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Managing inventory and supplies from a marketing for manufacturers stance

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ABSTRACT

This study uses the framework of Industrial Marketing Management (IMM) to reflect on the state of buying and supply management (PSM) research from an industrial marketing viewpoint. A comprehensive literature study of IMM shows that the journal has seen an increasing number of publications on PSM and that many of them use the IMP Interaction Approach as their theoretical framework. We theorize on the idea of supply networks, explore the concept of managing supply networks, and debate the established "best practices" in PSM as we analyze the themes of PSM research and suggest future PSM research possibilities for industrial marketing researchers. The recommendation is thus to spend additional research to build more theory on supply networks and how to manage within supply networks, since there is a startling lack of conceptual clarity as to the meaning of supply networks and the notion of managing supply networks. This study argues that innovative approaches to influencing and managing supply networks are necessary because of the growing complexity and hazards associated with these networks, particularly with respect to sustainability.

Keywords: Purchasing, Supply management, Industrial marketing, Supply networks

1. Introduction

Many businesses have elevated Purchasing and Supply Management (PSM) from a support role to a more strategic one. This shift has occurred because of the widespread agreement that outsourcing has led to an increase in the proportion of a company's value that originates in its supply chain, a fact that, in turn, demands a more developed PSM function that focuses on adding value to the business rather than simply cutting costs.

PSM's increasing prominence in the corporate world is mirrored in the proliferation of advanced academic degrees (e.g., master's) in the field. PSM research has come a long way from being dismissed as unimportant and unworthy of publishing to being recognized as a legitimate academic field in its own right (Harland et al., 2006). In many circles, PSM is still seen as a subset of SCM (Larson & Halldorsson, 2002), IO, or IM (Industrial Organization & Marketing). In an ongoing battle for acceptance among its more established contemporaries, PSM seems to be struggling with its own sense of who it is. Naturally devoted to industrial marketing, Industrial Marketing Management (IMM) yet deems PSM (and SCM) to be beyond the purview of the publication. As this article will show, PSM is receiving increasing attention within the realm of

industrial marketing research and beyond, as seen by the huge and rising number of papers published in IMM to date. This study covers the development of PSM research, contrasting PSM research published in IMM with PSM research in general i.e. published elsewhere. This study provides a reflection on PSM research from an industrial marketing viewpoint and suggests future options for PSM research from an industrial marketing perspective utilizing the Industrial Marketing Model (IMM) as a proXY. Supply network theory, supply network management, and PSM "best practices" are all areas that might be explored along these roads. The study opens with a short systematic literature review of PSM research published in IMM, including a summary of the number of PSM publications published in the journal since its inception in the 1970s and an examination of the evolution of theoretical viewpoints.¹ The systematic review serves as a springboard for a study and discussion of theoretical disputes presented in IMM, as well as an assessment of current developments. Future directions for PSM research in IMM are then suggested by comparing them to overarching themes in the broader PSM literature.

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2. An overview of PSM papers published in industrial marketing management

With PSM struggling to be viewed as a serious academic discipline (Harland et al., 2006), it is hardly surprising that there is a relatively low number of journals that publish PSM research. Zsidisin, Smith, McNally, and Kull (2007) showed that *Industrial Marketing Management* is a key journal target for PSM scholars. Where the *Journal of Supply Chain Management* and *Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management* are specialized PSM and SCM journals, *Industrial Marketing Management* is a journal that is open to PSM papers albeit without being a specialized PSM journal. Given the strong reputation and ranking of *Industrial Marketing*

Management, PSM researchers have long considered the journal an important target. Fig. 1 shows an increase in PSM papers published since the early 1970s. However, with an increasing number of total *Industrial Marketing Management* publications (four annual issues from 1971 to 1995; then six annual issues until 2001; eight annual issues since 2001), this growth needs to be seen in the light of the overall increasing volume of publications in this journal as across the field in other journals. Nevertheless, this shows a gradual increase in IMM publications focusing on PSM with peaks often explained by special issues dedicated to PSM-related topics.

3. Underlying theoretical perspectives in IMM PSM papers

Focusing on papers published since 2000, Fig. 2 shows that a large proportion of PSM papers published in IMM is based on an Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) (Håkansson, 1982; Håkansson & Snehota, 1995) perspective. In fact, out of 155 papers 47 applied explicitly or implicitly an IMP perspective, referring varying to this as an interaction, industrial network, or IMP approach. This demonstrates the popularity of IMP especially when comparing with otherwise dominant theoretical perspectives in PSM research i.e. transaction cost economics (TCE) (e.g., Williamson, 1975), the resource-based-view (RBV) (e.g., Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984), and knowledge-based view (e.g., Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). To put this into perspective, Spina, Caniato, Luzzini, and Ronchi's (2013, 2016) large cross-journal reviews of PSM literature found a strong reliance on TCE, RBV, the knowledge-based view and recorded no IMP-based papers. This is partly

as a result of their focus on 'grand theories' (Spina et al., 2016), where

IMP was not classified as such, but this picture still puts the widespread use of IMP in PSM papers in IMM into perspective. It is worth noting here also that many papers do not rely on a single theoretical perspective and often combine two or more, or authors may adopt, for example, an IMP conceptual framework and use these to interpret an empirical study but view their conceptual framework as founded on a more fundamental or grand theory underpinning the IMP perspective, such as resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Whatever the counter-arguments against classifying IMP at the same theoretical level as more widely accepted theories, such as resource-based view, or resource-based theory (Barney, 2012), the fact remains that IMP has a significant conceptual and theoretical stronghold over IMM PSM papers and this clearly characterizes IMM PSM papers, as discussed

4. PSM themes in IMM

Table 1 gives an overview of some of the major themes that have been tackled in IMM papers with a PSM focus. These are briefly discussed in the following. One theme is purchasing-marketing integration, which has warranted two special issues in IMM (Ivens, Pardo, & Tunisini, 2009; Lindgreen et al., 2016). The 2009 special issue (Vol. 23 No. 2) focused on organizational issues concerning purchasing/marketing integration, the rationale behind this that the "topic of organization [within business-to-business exchanges] remains desperately under-researched" (Ivens et al., 2009, p. 852). A central theme across the 2009 papers was the need for a change in focus in both marketing and purchasing from the view of buying and selling goods to buying and selling capabilities. The 2016 special issue (Vol. 52 No. 1) edited by Lindgreen, Campelo and Angell goes further in exploring the purchasing-marketing inter-

later. What may strike PSM scholars is that a relatively large proportion of papers build on what can best be described as general business-to-business (B-to-B) marketing literature; these tend to focus exclusively on a sales and marketing and, in reality, are concerned with downstream customers rather than suppliers. They also do not take a theoretical stance but are usually more driven by a practical agenda. It is worth pointing out that many papers are similarly positioned in PSM or SCM literature, reporting research based on, for example, Kraljic's (1983) well-known purchasing portfolio models (Caniëls & Gelderman, 2007; Wagner & Johnson, 2004); these tend not to claim a theoretical perspective even if they may, of course, be well-positioned in the literature.

Closely related to the B-to-B marketing perspective, many papers adopt a relationship marketing (e.g., Grönroos, 2011) and/or relationship value (Ulaga, 2003) perspective. Where the B-to-B perspective has little to offer PSM researchers, as it is almost exclusively viewing customers (i.e. purchasers) from a sales and marketing perspective, the concept of relationship value is of more universal relevance to the management of both downstream customer and upstream supplier relationships. The focus on value rather than cost savings resonates with PSM scholars as contributing to value is associated with strategic and mature PSM (Chick & Handfield, 2014). The relationship value concept offers a novel perspective for PSM scholars and practitioners as value is traditionally related to the value of purchases rather than (supplier) relationships. IMM papers have therefore made important contributions to advance this perspective. Lastly, it may come as a surprise that there are almost as many papers that adopt a relatively old-fashioned organizational buying behaviour (Webster & Wind, 1972) lens as there are papers adopting a TCE lens. Where the organizational buying behaviour models exerted influence on early PSM literature they are clearly developed from the perspective of sales and marketing with a view to identifying the right decision-makers within customers. They continue to be cited in a relatively large number of IMM PSM papers, perhaps indicating their seminal status.

face. A central theme here is the potential value creation and value

capture from better purchasing-marketing coordination and 'co-management' (Toon et al., 2016). This goes into more depth with organizational design issues in discussing specific ways to combat silo structures and achieve integration and co-management of purchasing and marketing through, for example, inter/cross-functional teams (see also Wynstra et al., 2003) and matrix-type structures.

An important area of potential value creation derived from marketing-purchasing integration concerns new product development (NPD) and innovation projects (Gonzalez-Zapatero et al., 2016). IMM has published several articles dedicated to this theme, examining the involvement of suppliers in NPD (Melander & Lakemond,

2015) with some research devoted to the role of the purchasing function in facilitating supplier involvement projects (Luzzini et al., 2015; Wynstra et al., 2003). Although research on (early) supplier involvement in NPD has a long track record (Johnsen, 2009), research on how to organize internally for managing these projects, including the role of purchasing and marketing, is far less developed (Luzzini et al., 2015).

Another theme relates to purchasing of services, including marketing services (Bals et al., 2009; Tate et al., 2010). The trend towards servitization of products (Araujo, Finch, & Kjellberg, 2010) and suppliers as full-service or systems providers (Lindberg & Nordin, 2008; Stremersch et al., 2001), has blurred the boundaries between products and services with strong implications for both marketing and purchasing. One of these is that purchasing of services requires an understanding of interaction processes and buyer-supplier relationships (Lian & Laing, 2007; van der Valk, 2008) and IMM has been instrumental in pushing this research agenda. A core reason for this is the prevalent, if not unique, use of the IMP Interaction Approach that characterizes IMM PSM papers. With services characterized by simultaneous production and consumption, purchasing tasks, especially specification and evaluation, pose particular challenges (Ellram, Tate, & Billington, 2004) that can usefully be addressed through an Interaction Approach (Araujo et al., 2010; Axelsson & Wynstra, 2002).

The final major PSM theme that emerged from this analysis of IMM

papers, is networks. More a concept than a theme, networks have provided the conceptual framework for the study of a range of industrial customer and supply market issues, including network change and dynamics (Håkansson & Waluszewski, 2013), implementation of sustainability (Crespin-Mazet et al., 2015; Meqdadi et al., 2017), and strategizing (Öberg, 2010). These studies share a common assumption that markets, be they customer or

5. Where to next for PSM IMM research?

Based on the brief review of theoretical perspectives applied in IMM papers and prominent themes, a picture of PSM research published in IMM begins to take shape. On the one hand, this stream of research in IMM has made valuable if not unique contributions to the PSM field. On the other hand,

5.1 Avenue 1: advance supply network theory

With PSM closely linked to SCM (Larson & Halldorsson, 2002), PSM needs to play a key role in the management of supply chains and networks. Both PSM and SCM research recognize a need to focus not only on supply chains but also on wider supply networks. This is not least driven by a recognition that many risks and opportunities exist in distant supplier relationships, for example concerning sustainability (Miemczyk, Johnsen, & Macquet, 2012) and innovation (Yan, Choi, Kim, & Yang, 2015). Where PSM has traditionally limited its attention to the management of immediate (first tier) PSM has gradually shifted its attention from managing dyadic supplier relationships to supply networks. Industrial marketing researchers are well-positioned to contribute to the development of supply network theory, using the IMP Interaction Approach to provide much needed conceptual clarity.

Where IMP scholars originally referred to industrial networks

supply markets, are not 'something out there' but inter-connected or interacted through network relationships i.e. an understanding of markets as networks (Abrahamsen & Håkansson, 2015). As will be argued in the next section, there is still much scope for using the network concept, including its foundations in customer-supplier interaction processes and relationships, to advance supply network theory.

Overall, PSM research published in IMM can be characterized by being heavily guided by an IMP interaction perspective. This would appear to contrast with the use of theoretical perspectives in PSM in other journals that rely more on TCE and RBV. Where TCE and RBV are theories with a much wider foundation in strategic management, and sometimes regarded as external grand theories (Spina et al., 2016), IMP is closer to an internal PSM theory (Chicksand, Walker, Radnor, Watson, & Johnston, 2012). The IMP Interaction Approach also sits more comfortably with many PSM scholars who struggle, in particular, with the behavioural assumptions of TCE that lend support to opportunistic buyer and supplier behaviour that runs counter to how the field has progressed since the 1990s (Lindgreen, Vanhamme, van Raaij, & Johnston, 2013). The focus on long-term buyer-supplier relationships, or partnerships, which emerged both in research and in practice during the last 25 years or so (Lamming, 1993), is generally seen as an indicator of strategic PSM. PSM maturity models, dating back to Reck and Long's (1988) seminal model, associate the sort of behaviour prescribed by TCE with a low level of PSM maturity in contrast with collaborative supplier relationships that indicate mature, strategic PSM functions that contribute to overall competitive advantage and corporate value creation (Chick & Handfield, 2014). With an increasing research focus on collaboration, for example in relation to innovation and sustainability, IMP arguably provides a much better fit than TCE for making sense of strategic PSM behaviour and practices.

there is scope for further development, in particular, to contribute to further theoretical development in the area where IMM PSM research is clearly strongest: on buyer-supplier relationships and networks. This paper proposes three inter-related avenues of research into this subject.

(Easton, 1992; Håkansson, 1987) or business networks (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995), the concept of supply networks is rarely used by IMP scholars. This might indicate a preference for conceptual consistency or perhaps an unwillingness to embrace a concept with roots in supply chain management. However, recent theoretical developments within supply chain management acknowledge that supply chains need to be understood as networks (Carter, Rogers & Choi, 2015) although this theoretical development has been a long time coming and yet it remains unclear what supply networks are even at a fundamental level.

Tracing the supply network concept to its roots, one finds that apparently the first author to propose the concept of *supply networks* as an alternative to *supply chains* was Harland (1996). Her definition of supply networks referred to a set of supply chains involved in the production and supply of a particular product or product

family, incorporating links between, or across, individual supply chains. Borrowing concepts from the IMP group (e.g. Håkansson, 1982, 1987), Harland (1996) proposed the concept *supply network* to focus on the implications of inter-connections of individual relationships and chains and to provide a more holistic picture of the system and process of supply.

As an extension of supply chains, Harland's (1996) conception of supply networks included not only the upstream *supplier* network but also the downstream distribution or customer network, the logic being that, as with supply chains, the supply network is defined from the perspective of the end customer. However, definitions of supply networks, in particular in relation to whether or not they include only upstream supplier relationships or also include downstream distribution or customer relationships, remain unclear and often simply taken for granted.

Braziotis, Bourlakis, Rogers, and Tannock (2013) make a rare attempt to identify the differences between supply chains and supply networks. Building extensively on IMP literature, they align their view with Harland's (1996), arguing that "Essentially, a [supply network] is a web of [supply chains] and associated satellite companies, with enhanced complexity of inter-firm relationships where power aspects and relationship management among members emerge as key difficulties in managing the network." (p. 648). They make a key distinction between supply chain actors being active whereas supply network actors include both active and inactive actors. However, their definition does not clarify the upstream or downstream nature of supply networks.

Choi, Dooley, and Rungtusanatham (2001) define a supply network purely in terms of the upstream (supplier) network:

"A supply network in this regard includes all companies that take part

directly or indirectly in supplying industrial inputs to a focal company with or without that company's knowledge."

Discussing the differences between the supply base and the supply

network, Choi and Krause (2006) go further to explain that the supply network refers to "All inter-connected companies that exist upstream to any one company in the value system", and the supply base is "a portion of the supply network that is actively managed by the focal company through contracts and purchasing of parts, materials, and services" (p. 638). Again, supply networks are defined as existing purely upstream in clear contrast with other research (Harland, 1996; Lamming, Johnsen, Zheng, & Harland, 2000) that takes both an upstream and downstream perspective. There is therefore a need for definitional clarification and discussion of the concept of supply networks.

In addition, defining supply networks in terms of traditional supply chains actors may be too narrow as more stakeholders become closely involved in sourcing and supply processes. Johnsen, Miemczyk, and Howard (2017) call for re-conceptualization of the supply network concept, arguing that stakeholders need to be included as these increasingly put strong pressures in and sometimes perform important roles in, for example, conducting supplier sustainability audits. These include stakeholders that are traditionally classified in stakeholder theory as secondary i.e. focal supply network actors are not engaged in transactions with these but they can affect, or are affected by these, for example, non-government organizations (NGOs), neighbouring communities, and social activists (Ehrgott, Reimann, Kaufmann, & Carter, 2011; Hall & Matos, 2010). Reconceptualizing supply networks therefore requires inclusion of actors that might be considered traditionally as 'non-business actors' (Crespin-Mazet & Dentenwill, 2012).

6. Conclusions

Using IMM as a proxy for an industrial marketing perspective on PSM research, this paper has offered reflections on PSM research. A systematic review of IMM papers over time has demonstrated that a large and growing number of PSM papers have been published in IMM. IMM is clearly a key target for researchers in PSM or for researchers looking to publish PSM-related research. This suggests an increasing focus on PSM within the bounds of industrial marketing research and more widely.

An analysis of theoretical perspectives applied in IMM PSM-related papers revealed a very strong reliance on the IMP Interaction Approach. This is in stark contrast to PSM papers published in other journals (Spina et al., 2013, 2016) and suggests a special character of PSM research in IMM. Where dominant theoretical perspectives in PSM research are TCE (e.g., Williamson, 1975), RBV (e.g., Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984), and the knowledge-based view (e.g., Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), relatively few papers in IMM build on these perspectives. In some ways, this may not be entirely surprising because the Interaction Approach fits theoretically very well with recent developments in PSM, especially given the strong focus of the Interaction Approach on providing frameworks to understand the nature of long-term buyer-supplier relationships and the embeddedness of these within networks. In fact, SCM theory is emerging that conceptualizes supply chains as networks (Carter et al., 2015), suggesting

that not only PSM but also SCM is embracing network theory. However, IMP scholars could do more to engage in conceptual debate concerning PSM and SCM. This paper therefore proposed three avenues of research that could serve this purpose: 1) theorizing on the concept of supply networks, 2) revisiting the notion of *managing* supply networks and 3) debating established 'best practices' in PSM. Given the central role of networks within emerging SCM theory, there is a surprising lack of conceptual clarity as to the meaning of supply networks where some view supply networks in purely upstream terms but others define networks from an end customer perspective i.e. covering both upstream and downstream relationships. Furthermore, it is argued that new conceptualizations of supply networks are required as these become increasingly complex. This is partly due to the rise of supply network risks, especially concerning sustainability, which in turn also requires new thinking about how best to influence and manage supply networks. IMP has traditionally been reluctant to accept that there is a need to manage networks, or even parts of networks, but would do well to engage in, or even lead, future research on what and how supply network actors can best manage within an increasingly complex and risky supply network context

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