

E-commerce research that benefits both industry and society

Some business executives think they have reached the end of their formal education with the completion of an MBA. Not so Dr Keith Choy Po-kwong, region head, Asia-Pacific, GSK Consumer Healthcare. Although his MBA qualification provided a welcome breadth of additional business knowledge, Choy was keen to gain further insights and a greater depth of knowledge. CityU's DBA courses helped provide this.

"The DBA gives participants an opportunity to sharpen their problem-diagnosis skills and formulate impactful solutions using robust frameworks," Choy told the *South China Morning Post*. "My research revealed it is a well-established programme with reputable professors and a supportive environment that creates a good learning atmosphere, and consistently delivers high quality student work."

Choy's DBA research looked to explore the effect of "advertising message variation towards consumers in early shopping and late shopping

stage". In particular, he was interested in discovering how advertising messages could convert potential customers into paying customers. To help find an answer, Choy conducted a field experiment – a gold standard of many research faculties.

"We ran marketing campaigns via the Baidu search engine and Tmall e-commerce site," he said. "These campaigns were directed towards consumers who had recently searched for specific brand-related or symptom-related keywords relevant to campaigns.

"Within each of the consumer groups, we randomly served two different types of advertising content – one that contained educational messages and another that conveyed promotional messages. The randomisation of content delivery ensured that the only factor being manipulated was the message, thus enabling us to isolate the effect of message variation on conversion rate."

The programme's rigour was a welcome challenge for Choy, particularly when it came to



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research and his dissertation. The demanding nature of the courses revealed to him how problem solving can yield unexpected results with benefits that extend beyond the immediate issue being tackled.

"If you can deep dive and diagnose a problem effectively – really get to heart of what you need to understand and achieve in less specific terms – you will find a solution or framework that can be leveraged more broadly, not just by one team, department or company, but also by an



Dr Keith Choy, region head, Asia-Pacific, GSK Consumer Healthcare. Photo: CityU

industry and society," he said.

Despite having completed his CityU DBA, Choy has no plans to stop learning – although in the short term, he now has another plan. "I would like to take a break from further study to really embed what I learned, and magnify this to make a greater contribution to the industry through my knowledge sharing and practical experience," he said.