



Introduction

Letter from the Co-Editors-in-Chief Industrial Marketing Management



1. Introduction

This issue of *Industrial Marketing Management* consists of two sections. The first, a special section of 10 articles focused on the “Dark Side of Business Relationships,” was edited by Ibrahim Abosag (University of London), Dorothy A. Yen (University of London), and Bradley R. Barnes (Sheffield University). The traditional section of this issue is composed of 7 regular articles. But first, we start with our next piece in the “Publish or Perish” series.

2. Publish or perish, part 6...

This editorial continues our discussion of how to write great articles. Previous editorials discussed the title, abstract, introduction and hypotheses of your paper. Our last editorial was the first of two focusing on the paper's methodology section; it looked at case method research. This editorial looks at quantitative methodologies. A well-written methodology section of a research paper serves two primary purposes: to demonstrate that you have followed acceptable scientific standards in conducting your research and to enable another researcher to replicate your study so that their results can be compared to your results.

In preparing this essay I am deeply indebted to three senior members of the IMM Editorial Review Board: Ghasem Zaefarian (University of Leeds), Aino Halinen (University of Turku) and Stephan Henneberg (Queen Mary University of London).

2.1. Methodological considerations

- Researchers have a very broad field of methodologies from which to select. Chosen methods need to be justified and linked back to research objectives (“why and how does the chosen method address the objectives in an appropriate manner?”)
- Methods have limitations; be cognizant about them (e.g. discuss possible rectifications in the ‘limitations and further research’ section of the manuscript's closing discussion). Do not assume that these limitations are infinitely flexible; at some point the methodology becomes inappropriate.
- Methods also have assumptions. For example one analytical method may require normally distributed data while another requires skewed data. Failure to recognize and satisfy the requirements for a specific analytical technique will result in an automatic rejection of a manuscript.
- Research methods seem to follow a fashion cycle with one or more methods suddenly being in vogue. Researchers see what has recently

been published and try to apply currently fashionable methodologies to their specific research project. Always link the methodology to the needs of the research and not the research to the needs of the methodology. Too often we see papers employing a certain “hammer” to inappropriate problems. Sometimes a screwdriver is necessary; put the hammer aside.

- Do not always ‘play safe’ with your method choice; new methods can provide new insights and stimulate new discussions (see the current developments around fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis fsQCA, variance and covariance based SEM/PLS, Bayesian modeling, multi-level modeling, and event structure analysis as well as computational models such as agent based modeling, simulations and their applications in B2B marketing and supply chain management).
- Do not be afraid of borrowing a research methodology from different fields to investigate your research problem. Established methodologies in other disciplines can be successfully used to explore marketing issues, frequently providing unique and enlightening perspectives.
- Methodology that uses multiple methods in a step-wise progression normally delivers added value. Each step complements the preceding one(s), builds on them and adds a specific contribution. This can include mixed methods (e.g. a qualitative study to define concepts and overall model, followed by a quantitative survey using SEM), or the use of the same method in different steps (e.g. multiple experiments, where outputs/results of experiment 1 provide the input for experiment 2).
- However, good methodological considerations usually include a discussion (and often also a pictorial representation) of the overall research process or model. In quantitative studies, this could include the underlying logic of a causal model (i.e. a nomological model) for use in SEM (this can be done also in the context of the hypotheses development), or for qualitative studies it can outline a research framework (e.g. a dimensional model of concepts of interest), which are juxtaposed with data. If no preconceived model or framework is integral to the chosen study (e.g. for grounded theory approaches), a clear process overview of the research progression and reasoning steps can be provided.

2.2. Analysis considerations

- Most quantitative studies submitted to IMM use survey instruments for data collection. When a single informant design is used for answering the questionnaire, common method variance (CMV) is a concern that has to be validated, particularly when both the antecedent and

the dependent variables are perceptual measures derived from the same source. Avoid or minimize CMV bias in the *ex-ante* research design stage by using different sources of information for dependent and independent constructs (e.g. multiple informants; objective data; or time intervals), or by considering remedies in designing and administering the survey. It is always preferable to obtain information from both sides of a dyad (buyer-seller) than to only question of side and then ask the same respondent to estimate the other side's perspective. *Ex-post* approaches should also be used to verify and if necessary reduce CMV effects through a variety of statistical procedures. Using more complicated models (e.g. introducing non-linear interaction effects) make it more difficult for the respondents to second-guess the aim of the survey and hence it reduces CMV. Harman's one factor test is insensitive and therefore insufficient to prove that CMV is not a concern, instead try to use more sophisticated tests such as partial correlation procedures and latent common method factor. The recommendation here is to use a combination of multiple *ex-ante* research design and *ex-post* statistical analysis remedies.

- For quantitative studies, clearly show your construct operationalizations (e.g. item wordings) as well as validity and reliability tests. Often reviewers want to see certain things that may not make it into the published version of the manuscript (e.g. an exploratory factor analysis/EFA for all constructs); thus, provide this information in an appendix.
- Do robustness tests of your analyses. For example, do not just run the model for your whole sample but test for heterogeneity in your sample (through latent class analysis, split-half comparisons, or multi-group analysis, especially if you have hypotheses about the causes of heterogeneity).
- Be cognizant that the overwhelming number of quantitative methods normally used in business marketing and supply chain management does not corroborate causality (this is only stipulated by the nomological model). Thus, most studies are open to the question of the issue of 'reversed causality' ('isn't it in fact the dependent construct which drives the independent one?'). This needs to be discussed and possibly even tested as part of the analysis (e.g. Granger-causality tests), or recursive models may need to be considered.
- For qualitative studies, especially case studies, provide a clear 'narrative' and logic about how the researcher reaches a certain 'result' or 'interpretation'. Too often, manuscripts laconically state that a 'content analysis was done'...without providing any further details.
- Also, be aware that there are sophisticated qualitative methods available which provide a rigorous frame for the systematic comparison and interpretation of case studies.
- For both qualitative and quantitative analyses the issue of 'time effects' is crucially important but often neglected in research: the independent construct may affect the dependent one, but not immediately. Thus, it is important to model such time issues in the analysis (which has implications for the data capture) to test for time-lags. Qualitative studies, e.g. process analyses such as event structure analysis (ESA), can provide a granular understanding of such phenomena but are only used rarely in business marketing and supply chain management studies.
- Overall, we would advocate a call for 'methodological pluralism'. SEM (for quantitative researchers) and case studies based on content analysis (for qualitative researchers) may dominate the field, but there is much more methodological richness out there. Cross-fertilization from other disciplines is a good thing in boosting methodological and analytical rigour, and in developing study contributions based around method usages.

In an effort to improve research methodologies in B2B research, *Industrial Marketing Management* has issued a permanent call for methodological papers. We have established a core set of methodological reviewers to evaluate submitted papers that illustrate new and

innovative methodological techniques and applications in B2B research. Additionally IMM will publish special issues on specific research methodologies. For example the January 2010 issue was devoted to **Case Study Research in Industrial Marketing**.¹ We are also working on a special issue for next year entitled "Methodological Advances in B2B Research" under the guest editorship of Ghasem Zaefarian, Andreas Eggert, Eva Boehm and Aino Halinen.

3. Special section on the dark-side of business relationships

The editors of this special section offer their own assessments in an editorial, "What is Dark about the Dark-Side of Business Relationships?" Thereafter, nine articles provide additional insights and detailed analyses of this question.

In particular, in "The Influence of Desire for Control on Monitoring Decisions and Performance Outcomes in Strategic Alliances," Giuseppe Musarra, Matthew J. Robson, and Constantine S. Katsikeas acknowledge the risks inherent to strategic alliances and highlight the potential for uncontrolled disclosures of core knowledge through opportunistic learning, which often leads to calls for monitoring efforts. But monitoring mechanisms can manifest dark sides too. If the firm's powerful desire for control influences its monitoring decisions in strategic alliances, the result might be damage to performance outcomes. With a conceptual model, tested through a survey of 404 strategic alliances, these authors demonstrate that a focal firm's desire for control relates positively to process and output monitoring. Process monitoring then drives performance outcomes when the alliance features minimal information exchange, such that the information exchange substitutes for process monitoring, but outcome monitoring hinders performance unless it is complemented by extensive information exchanges.

In addition to monitoring, business relationships inherently feature dependence, so Tobias Schmitz, Bastian Schweiger, and Jost Daft investigate the mechanisms that explain how dependence (or lock-in) evolves in "The Emergence of Dependence and Lock-in Effects in Buyer-Supplier Relationships: A Buyer Perspective." With a grounded theory approach and a real-life case, involving a German mechanical engineering company and a logistics service provider, this article reveals four interrelated, explanatory mechanisms from the buyer's perspective: convincing, tying, complementing, and lock-in. The resulting conceptual model emphasizes the importance of the interrelated influences across various transactional, mental, and operative bonding effects. Managers can use these findings to plan their buyer-supplier relationships; researchers can use the model as a foundation for continued investigations into buyer-supplier dependence and lock-in in dyadic business relationships.

In the next article, "Dark Network Tensions and Illicit Forbearance: Exploring Paradox and Instability in Illegal Cartels," a case study of illegal cartels reveals a truly dark side of business relationships. Andrew D. Pressey and Markus Vanharanta cite three key findings in this novel setting. First, they investigate opportunism in price-fixing cartels, along with the role of illicit forbearance. Because they are illicit, cartels by nature operate outside legally binding contractual frameworks, so other means are required to mitigate opportunistic behavior. Second, the authors identify network tensions and show how the illicit nature of the cartels intensifies these tensions, resulting in inherently unstable relationships. Third, even as they study cartels, the authors propose broadening the scope of the dark side to support recognition of the illicit practices undertaken in legal settings by marketing managers. Illicit relationships provide informative, archetypal examples of opportunistic behavior that produces powerful conflict and has negative influences on participants, customers, suppliers, and the wider public.

Nima Heirati, Aron O'Cass, Klaus Schoefer, and Vida Siahtiri instead argue that in service collaborations, bright-side benefits can transform

¹ Anna Dubois and Michael Gibbert, editors, "Case Study Research in Industrial Marketing" *Industrial Marketing Management*, 2010, Vol 39 No 1.

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