

Marketing the Smart City: New Technology, Urban Development and Underserved Communities

Supervisors: [Dr Rohini Vijaygopal](#) and [Professor Gordon Liu](#), Department of Strategy and Marketing, The Open University Business School and Professor Roger Bennett, Kingston Business School

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.

Possible research projects in these areas include the investigation of:

- Marketing communications concerning information about new modes of transportation (electric cars, autonomous vehicles, automated walkways, 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).
- Marketing of new technology in general to underserved communities (special communication techniques and methods may be required for this purpose).

- Co-creation of new product development prototypes for urban developments and for specific smart city initiatives (science fiction prototyping for instance) involving various citizen groups.
- 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 regarding housing and healthcare facilities: which includes the application of artificial intelligence and big data to facilitate the use of housing and healthcare facilities.
- Business to business marketing and cross-sector alliances (e.g., for-profit and non-profit organisation, for-profit and public sector organisation, and other combinations).

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 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:

Rohini Vijaygopal is a Senior Lecturer in Marketing at The Open University Business School. She is the author of book chapter, several journal articles as well as newspaper articles in the field of business and marketing. With a first degree in pharmacy, she is also passionate about well-being, mental health and psychology. For more information: <https://www.open.ac.uk/people/rv689>

Gordon Liu is a Professor of Marketing Strategy at the Open University Business School. His work is situated at the intersection of marketing, strategy and entrepreneurship. He has particular interest in cause-related marketing, product innovation/new product development, strategic orientation/capabilities, and networks/strategic alliance. For more information: <https://www.open.ac.uk/people/cgl65>

Roger Bennett is a Professor of Marketing at Kingston University. Roger is the author of many books and numerous journal articles in the fields of marketing and business management.

Among several other awards and distinctions, Roger is a recipient of the Academy of Marketing's Lifetime Achievement award.

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