
Guest editorial

“Extending value through product, service and platform innovations”

Background and rationale of this special issue

Since its beginnings in the late 1970s and 1980s in the fields of industrial marketing and services marketing, and through its consolidation in the 1990s, business relationship research has gained substantial ground in theory and practice (Shostack, 1977; Arndt, 1979; Ford, 1980; Håkansson, 1982; Levitt, 1983a, 1983b; Berry, 1983; Dwyer *et al.*, 1987; Jackson, 1985; Noordewij *et al.*, 1990; Anderson and Narus, 1990, 1991; Heide and John, 1992). This increased relevance was triggered by two fundamental changes: first, with respect to technology, especially in the fields of information and communication technologies, manufacturing and logistics, and second, pivotal transformations in the management of corporations, pushing these to focus on core competencies and cooperation with suppliers, in detriment of vertical integration (Carlsson, 1992; Kleinaltenkamp and Ehret, 2006; Kleinaltenkamp *et al.*, 2015).

These changes led manufacturers to decentralize functions, subcontract and outsource noncore tasks and delegate the production of parts to specialized supply firms. As a partial result of this process, during the 1980s, most Western European countries, alongside with the USA and Japan, experienced an increase in small- and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) entering the value chain process as new agents in the delivery of products and services (Loveman and Sengenberger, 1991; Carlsson, 1992; Carree and Thurik, 1998). These national economies have reached a point in manufacturing that is organized into flexible networks of highly specialized firms (Carlsson and Stankiewicz, 1990).

In tune with these changes, Lynn Schostack’s “breaking free” of services marketing from goods must push the theory and practice of industrial and B2B marketing into a broader perspective, moving beyond the traditional product-centric views to a more integrative one, encompassing products, services and platforms. Under this view, the central aim must be to provide better responsiveness to customer needs and market dynamics (Shostack, 1977; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008; Carlborg *et al.*, 2014; Kindström and Kowalkowski, 2014).

To some extent, this much-needed shift toward an increase of service-led strategies has been taking place (Bustinza *et al.*, 2015; Baines *et al.*, 2017). Successful manufacturing firms are reaping benefits from servitization, such as growth in revenue and profits, better response to customer needs, increasing customer loyalty or building new revenue streams, among

others (Baines *et al.*, 2017), with the clear effect of a blurring of the boundaries between products and services.

Service and manufacturing agents are increasingly organizing around platform ecosystems. These are sets of shared technologies and technology standards underlying an organizational structure that operate by giving support to value co-creation specialization and complementary offerings (Thomas *et al.*, 2014). Today, the Internet of Things, namely, the use of machines and objects embedded with miniaturized sensors and other electronic devices in a network enabling them to collect and exchange data, is allowing a multitude of platform ecosystems to not only form and grow but also compete with similar platforms to lead the market.

It is not surprising that this phenomenon is raising serious concerns and challenges to established firms and even entire industries. To keep a leading position, incumbent firms will not only have to produce the best products but also need to become leaders in administering platforms or layers of software that combine “devices, data and services on which other firms can build their own offerings” (The Economist, 2015).

This is perhaps the main reason behind the rise of recent national manufacturing policies, such as Industrie 4.0 in Germany, the High Value Manufacturing Catapult in UK and similar programs in France, China or Korea. According to the Final Report of the Industrie 4.0 Working Group: “In conjunction with smart production, smart logistics, smart grids and smart products, the increasing use of the Internet of Things and Services in manufacturing will transform value chains and lead to the emergence of new business models” (Kaggermann *et al.*, 2013).

Taking note of this context and challenges stemming in industrial marketing and B2B relationships, I am pleased to present this special issue, entitled “Extending value through product, service and platform innovations.” Some of the ten articles comprising this special issue are originally from a selection of papers presented at the 2016 *Center of Business and Industrial Marketing (CBIM) Academic Workshop* that was held in Bilbao, Spain, on June 30-July 1, 2016. In this totally international event, a final selection of 40 papers and more than 70 participants from 16 countries were presented. The conference program included seven tracks, one plenary session followed with a roundtable discussion including professors, public officials, guest entrepreneurs and two panel sessions. A few weeks after this event, we also opened a call for papers, inviting authors to submit their manuscripts based on the general message of this lemma. The selected papers are presented below.

The first paper entitled, “Openness and front end of innovation: does customer type matter?” studies two forms of openness, namely, cross-industry networks and customer integration, and their outcomes in the form of creative ideas or product definitions. Using a mixed approach based on a series of in-depth interviews with managers, followed by a quantitative analysis of a structural equation model, Barrutia *et al.* (2018) find that idea creativity in B2B and B2C settings is explained by different external drivers. Whereas in the former, managers should focus on cross-industry networks, in the case of B2C settings customer integration is of key concern.

The second paper in this issue, “Industrial marketing research. A bibliometric analysis (1990-2015)” by Valenzuela Fernandez, Nicolas, Merigó and Arroyo-Cañada, develops an analysis across countries and universities for the research field of industrial marketing by looking into the Web of Science

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collection maintained by Clarivate Analytics (formerly, Thomson Reuters). Their findings show a clear dominance of researchers from the USA and the UK, followed by Australia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and New Zealand. Regarding universities, both Michigan State University and Georgia State University are clearly outstanding.

In the third paper, “Internationalization as a process of value distribution through innovation: polyhedral diagnosis of a ‘born-global’ firm,” authors Calvo and Villarreal delve into the question of how “born-global” firms enter international markets. Their research applies a polyhedral diagnosis of market entry strategy to the case of a born-global firm in the e-learning industry and finds evidence supporting the idea that current literature on internationalization does not apply correctly to this type of firms.

The fourth paper entitled, “Openness of technology adoption, top management support, and service innovation: a social innovation perspective,” by Hsu, Liu, Tsou and Chen defines and studies openness to technology adoption as an operant resource from service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), in its effect on service innovation. The results obtained from an empirical study on 176 information technology firms back the idea that this relationship is significantly positive and that openness from top management acts as a positive moderating effect.

The fifth paper, “The role of cognitive proximity on supply chain collaboration for radical and incremental innovation: a study of a transition economy,” by Nguyen, Lei, Vu and Mai Anh, analyzes Noteboom’s (1999) cognitive proximity as an antecedent of radical and incremental innovation in the context of supply chain agreements. Using a sample of 218 Vietnamese companies with supply chain experience, results show that cognitive proximity positively relates to decision synchronization and incentive alignment of the supply chain.

In the sixth paper, entitled “Marketing role in B2B settings: evidence from advanced, emerging, and developing markets,” authors Mora and Johnston analyze the differences existing in terms of sophistication in applied B2B marketing strategy between emerging and developed economies. They use data from a series of in-depth interviews, presenting a sample of 228 senior marketing and/or sales managers from companies in the USA, Bolivia, Chile and Peru.

The seventh paper, “The impact on competitiveness of customer value creation through relationship capabilities and marketing innovation,” from Sánchez-Gutiérrez, Cabanelas, Lampón and González-Alvarado, is an analysis of the link between managerial relational capability and marketing innovation in the value-creation process and the antecedent effect of the former on firm competitiveness. Using a sample of 450 Mexican SMEs from the furniture industry, the empirical study evidences significant and positive effects.

The eighth paper, from Ruiz-Alba, Soares, Rodríguez-Molina and Frías Jamilena, entitled, “Servitization strategies from customers’ perspective: the moderating role of co-creation,” delves into the implementation of servitization strategies, as perceived by pharmacists. The empirical study was based on a sample of 219 pharmacy store managers located in Spain. A particularly interesting result obtained was that only in the case of situations with a high level of co-

creation does the servitization factor have a significant effect on the performance.

The ninth paper, entitled “Validation of organizational innovation as a creative learning process,” by Kumar, Yakhlef and Nordin, is based on a case-study analysis from of three different firms. From grounded theory, their findings suggest that the validation phase of the innovation process is also a creative one and that the source – internal or external – and flow of knowledge – vertical or horizontal – set the conditions for a particular type of legitimacy of innovative solutions.

Finally, the last paper in this special issue entitled, “Value and barriers in the creation of intellectual property in advanced manufacturing: a country comparison” is a comparative analysis of the value of patents belonging mainly to manufacturing firms. Here, professors Charterina and Araujo aim to study whether the number and diversity of the owners of a patent is a factor that firms use as a means to counter some well-documented and important advantages that more centrally located or bigger companies enjoy.

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Further reading

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Jon Charterina