



Edlira Shehu

## New in Groningen: Edlira Shehu

**Edlira Shehu recently joined the Faculty of Economics and Business as Professor of Digital Marketing. Before coming to Groningen, she worked at universities in Germany and Denmark. Having also worked in the industry in different management positions in the field of marketing analytics, Shehu brings a lot of practical experience to the table. She knows how to bridge the knowledge gap between academia and practice with her research focused on the challenges and opportunities of digital marketing. Shehu often collaborates with industry partners and aims to help organizations improve their marketing activities with state-of-the-art methods. Having collaborated with colleagues from Groningen's Department of Marketing before, she felt her research profile fits well within the department. So, at the start of 2023, she made the move.**

### Why did you choose Groningen?

“I knew Groningen and the Department of Marketing already from research and conference visits. I had already collaborated with colleagues from the department, so I had quite a good feeling about the department and the city, which I both liked very much. Most importantly, I also felt that Groningen was a great

match in terms of my research profile – many colleagues from the department work on research questions from similar domains, so I see a lot of potential for synergies and fruitful collaborations. The Department of Marketing of the University of Groningen has a great reputation, so I am very happy and proud to be part of it.”



### Could you tell us about your career so far?

“I obtained my PhD and Habilitation (state doctorate) at the University of Hamburg. However, my academic career was not quite linear – after my PhD, I worked in industry for 5 years in different positions in what nowadays would be called Data Science, but back then was simply Data Mining. It was a very insightful time for me, because I saw how things really work in industry. I saw that many of the things that we take for granted in academia, simply do not happen in practice because of lack of time, resources, or knowledge. I got to know how managers think, and what is important for them. This helped me tremendously when I came back to academia. The network I had built was helpful for industry collaborations, but in addition, my experience in the industry helped me come up with research questions that are relevant academically, but also managerially. I came back to academia as an assistant professor at the University of Hamburg and later held positions as an associate professor at the Southern Denmark University and Copenhagen Business School, before joining the University of Groningen this February.”

### Your chair is in Digital Marketing. What kind of issues are dealt with in your research?

“My research is guided by international standards; it is very important to me to collaborate internationally, and serve to the international academic community. Compared to the start of my academic career, I now have a much better sense of the research areas I want to focus on and help fix. I combine collaborations with firms with problems that I think the academic community would also benefit from – issues where current research does not provide insights, or out-of-the-box solutions. My research revolves around topics of digital advertising and multichannel retailing. I investigate how digitalization is changing organizations’ marketing decisions, consumer behavior and the society as a whole.

My research focuses on challenges and opportunities of digital marketing at an organizational and individual level. At an organizational level, I analyze challenges and opportunities of digitalization for companies and non-profit organizations. For example, I examine how digitalization affects advertising, communication



and distribution strategies of companies. In another current project, I study how online retailers can make better budget allocation decisions across multiple online and offline media in the presence of multiple online and offline distribution channels. At an individual level, I research how consumers react to different ad content, which acquisition channels increase customer lifetime value and why, or in which situation the usage of artificial intelligence, like chatbots or voice assistants, is especially appreciated by consumers, and when it backfires. It is my goal that my research provides insights into how digital marketing can help organizations - companies, as well as non-profit organizations - improve their overall performance, as well as the relationship to their customers in an increasingly digital world.”

### What is the societal relevance of your research?

“I have been working for many years on topics around nonprofit marketing, for instance analyzing how nonprofit organizations should communicate with their donors in order to improve donation behavior and retention. Here, the purpose is to leverage data in order to show nonprofits how to better manage their donors, and improve the content of their donor appeals. This is an area of work that I am especially proud of, because of its societal impact. The impact of this is immediately visible in more donated blood, or money that the nonprofit organizations can use to help persons in need.

I have also been working for some time on product return management, aiming to identify strategies on how companies can reduce online product returns. Product returns are not only a major problem for retailers, but they also have a huge negative ecological footprint.

### What can we expect from you in the future?

“I will continue working on topics that are timely and relevant in the realm of digital marketing. In addition, it is important to me to provide service within the department and the university, but also to the international marketing community.”

### What research output from your body of work are you the proudest of?

“I am very proud of my research in the field of product returns. Three of these papers are published in top journals of the field: *the Journal of Marketing Research*, *the International Journal of Research Marketing and the Journal of Retailing*. I was very happy to see that The Wall Street Journal featured one of these studies. I am also very proud of the projects from the realm of blood donation and charitable behavior. Many of these projects are works-in-progress, and under review, but this is definitely a stream of research that I am especially fond of, and makes me clearly see the relevance of our work from a different perspective.”