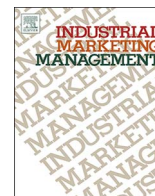




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Introduction

Journal positioning meta-issues as evolving contexts: Organizational marketing at the crossroads

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ABSTRACT

As *Industrial Marketing Management (IMM)* has completed 45 years of publication, *Industrial Marketing Management: An Interorganizational Interdisciplinary Journal* comes of age yet again. A description of the proliferation of journals and associated titles within cognate subfields is provided noting the societal forces creating this necessity. Relief is brought to the complexity and diversity of journals therein. The unit of analysis is that of an individual circumspect scholar viewing the journal mix landscape and its associated impact on their scholarship and career. Contexts and criteria are offered for sorting out this meta-dilemma that has been evolving since time immemorial. Peter J. LaPlaca's (PJL's) presence in our field and *IMM* is explicated with awe and appreciation. Closing thoughts are offered regarding our collective future and some criteria for getting there – *the next interlude*. The reader is invited to ascertain their unique scholarly path.

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses are used in the evaluation of the mere incidence of article outlets and the moderating effect on institutional and industry constraints as accelerated over the past 45 years. Industry sources that measure and monitor journal use and their activity are broadly and succinctly portrayed.

Historical analyses of college business school education's evolution with the associated impact of these industrial forces for journal publishing are derived. A narrative describing the evolution in the quantity of journals and their proliferation is provided. The analysis is by definition contemporary yet retrospective, qualitative yet adductive. PJL's long-term contribution to the field is documented with awe and appreciation.

Individual scholars are to know that their own acumen and that of those whom they may come to supervise are constrained yet enabled by the mere quantity of journal options and their inevitable domain enmeshment. The impact on education and the management thereof are noted in detail and associated sense making in the performance of our job.

The analyses of the journals publishing provides a paradox of opportunity yet a twisted knot of options for any scholar requiring yet further criteria to untie. Over most of our career lifespans the data and analysis provided help contextualize the character of your scholarly journey. A glimpse into the evolution of research in the area of business-to-business marketing and its components over the last few decades helps magnify the positioning of the journals for prospective authors and would-be readers.

Opening quotes

“The idea of a college education for all young people of capacity, provided at nominal cost by their own states, is very peculiarly American. We in America invented the idea. We in America have developed it with remarkable speed.”

Lyndon B. Johnson

“If everybody is thinking the same thing, then nobody is thinking.”

General George S. Patton

“We live in a world that has narrowed into a neighborhood before it has broadened into a brotherhood.”

Lyndon B. Johnson

“Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.”

Carl Jung

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1. Preface

Only incoming editors can really implement any kind of commemorative for an outgoing editor of any stature. And editors as well as all board members all have stature by virtue of their long-term commitments to the work that we do. This too has been altered indelibly. Such commemoratives are likely no longer needed after the foundation years of any journal title and so of necessity become a thing of the past – an era has ended.

Our take on the current matter is one of the editor author being in the “wheelhouse” since 1995 and other newer entrants since 2005 and 2015 respectively as part of the Editorial Review Board (ERB) helm of the *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing (JBBM)*. And an industry leader with expertise in journal stewardship is acknowledged with gratitude for its unique data Cabells.

Peter J. LaPlaca (P.JL) has been a friend of business marketing and those of us who study and practice for over 40 years almost on parallel with Dave Wilson founding Editor of *JBBM*. Peter is also the founding Editor of the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing (JBIM)*.

Quality journals have long and honorable lifespans. Editors come and go like the changing of the guard but the journals continue. Editors do their best during their time in office to guide a journal and maintain its focus, integrity and quality. When it is time for editors to move on it is traditional for their replacements and boards to commemorate their contributions and take stock of the field. It is a way of noting accomplishments and expressing thanks for the unseen and often thankless behind-the-scenes work of both editors and reviewers.

The change in *Industrial Marketing Management (IMM)* leadership is really *more akin to the changing of an era than the mere changing of the guard*. As such, this moment calls for broader input and broader perspectives. We would like to take a step back, reflect on this era, and consider *IMM's* and Peter's role within the sea of changes that occurred during the almost five decades since *IMM's* inception in 1971.

Our sense is to *not* address *directly* the implied “journals mix-positioning issue,” ergo multiple titles within our subfield neither broadly nor narrowly defined. As these few titles came of age over a span of over 45 years, they *were* differentiated, emerging with emphasis then borrowing from each other early on including content sought/methods emphasis and personnel acquired and have evolved of late to few differences except the number of special issues. A Leximancer content assessment of these sources since their inception would be of interest looking back every 10 or even 5 years and would be welcome at the *JBBM* “editor's desk” when all such sources are at least 30 years old.

Basically we attempt to take a circumspect vantage point of a single scholar or practitioner: How perhaps should you specialize? What should you consider reading and doing? What should you as an aspiring author consider doing? What boards should you consider agreeing to or seeking membership of and associated participation with? Which journals perhaps should you or your home organization subscribe to? *And most of all ... why?* Given the hyper-proliferation of journals, and the moving-target nature of the journal-reviewing landscape, we have unintentionally wreaked havoc with scholars' and practitioners' work life and life work! And business-to-business or B2B, while no exception, also remains a time immemorial “target child” in both academia and industry.

To set the stage for such an analysis we look at several antecedent interlocking phenomena: burgeoning university life in the America, proliferation of journal titles, evolution of ELMAR as well the impact of AACSB and journal rating forums. In parallel, evolutionary data from Cabell's provides unique illuminating contexts.

As our opening quotes portrays there was a massive transformation in the quantity and quality (for the better) of American educational institutions and the need to have so many faculty facing personnel decisions (few as they are career-wise (three or four at most). There is a “log transformation”-type force creating the pressure for so many new journal titles; ergo all those buyer behavior-related, channels/supply

Table 1

College degrees awarded, 1870–2009.

Year	BA degrees	MA degrees	PhD degrees
1870	9400	NA	1
1890	15,500	1000	149
1910	37,200	2100	440
1930	122,500	15,000	2300
1950	432,000	58,200	6600
1970	827,000	208,000	29,900
1990	1,052,000	325,000	38,000
2009	1600,000	657,000	67,000

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_higher_education_in_the_United_States#Great_Depression_and_New_Deal

chain-related, product-related, selling and sales management-related, international-related and of course, perhaps most of all, so many promotions-related journals not to mention the now often near-unfathomable intricate overlaps. And this “clusters of titles” phenomenon happens among and between almost all business disciplines and beyond not to mention the continuing excessive enmeshment of title domains therein.

It is interesting to note the difference in perspectives between editors and chairs and deans. It appears that editors may be of necessity more aware of the issues involving journal positioning and differentiation. It is also correct to note that *IMM*, *JBBM* and *JBIM* seem to be evolving into a common niche with similar topics, methods, contributors and ERB to some degree, yet all remaining during expansion within the *IMM* founding Editor Jim Hlavacek's notion of the field of *organizational marketing*.¹

We close by delineating Peter's LaPlaca's long involvement with both *awe and gratitude*. We list some of the many milestones of the man and his editorship of *IMM* – *noting his unique scholarly journey that we all must navigate in our own way*.

2. Secondary education industry perspective

In colonial and nineteenth-century America there were relatively few colleges. Most of those that existed had regional northeast and religious themes or foci. By the twentieth century that was destined to change forever with the advent of philanthropy, land grant universities, junior colleges, the GI Bill, the post-World War II boom and attempts to level the socio-economic playing field with improved access to higher education. With these changes came the explosive growth in the number of universities and college students (see Table 1). “Great Society” thinking as the opening quotes pungently reflect was the impetus for societally driven rapid market growth in higher education and business schools in particular. These forces in turn led to the need to groom evaluate and sustain a massive arithmetic near-geometric increase in faculty qualitatively and quantitatively. This growth spilled onto world forums too (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lists_of_universities_and_colleges_by_country). The stunning successes in the USA and originating in other parts of the world manifest these exciting dilemmas. Baker (2015) provides many similar insights, including a

¹ Business-to-business marketing or business marketing (a.k.a. industrial marketing) is a broader concept that encompasses the marketing of business experiences, ideas, services, products and any combination of such offerings as well as reseller phenomena with domestic and/or global perspectives. Business marketing phenomena occur with all transactions, exchanges and relationships between any dyad involving organizations, institutions, or resellers and within/among social networks. Individuals are included only when not personally motivated (i.e., acting on behalf of organizational buying needs as opposed to those needs of households; a.k.a. consumer marketing). Dr. James D. Hlavacek, Founding Editor of *Industrial Marketing Management (IMM)*, clairvoyantly referred to the field as organizational marketing, the by-word for the new *IMM* title.

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