
Guest editorial

Changing Dynamics in B2B Marketing

This special colloquium edition of “Changing Dynamics in Business Marketing” for the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* was prompted by a business-to-business (B2B) colloquium at the University of Bournemouth, an event that took place in 2015. The articles and papers for this special edition stem primarily from the conceptual foundations of the original conference, which presented an opportunity for practitioners and academics to consider business needs for change and the adaptability (or not) of firms to meet the contemporary challenges posed. The turmoil created by the last economic crisis and the advances in IT, communication technologies and social media networks has meant that firms cannot take for granted that certain old practices by managers of firms should carry on without change, as highlighted by the authors of the “commentary” articles. Theoretical and practical issues in the commentary articles give valid arguments and valuable insights for adapting business models, tackling social media opportunities and improving the role of the chief marketing officer. These are followed by research papers dealing with important issues of communications, cooperation, engagement, trust and the dynamic nature of business and customer interactions. The special edition ends with a book review that considers the need for change in the way firms interact with other businesses, customers and employees in their business environments. There are implications for the B2B practices of firms when faced with the need to change in confronting the new developments or challenges in their business environments.

The first commentary paper is by Ryan Stott, Merlin Stone and Jane Fae. Ryan Stott works with the leading information and communication technologies (ICT) research and consultancy company, IDC (International Data Corporation), advising IT vendors and services companies on growth strategies. Professor Merlin Stone has written many publications, is a consultant and runs several businesses, consulting and researching the customer relationship management (CRM), customer insights, market strategies, direct and digital marketing fields. Jane Fae is a Writer and Researcher in IT, Business and Law and was formerly the Editor of *Journal of Database Marketing and Customer Strategy Management*. Together, their thought-provoking article raises questions, challenges, perceptions and seeks to address the issues around business models, concepts and their implementation.

Mike Bernard works at IBM as the Large Enterprise Marketing Leader in UK and Ireland. He is also Market Segment Management Leader. His commentary paper is illuminating and excellent in addressing the hesitancy of B2B chief marketing officers in using social media. Drawing on the statements and accumulated experience of his peers, he suggests that B2B chief marketing officers (CMOs) are not ready to meet the challenges the new media poses. Social media are used for after-sales service, getting sales leads,

engaging with key influencers, building the company’s reputation and enhancing the industry status of key individuals. There are opportunities for B2B CMOs to exploit these, but there is inertia. The author explains why collaboration between CMOs and the boardroom is essential to do this successfully, even though some amongst the former are not ready to do take account of the new potential in social media activities and to exploit them for the benefit of their firms. The author stresses the need to develop and exploit the capabilities of processing massive amounts of data to get the most out of social media.

Malcolm McDonald is Emeritus Professor at Cranfield and a Practitioner with a longstanding background as a practitioner and consultant for top management in hundreds of companies, most of them being B2B firms. He claims that the main challenges facing B2B marketers are in determining the right marketing budget, marketing costs and measuring profitability; meaningful market-based intelligence with financial information; and important information on value-creating activities management. B2B firms need to change to cope properly with their marketing environments. He highlights the effect of short-termism in capital investment, as the effects of marketing expenditure are often manifested some considerable time after they have “left the factory”. It is not adaptation but changes that are required. To achieve long-run financial success, he advocates that B2B marketers should target needs-based segments, make a specific offer to each customer segment, leverage company strengths and minimise weaknesses. In anticipating future market developments, B2B marketers need to gain a more robust position in the boardroom and play a stronger role in defining corporate strategy.

Following this, the first research paper, Elvira Bolat *et al.*, explores the implications of the use of mobile social media (MSM) on interaction, exchange of information and creation of user-generated content in the B2B firms in the context of the combined UK advertising and marketing sector. Theoretical perspectives are discussed, and a grounded theory approach is adopted. The results of an exploratory study show that marketing and advertising firms use MSM for branding, sensing market, managing relationships and developing content. MSM is treated by businesses as a strategic firm-specific capability. This capability drives organisational competitiveness, as imitation of such capability by competitors is limited because MSM skills are specific to individuals within organisations and MSM routines are manifested in the deployment of firm-specific MSM skills. The research study emphasises on MSM capability as a result of the overlap between the individual and the organisation concerning knowledge and memory, which contradicts a long-held belief in the literature on the subject.

The issue of internet banking adoption with business users is examined by Kaouther Ben Mansour in the second paper. The study highlights the relevance of integrating e-trust dimensions to the technology acceptance model (TAM) and identifies the factors affecting business’ internet banking adoption. Identifying such variables will improve the likelihood of increasing the businesses’ adoption rate of these services. Based on relevant literature, a questionnaire for just over a hundred business managers was activated as a Web survey. A structural modelling analysis was applied for the data collected. The results confirm that two main trust

dimensions of the TAM (integrity and credibility) positively influence perceived usefulness and attitude towards business' internet banking adoption and behavioural intention. The findings provide necessary insights for bank managers who should be aware of the importance of the different beliefs on users' attitudes and the need to adjust their marketing mixes accordingly. The author emphasises on influencing business internet banking behaviour with the most influential dimensions of trust in this B2B context.

Internal dynamics viewed from organisational perspectives and their influences upon perceived business success are highlighted in the last two papers, first from employee-managerial relationships and second in assessing behavioural characteristics in aligning under an umbrella brand.

In the third paper, Julie Robson *et al.* investigate a topic frequently ignored in the academic literature and provide some evidence of *the role strain in inter-personal relationship from an individual employee's perspective*. The qualitative study highlighted the often overlooked subtleties in the academic literature about relationships and issues important in affecting the running and, hence, the effectiveness of businesses that can trigger strains on relationships between individuals. The research method used 30 in-depth interviews with experienced account managers. What was scrutinised was the nature of the inter-personal relationship existing between the account managers of UK insurance brokers and their business customers. The study found that account managers, although having a range of resources to support their inter-personal relationships, develop a mismatch in their perceptions of relationship closeness, and this resulted in role strain for these managers. Resentments expressed over time increased the problems perceived, for example, concerning a better work/life balance. There is a need for managers to take on board much more seriously the issue of role strain in inter-personal relationships and to identify warning signs of early mismatches. Otherwise, the often overlooked subtle ties within relationships and issues have the potential of leading to larger problems that trigger relationship strain. Identification of the personal resources used in inter-personal relationships

can prove useful for other researchers examining the way businesses are managed in this under-researched area.

The B2B marketing literature has published much less on umbrella branding with regards to the hospitality industry. The fourth paper by Kaouther Kooli *et al.* attempts to make a contribution by drawing on a theoretical framework from the business literature to develop this further in a practical examination of one case example, the umbrella brand of Ringhotels e.V., incorporated in 1973. It has grown to be Germany's biggest and one of Europe's largest umbrella associations. Data collected from interviews with senior managers inside the Ringhotels' headquarters in Germany were content analysed. The findings show that behavioural characteristics play a significant role in explaining overall alliance success on cost and service benefits with insights for improvement for the umbrella association and its membership.

This special colloquium edition finishes with a review of the book *Business Marketing: Concepts and Cases*, written by Sharad Sarin and published by Mc-Graw Hill Education in India. The book covers core principles of how to develop good business practices using marketing with many concepts originating from the West. So, the contexts of the book are suitable for both Western and Indian business cultures. With 18 chapters and 35 cases, it packs a wealth of information about B2B businesses and their processes. The book has examples of many products and firms and deals skilfully with stressing the adaptation of business practices to changing customer demands in India and elsewhere. The importance of marketing is emphasised by the book's author, who sets it at the core of strategic planning and business activities.

Finally, we should like to record our special thanks to Professor Wesley J. Johnston, *JBIM* Editor, for giving us this opportunity and to the reviewers for their help in reviewing for this issue. We thank all the authors for their contributions in helping us to make this edition a success. Our last comment is that we hope this edition, in providing valued insights, can promote future researches and discussion for a long time to come.

Kaouther Kooli
Len Tiu Wright