
- 10/11 - 10/13 **PROCTER & GAMBLE**, *SWITZERLAND*
Brand Manager
Award: P&G Leadership Award "Power of You" from VP (2012)
- 12/10 - 09/11 **TIM MUSIC**, *SWITZERLAND*
Head of Digital Marketing
- 02/09 - 07/09 **AKQA**, *ITALY*
Digital Marketing Trainee
- 2004 - 2008
- Italy Leader Quality Control P&G, Leader Field (Market Research)
- Manager Market Insights, Field Service Italia (Market Research)
- Web Marketing Specialist, Liliun Resorts (Hospitality)
- Growth Strategy Coach, CP Start-up Lugano (Education)

Teaching experience

- 2022 - **UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH**, *SWITZERLAND*
Teaching Fellow in Personal Branding and Digital Marketing - Bachelor (24h, 6 ECTS) and Digital Marketing Applications - Master (16h, 3 ECTS)
- 2019 - 2022 **UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH**, *SWITZERLAND*
TA, Module Lecturer and Instructor of Personal Branding and Digital Marketing (7x)
Personal rating FS2021: 5.1/6.0 Bachelor course; 5.6/6.0 Master seminar.
- 2019 - **MARCHE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY**, *ITALY*
Visiting Lecturer of Marketing Innovation - Master & PhD (2h, 6x)
- 2018 - **BOCCONI ASIA CENTRE**, *INDIA*
Invited Lecturer of Digital & AI Marketing - MBA (~2h, 5x)
- 2012 - **SDA BOCCONI, SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**, *ITALY*
Invited Lecturer of Digital & AI Marketing - Executive (~2h, 18x)
- 2014 / 2019 **BOCCONI UNIVERSITY**, *ITALY*
Co-Lecturer of Social Media Marketing (Lab) - Master (~15h, 2x)
- 2014 - 2018 **INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN GENEVA**, *SWITZERLAND*
Adjunct Faculty - Lecturer of Digital Marketing - MBA (24h, 5x)
- 2010 - 2013 **MASTER IN MARKETING PUBLITALIA - MEDIASET**, *ITALY*
Adjunct Faculty - Lecturer of Digital Marketing - Professional Master (24h, 5x)
- 2008 - 2010 **UNIVERSITY OF LUGANO & SDA BOCCONI**, *SWITZERLAND & ITALY*
SA, TA and RA in Social Media Marketing and Consumer Behavior - Master & Executive (2 years)

MOOCs and invited research talks

- 2022 - **SDA BOCCONI, SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**, *ITALY*
Guest Speaker - Big Data and AI in Marketing Programme (via Emeritus)
- 2022 - **SDA BOCCONI, SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT**, *ITALY*
Guest Speaker - Digital Customer Experience (Online Programme)
- 2021 - **SÄID BUSINESS SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD**, *UK*
Guest Speaker - Oxford Platforms and Digital Disruption Programme (via Esme Learning)

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| 2021 - | SDA BOCCONI, SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT, ITALY Guest Speaker – Digital Analytics (Online Programme) |
| 2021 | Jyväskylä School of Business and Economics - Prof. Niininen |
| 2021 | Grenoble School of Management - Prof. Liouka |
| 2021 | Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan - Prof. La Rocca |
| 2020 | University of London X Riinvest - Prof. Shala |
| 2020 | Bocconi University - Prof. Mandelli |
| 2019 | University of Lugano - Prof. Mandelli |
| 2019 | Jyväskylä School of Business and Economics - Prof. Niininen |
| 2019 | Grenoble School of Management - Prof. Liouka |
| 2019 | University of St. Gallen - Prof. Bresciani |
| 2018 | ESA Business School, Beirut - Prof. Som |

Academic conferences 2022 (4)

- (4) **Strategic Management Society (SMS) Special Conference**
SDA Bocconi, School of Management
"FoMO in Platform Ecosystems: How Emotions Affect Complementor's Strategic Adoption Decisions"
with Andreina Mandelli and René Algesheimer
- (3) **Strategic Management Society (SMS) Special Conference**
SDA Bocconi, School of Management
"Balancing Breadth and Depth in Platform Adoption Strategy: Exploring Voice Assistant Ecosystems"
with Andreina Mandelli and René Algesheimer
- (2) **2022 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference**
Monterey Bay, California
"Shopping With Voice Assistants: How Empathy Affects Decision-Making Outcomes"
with Andreina Mandelli and René Algesheimer

Stanley C. Hollander Award for Best Retailing Paper by the Academy of Marketing Science
(<https://www.marketing-group-zurich.com/news/academy-of-marketing-science-award/>)
- (1) **2nd Annual Artificial Intelligence in Management (AIM) Conference**
Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California (remote)
"AI-Driven Platform Ecosystems: How Emotions Affect Strategic Adoption Decisions"
with Andreina Mandelli and René Algesheimer

Publications

Conference proceedings (7)

- (7) Mari A., Mandelli A. & Algesheimer R. (2022) *Shopping with Voice Assistants: How Empathy Affects Decision-Making Outcomes*. In Proceedings of the 2022 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference.
- (6) Mari A. (2022) *Artificial Intelligence-based Voice Assistants as Social Media Platform: Anticipated Effect on Brands During Shopping*. In Annual IMMAA Conference, Journal of Creative Industries and Cultural Studies.
- (5) Mari A. & Algesheimer, R. (2021) *The Role of Trusting Beliefs in Voice Assistants during Voice Shopping*. In Proceedings of the 54th Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences, pp. 4073 - 4082.
- (4) Mari A., Mandelli A. & Algesheimer R. (2020) *The Evolution of Marketing in the Context of Voice Commerce: A Managerial Perspective*. In: Nah FH., Siau K. (eds) HCl in Business, Government and Organizations. HCII 2020. Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol 12204. Springer, Cham.
- (3) Mari A. (2019) *Voice Commerce: Understanding shopping-related voice assistants and their effect on brands*. In IMMAA Annual Conference. Northwestern University in Qatar, Doha (Qatar).
- (2) Mandelli A. & Mari A. (2011) *The relationship between social media conversations and reputation during a crisis: The Toyota case*. International Journal of Management Cases, 456 - 489, 14 (1).
- (1) Mandelli A., Accoto C. & Mari A. (2010) *Social Media Metrics: Practices of Measuring Brand equity and Reputation in Online Social Collectives*. 6th International conference 'Thought leaders in Brand Management', Università della Svizzera Italiana, Lugano, Switzerland.

Book chapters (5)

- (5) Mari A., Mandelli A. & Algesheimer R. (2022, forthcoming) *Digital Corporate Communication and Voice Platforms*. In Handbook of Digital corporate communication, Edward Elgar.
- (4) Mari A. & Algesheimer R. (2021) *AI-based Voice Assistants for Digital Marketing: Preparing for Voice Marketing and Commerce*. In Contemporary issues in Digital Marketing, Routledge, UK.
- (3) Mari A. (2016) *The impact of social media on consumer-brand relationships*. In Karmarkar and Mangal (eds.) The UCLA Anderson Business and Information Technologies (Bit) Project: A Global Study of Business Practice. World Scientific Publishing Company.
- (2) Mandelli A. & Mari A. (2012) *The impact of digital technology on service networks: studying a case in the advertising sector*. In Karmarkar and Mangal (eds.) The UCLA Anderson Business and Information Technologies (Bit) Project: A Global Study of Business Practice. World Scientific Publishing Company.
- (1) Mandelli A., Accoto C. & Mari A. (2010) *Pratiche di social media measurement: esplorazione e modelli*. In A. Mandelli and C. Accoto (eds.), *Marca e Metriche nei Social Media*, Lugano, CH: Università della Svizzera italiana, 135 -167.

Others: research report and services (4)

- (4) Thesis supervision at UZH: Master (10x) and Bachelor (7x)
- (3) Program Coordinator of the Marketing Group Zurich, a joint research initiative of UZH and ETH Zurich.
- (2) Reviewer of the Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing (Emerald); Ad-hoc reviewer of the ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.
- (1) Mari A. (2019) *The Rise of Machine Learning in Marketing: Goal, Process, and Benefit of AI-Driven Marketing*. Research Report, University of Zurich. DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.16328.16649

Industry keynote presentations (8)

- (8) 2019 - The AI-Driven Marketing Strategy, *Marketing Analytics Summit* (IT).
- (7) 2019 - The Infusion of Machine Learning in Marketing, *Medtech Commercial Leaders Forum* (BE).
- (6) 2019 - Machine Learning in Marketing, *How Innovation Drives Growth - MediaCom* (CH).
- (5) 2019 - The Rise of AI Marketing, *Online Marketing Trend Conference* (CH).
- (4) 2018 - The Agile Digital (Marketing) Department, *MarTech by Marketing Week* (GR).
- (3) 2017 - New Frontiers of Digital Marketing, *Young Generation - Phonak at Eataty* (IT).
- (2) 2017 - Digital Transformation in the Medical Device Industry, *Medtech Commercial Leaders Forum* (CH).
- (1) 2016 - How Digital Is Transforming Marketing, *MarTech Europe Conference* (UK).

Consulting projects

- 2019 Crownhealth (startup) - Healthy sports nutrition - Digital marketing strategy
- 2019 Hearing Home (startup) - Hearing aids retailing - Business strategy
- 2018 Snowcookie (startup) - Wearable ski technology - Marketing strategy
- 2018 Chalhoub Group - Luxury retailing - Executive training on digital strategy
- 2018 Safilo Group - Eyewear segment - Executive coaching on social media
- 2017 Sonova Group (Italy) - Medical devices - Digital audit and recruiting
- earlier GSK, DNV-GL, Vodafone, and others.

Other skills

Technical Proficiency: Proficient user of SPSS (incl. PROCESS Macro); Proficient user of NVivo; Intermediate knowledge of Mplus (SEM).

Languages: Fluent in English, Italian native speaker.

Selected research in progress and dissertation chapters

1) Shopping with Voice Assistants: How Empathy Affects Decision-Making Outcomes

With Andreina Mandelli (SDA Bocconi) and René Algesheimer

Empathy is a fundamental requirement for effective communication. Empathic salespeople can positively affect consumers' purchasing decisions and evaluation of the service encounter. Artificial intelligence-based voice assistants (VAs) such as Amazon Alexa increasingly assist shopping decisions and exhibit empathic behavior. Yet, it is unclear how and when consumers' affective responses towards an empathic VA influence decision-making outcomes. We design an individual-session experiment where families (vs. individuals) shop using an ad-hoc Alexa app featuring high (vs. standard) empathic capabilities. Findings show that consumers' perceptions, beliefs and intentions increase with the empathic Alexa while their social-emotional responses remain unchanged during family shopping. Next, we apply the experimental conditions as moderating variables to the structural equation model based on technology acceptance and social response theories. Our framework explicates the bases of functional, relational, and social-emotional consumer's beliefs and predicts behavioral intentions to adopt the VA as a delegated agent, decision aid and product recommender.

Keywords: Voice assistant; Empathy; Voice commerce; Decision-making; Social shopping; Voice app.

2) "Alexa, Buy Me Batteries!" - The Impact of Trust and Default Options on Recommendation Acceptance

With René Algesheimer

Artificial intelligence-based voice assistants (VAs) such as Amazon Alexa deliver personalized product recommendations in order to match consumers' needs. The use of voice assistants for shopping purposes incorporates elements of risk affecting when and how they are considered trusted relationship partners. In this uncertain environment, it is unclear 'when' voice assistants are capable of gaining trust and 'how' the development of such a trusted relationship affects decisions. Study 1 explores the effect of trusting beliefs towards voice assistants on decision satisfaction through the indirect effect of consideration set size (n. of options) in the context of voice shopping. Findings of an individual-session online experiment (N = 180) show a positive direct effect of trust on customer satisfaction and a mediating role of set size, confirming consumers' bias towards default choices. Using data from a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subject experiment (N=485), study 2 examines how default brand and price recommendations affect consumer choice while voice shopping. This research highlights the consequences of trust in AI-enabled voice assistants and default options for decision-making during utilitarian purchases.

Keywords: Voice commerce; Trusting belief; Default effect; Private label; Shopping behavior; Algorithm.

3) Adoption of AI-based Voice Assistants in Consumer Goods Companies

With Andreina Mandelli (SDA Bocconi) and René Algesheimer

AI-based voice assistants such as Amazon Alexa develop at exponential rates while altering consumer decision-making alongside the entire consumer journey. The introduction of voice-related consumer biases and heuristics is likely to affect marketing and sales practices in consumer goods companies. Although voice-based technologies open up a full set of new possibilities for managers, the simultaneous growth of several voice platforms, the explosion of provider-specific business services, and the fast-changing supplier ecosystem drive feelings of uncertainty in managers. Individual and collective sense-making towards this disruptive innovation guides the manager's decisions on 'what' and 'how' to implement a variety of voice-based marketing and commerce initiatives. These strategic responses to the diffusion of AI-based voice assistants are likely to depend on the manager's beliefs towards the technology and its suppliers. While the experts' perception swings widely between utopian and dystopian, managers urge to decide whether to proactively implement solutions (act) or wait for a richer pool of best practices (react). This study explores managers' perceptions and decisions towards adopting AI-based voice assistants in consumer-facing functions. Using in-depth interviews with key informants (N=94), expert surveys and large archival data, this research guides managers' strategic decisions in the context of consumer-oriented AI technologies.

Keywords: Platform ecosystem; Voice platform; Role of emotion; Decision-making; Coopetition; Power dynamic.

References

Prof. Dr. René Algesheimer

Full professor, Marketing
Director URPP Social Networks
University of Zurich
Andreasstrasse 15, Zurich
Rene.algesheimer@business.uzh.ch

Dr. Andreina Mandelli

Adjunct Professor, Digital Marketing
Bocconi University, SDA Bocconi, Bocconi Asia
Center, University of Lugano
Via Serfatti 10, Milan
Andreina.mandelli@sdabocconi.it