
Editorial: New JBIM initiatives to improve B2B research and provide greater scholarly alignment with practice

1. JBIM a platform for the evolving business-to-business system in practice and research

Business-to-business (B2B) marketing faces a paradox: while industrial markets are key pillars of virtually all local and global marketing activity, most consumers only notice them once they are disrupted. Currently, we are witnessing disruptions like the COVID pandemic, related distortion of supply chains and a war affecting the largest participants in the global market. As a leading journal devoted to business and industrial marketing, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* (JBIM) is committed to extending knowledge, theory and methods empowering scholars and managers to navigate and shape business markets in the face of uncertainty and complexity inherent in B2B commercial relationships. Recent publications on the state and future of B2B marketing research (Lilien, 2016; Mora Cortez and Johnston, 2017; Mora Cortez, 2019; Tanner, 2021; Tzempelikos, 2022) indicate opportunities for researchers to reimagine theories to better connect to the practical world. In this vein, academics are encouraged to adopt an ecosystemic view (Alderson, 1965; Layton, 2011) on B2B marketing research, which involves researchers, journals, publishers, readers and reviewers among others. In this editorial, we focus on the goals of JBIM as the platform for rigorous research on B2B marketing and sales, aiming to navigate and contribute to the publishing ecosystem.

Both, the enhanced complexity of business markets and the thrilling productivity of B2B scholars shown in the rise of number, quality and range of topics of submissions, are driving substantial changes of the journal. Some of these changes will include the following:

2. New article formats: extending business-to-business reasoning, methods and management capabilities

From its inception, JBIM has been committed to enhancing and strengthening theories of business markets. Ubiquitous digitization of business markets is now creating a new

challenge to theory, potentially connecting any type of resource with any type of user on a global scale. For example, buying centers are extending with virtual buyers and stakeholder organizations (Grewal *et al.*, 2015; Johnston *et al.*, 2022). Transformative buying processes do not simply call for further theoretical reflection. They also call for a unique way of reasoning reflecting technological capabilities, interplay of human, virtual and corporate actors on business markets (Johnston *et al.*, 2022). Multilevel systems-approaches offer an inroad to capture the interplay of physical and human scientific explanations of business market phenomena (Cyert *et al.*, 1956; Spohrer and Maglio, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2016). Besides our genuine curiosity for every original idea with the potential to enlighten business market phenomena, we have a particular interest in multilevel reasoning that crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries. Take data governance: Effective approaches will reside not only on special knowledge and theories from areas such as IT systems, organizational behavior, law and psychology, but even more on coming to terms of the complex interplay of these forces (Hess and Ostrom, 2003; Huang and Rust, 2021).

3. Method development

JBIM is committed to sound methodological enlightening of business decisions, rather than selecting business problems in lieu of existing methodological expertise (see e.g. Woodside, 2019; Woodside and Baxter, 2013). Thus, the range of theories suitable for JBIM articles is broadening. Although JBIM has developed a culture reflecting the progress and use of methods for enlightening our understanding of business markets, more is still needed. We will support this ambition in the present and the future. Currently, digitalization drives one of the most fundamental transformations of market research (Economist, 2021). Ubiquitous computing opens a new level of access to data and frequently in real time. This calls for new methods beyond the standard toolset of the academic market researcher. We call for articles that reflect and demonstrate the contribution of real-time, behavior-capturing approaches that thrive on new types of data formats.

4. Exploring neglected, crucial domains

4.1 Emerging markets: wellsprings of marketing innovation

At JBIM, we are committed to identifying neglected domains that show promise and opportunities for business marketers. One of the most neglected domains is the role of business markets in economic development. Although one of the key insights offered by the economic calculation debate (Keizer, 1989) is that business markets are key to the unfolding of benefits for market forces for human wealth, research has rarely built on that insight. Currently, emerging markets are one of the most fascinating domains to study, explore and validate the power of business markets. Facing resource constraints and institutional voids, marketers have made emerging markets into wellsprings of market innovation. By leapfrogging rich world institutions and infrastructures, emerging markets herald marketing development in domains such as agility, e-commerce, application of mobile technologies, reorganization, crises, offering management and operating under resource constraints. At JBIM, we are taking

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a number of initiatives to reflect and sustain emerging market dynamics, including special issues and forums for theoretical, methodological and managerial reflection.

4.2 Entrepreneurial marketing

Marketing is a laggard in the reflection of the turmoil at work in real-world markets. In contrast, domains like entrepreneurship showed a much stronger concern to fundamental aspects of market uncertainty, and business responses such as business modeling. While marketing is lately adopting such approaches, *JBIM* will commit to stimulate entrepreneurial approaches to market uncertainty and the role of entrepreneurs in enhancing value chains.

4.3 Transformation of the marketing department/organization

The role of the marketing department is a controversial topic in the mainstream literature, indicating contrasting results regarding its power and influence (Homburg *et al.*, 2015; Feng *et al.*, 2015). B2B settings seem to face the same challenge and market-based activities conducted by the marketing department are deemed rather limited (Blachetta and Kleinaltenkamp, 2019). Indeed, some B2B firms do not even have a formal marketing department. *JBIM* is vastly interested in further understanding the role of the marketing department, its dynamics and collaboration with other departments.

4.4 Big data and small data complementarity

The explosion of big data has contributed to advance the analytical frame associated with B2B firms. However, most organizations have difficulty turning the torrential flood of customer and competitor data into something insightful (Fahey, 2019, p. 27). Indeed, rarely suppliers serve more than 100 customers (per country) with the sales Pareto being concentrated on a few tens. Although product and service operations can generate terabytes of data, a customer survey data can merely generate a couple of megabytes and be processed using Excel or simple statistical approaches. *JBIM* acknowledges the value of both big data and small data and invite researchers to explore their synergy.

4.5 Ideation, strategy and the human brain

While applied psychology, innovation and intelligence domains have paid much more attention to the development of creative ideas, the intersection between creativity, intelligence and strategizing has been neglected by marketing scholars. Recently, the literature showed a boost in research on artificial intelligence because of increasing computing power, lower computing costs, data availability and the advance of machine learning algorithms and models (Huang and Rust, 2021; Davenport *et al.*, 2020). However, the emergence of new ideas and the overall process related to strategizing in B2B settings is underresearched, which is key for further understanding the decisions and actions of marketers.

4.6 Capability nurturing

The main focus of academics researching marketing capabilities has been on connecting capabilities to

performance outcomes – with a large and increasing evidence-base for this linkage (Morgan, 2019). Nevertheless, the existing literature is far less clear with regard to how to build such marketing capabilities. *JBIM* is prepared and ready to ignite groundbreaking research on this arena.

4.7 Buying decisions

The buying behavior of B2B actors is often assumed to be incrementally difficult to manage because of the belief that buyers are obsessed with simply reaching a low price at a reasonable quality and delivery time. Moreover, extant research states that academics tend to *observe organizational buying behavior (OBB) through a glass darkly when the only glimpse is through research undertaken in the context of understanding related phenomena* (Tanner, 2021, p. 94). This approach has led to disengaging from advancing OBB theory, which precludes from answering key questions linked to how or why or when buyers behave the way they are behaving. *JBIM* calls for more studies blending OBB theory and more recent behavioral nuances in B2B buying grounded in psychology and/or sociology. The role of social economics, especially with respect to sustainability in buying behavior, is also an important focus for research.

4.8 Data governance

The vision of computers supporting almost any human activity on a global scale – “ubiquitous computing” – is becoming real (Ehret and Wirtz, 2017; Weiser, 1991; Zuboff, 2019). Quick access to real-time data opens novel pathways to innovative services such as industrial services (Wirtz and Kowalkowski, 2022), autonomous transportation (Stayton & Stilgoe, 2020), health services (Laitinen, Kinder, and Stenvall, 2018), financial services (Ehret and Olanyan, 2022) or agrifood. Almost ubiquitous access opens up new opportunities and challenges for the shared use of data for value co-creation. To date, regulators and researchers have tackled the downsides of ubiquitous data-access, in particular privacy issues. As an unintended side effect, leading platforms use privacy regulation to fortify their data-monopolies (Mayer-Schoenberger and Ramge, 2022; Scott *et al.*, 2020). One of the central challenges of B2B research is on identifying data-governance approaches that protect privacy of stakeholders and unlock the vast opportunities of sharing data for value co-creation. *JBIM* will lead initiatives for data-governance research and encourages researchers to submit their work. In particular, we encourage researchers to reflect data-specific challenges of interorganizational governance and explore outcomes of B2B-data-governance configurations.

5. Increasing ecosystemic participation in business-to-business research

5.1 Industry-researcher author teams

JBIM is among the marketing journals with the highest commitment to manager perspectives and relevance. While continuing our tradition such as case studies and industry viewpoint articles, we aim to stimulate new levels of practitioner–researcher interaction. For this reason, we introduce a new format of team authorships articles written by industry-academic author teams. The new format follows an

interview-based approach to stress the practical voice of the industry coauthor. In addition, the academic coauthor shall briefly synthesize the main idea of the practitioner topic and identify topics for further research because of conceptual novelty, inconsistency with prior academic literature, unexplored boundary conditions and/or extending B2B nomological network theory issues.

5.2 Reviewer recognition

Reviewers are the unsung heroes of marketing publications. They share their experience and capabilities and enormous time for identifying the substance of submissions and unlock the full potential of articles. At the same time, recognition of reviewer work is very limited, at best shows in reviewer awards that make one line in a CV. However, many reviews contain substantial observations. *JBIM* will open a reviewer route to publication, by copublishing substantive comments to accepted articles or inviting reviewers to elaborate insights into full-fledged articles.

5.3 Center for business and industrial marketing

The Center for Business and Industrial Marketing (CBIM), in the Robinson College of Business at Georgia State University, supports the journal with an assistant editor and organizes an occasional special issue. The center is open for visits by scholars who are interested in publishing in the journal and are on sabbaticals funded by their university or have government support. The visit provides the opportunity to interact with other scholars interested in B2B marketing and sales. These visits have often resulted in the successful development of a manuscript for submission to the journal. The center also conducts an annual conference in conjunction with a special issue of the journal focused on a theme from the conference.

6. Editorial board changes

To better support these changes, we are broadening the board of editors and introducing a tier-level structure of editors, associate editors who take the responsibility of key B2B knowledge domains, three senior associate editors who engage in setting the agenda for the journal publication process and priorities and two editors-in-chief to provide overall direction and support for both the journal and its special Forum for the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Group's research on networks and relationships. The new structure of the editorial board and those individuals participating is as follows:

6.1 Associate editors and their specialization

Bahar Ashnai
Associate Professor of Marketing
Sales, Sales Management and Relationships
William Paterson University of New Jersey
Wayne, New Jersey, USA

Surajit Bag
Associate Professor of Marketing Management
Industry 4.0, IoT, Big Data and Manufacturing Sustainability
IMT Ghaziabad
Delhi, India

Pablo Cabanelas
Associate Professor of Marketing
Competitiveness, Supply Chain Management and Sustainability
University of Vigo
Vigo, Spain

Carolyn Curasi
Associate Professor of Marketing
Sales, Sales Management and Ethics
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Julian Ming-Sung Cheng
Professor of Marketing
Channels, IoT and Innovation
National Central University
Chung-Li City, Taiwan

Steven Pattinson
Associate Professor of Entrepreneurship
Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Innovation
Northumbria University
Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

Sharon Purchase
Professor of Marketing
Purchasing, Relationships and Networks
University of Western Australia
Perth, Australia

Brian Rutherford
Professor of Marketing and Professional Sales
Sales, Buyer Behavior and Planning
Kennesaw State University
Kennesaw, Georgia, USA

Wendy L. Tate
William J. Taylor Professor in Supply Chain Management
Halsom College of Business
University of Tennessee
Knoxville, Tennessee, USA

Pauliina Ulkuniemi
Professor of Marketing and Purchasing
Value, Networks and Social Media
University of Oulu
Oulu, Finland

Alexandra Waluszewski (IMP Forum)
Professor Emeritus
Technological Development and Innovation
Uppsala University
Uppsala, Sweden

6.2 Senior associate editors and their specialization

Senior Associate Editor
Michael Ehret
University Professor of Marketing
Marketing and Digitalization, Services, Ecosystems, and
Entrepreneurship and Innovation
University of Graz
Graz, Austria

Senior Associate Editor
Roberto Mora

Associate Professor of Marketing
Marketing Strategy, Data analytics, Market Intelligence,
Trade Shows and Buyer Behavior
University of Southern Denmark
Kolding, Denmark

Senior Associate Editor (IMP Forum)
Håkan Håkansson
Professor Emeritus
Business Relationships and Networks
BI Norwegian Business School
Oslo, Norway

6.3 Editors-in-chief and their specialization

Editor-in-chief
Wesley J. Johnston
CBIM Roundtable Professor of Marketing
Organizational Buying Behavior, Marketing Organization and Sales
Georgia State University
Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Editor-in-Chief (IMP Forum)
Antonella La Rocca
Associate Professor of Marketing
Business Relationships and Networks, Innovation,
Entrepreneurship, Sales and Key Account Management
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Milan, Italy

7. Personal notes from the EIC about associate editors

Bahar Ashnai has been at William Patterson University for over 10 years and was the department chair of the Professional Sales Department. She earned PhD at the University of Manchester. We met one another at a meeting of the IMP Group. We have had discussions about sales and sales management research at various American Marketing Association meetings. Her most cited article is “Inter-personal and inter-organizational trust in business relationships: An attitude-behavior-outcome model” published in *Industrial Marketing Management*.

Surajit Bag has PhDs from the University of Petroleum & Energy Studies and the University of Johannesburg. Before joining academia, Dr Surajit worked in jobs in manufacturing industries for 11 years at various senior positions. He has been a reviewer for the journal for a number of years and one of the busiest. His most cited article is “Industry 4.0 adoption and 10R advance manufacturing capabilities for sustainable development,” published in the *International Journal of Production Economics*.

Pablo Cabanelas at the University of Vigo has been an active participant in the Center for Business and Industrial Marketing International Conferences for years. We first met at the conference in Bilbao and discussed international issue in B2B relationships. His most cited article is “The impact on competitiveness of customer value creation through relationship capabilities and marketing innovation” published in the *JBIM*.

Carolyn Curasi earned PhD at the University of South Florida. Currently at Georgia State University, she originally conducted research in the area of consumer behavior but has turned her research to study buyer behavior in the B2B

market, focusing on salesperson ethics and buyer emotions when selecting multimillion-dollar sales proposals. She has been a colleague of mine at GSU for over 10 years. Her most cited article is “How individuals’ cherished possessions become families’ inalienable wealth” published in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

Julian Ming-Sung Cheng is a Professor at the National Central University (Taiwan) and earned PhD at Kingston University (UK). He has had numerous visiting appointments at universities around the world. We first met through the IMP meetings and have continued our relationship by visiting each other’s universities and discussions at the annual International CBIM Conference. His most cited article is “Social media advertising value: the case of transitional economies in Southeast Asia” published in the *Journal of Advertising*.

Steven Pattinson earned PhD at Teeside University. He had worked in academia for several years in various management positions before entering the academic track. Before that he was in customer service as a customer advisor in the insurance industry. He is a member of the IMP Group and is actively involved in numerous funded research projects involving entrepreneurship and innovation. Recently, he was promoted to the Department Head of Education at New Castle Business School at the University of Northumbria. Steven’s most cited article is “Communities of practice, knowledge acquisition: a case study of science-based SMEs” published in the *Journal of Knowledge Management*.

Sharon Purchase earned PhD at the Central Queensland University and has been at the University of Western Australia for over 20 years. We first met at an IMP Group conference and discussed B2B marketing strategy. We have continued to share our ideas on B2B marketing research at several of the IMP Group Asian conferences held every other year. She has been involved in the *JBIM* for years as one of the best members of the editorial review board. Her most cited article is “Marketing collaboration within networks and relationships” published in *Industrial Marketing Management*.

Brian Rutherford was a student in the PhD program at Georgia State University when we first met. He is now a Full Professor at Kennesaw University not far away. We have kept in touch over the years discussing sales and its relationship to B2B marketing. He is the Executive Program Director at Kennesaw. He is skilled in Sales and Sales Management and enjoys working with executives to improve issues in their firms. His most cited article is “The relationship of facets of salesperson job satisfaction with affective organizational commitment” published in the *JBIM*.

Wendy Tate is the William J. Taylor Professor in Supply Chain Management at the Haslam College of Business, University of Tennessee, Knoxville. She is the newest addition to the editorial board of the journal. Wendy comes highly recommended from other editorial board members. She has editorial experience with other journals and is a thought leader in supply chain management and logistics. Before receiving PhD, she spent 17 years in corporate planning, supply chain management, purchasing and operations management within the furniture industry. Her most cited article is “Understanding, and managing the services supply chain” published in the *Journal of Supply Chain Management*.

Pauliina Ulkuniemi is a Professor at the University of Oulu in Finland. I was a reviewer of her dissertation and the official opponent (a custom in Finland) of her dissertation at her oral defense. We have been friends for over 20 years. I have visited her university several times over the years to teach a short course on international sales management. She took this course before she earned PhD. Pauliina is also a member of the IMP Group and we have shared many discussions at the group's annual meetings. She has been one of the best editorial review group members of *JBIM* for years. Her most cited article is "Modularity in developing business services by platform approach" published in the *International Journal of Logistics Management*.

Alexandra Waluszewski is Professor Emeritus at Uppsala University, where she spent most of her career as Professor in Business Studies at the Department of Economic history, Centre for Science and Technology Studies. Her research interest and engagement in the IMP setting include empirical studies and methodological and theoretical considerations concerning technological development, innovation and industrial renewal in a broad sense. A particular research interest is the relation between scientific knowledge advances and its utilization in business and society. Her publications include a number of books, journal articles and debate articles on this topic.

8. Personal notes from the EIC about senior associate editors

The position of senior associate editor is new to the *JBIM*. It has been added to support the editorial advisor board. The EAB met regularly before the COVID pandemic. But meetings have been difficult with the lack of face-to-face meetings. The EAB members still provide regular suggestions to direct and improve *JBIM* and the two senior associate editors will augment the EAB support. Thus, the role of the senior associate editors will be to publicly represent the journal and help with the process of continual improvement of the journal's processes and impact on the international B2B marketing and sales community.

The two senior associate editors, Michael Ehret and Roberto Mora, have been long time colleagues and friends. Michael and I have known one another for almost 25 years and visited one another's homes in Germany and the USA to discuss research on numerous occasions. Roberto was the director of the Industrial Marketing Center at the University of Chile and joined my university to work in the Center for Business and Industrial and earned PhD under my direction. Michael has now moved to Graz, Austria, as the Professor of Marketing at the University of Graz. Roberto has moved to the University of Southern Denmark as an Associate Professor. They are both active each year in supporting the annual meeting of the Center for Business and Industrial Marketing of which I am the director. They have also represented the journal at the EMAC meeting this year and have helped create a new vision for the journal.

9. Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Forum

There is a special feature of every issue of the *JBIM* – the IMP Forum edited by an *ad hoc* editorial team. The IMP Forum

(The IMP Journal until 2019) is linked to the homonym Group of Research – The IMP Group – which has been active since the early 1980s and is the leading academic group for business in the world. The IMP Group organizes every year the IMP Conference and a series of developmental papers workshops – IMP Forum seminars – that aim at transforming early-stage studies into articles ready for submission to the IMP Forum in *JBIM*. The editor-in-chief is Antonella La Rocca at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, Italy, and Håkan Håkansson and Alexandra Waluszewski are Senior Associate Editor and Associate Editor, respectively. The IMP Forum, as detailed in its manifesto (Waluszewski *et al.*, 2019), aims to bring out research that explores interactivity and interdependences in business relationships and their implications for marketing management, business development and for society at large. Currently, the IMP Forum publishes three articles in each issue of the journal and guest edits a special issue each year. You will be hearing more about the IMP Forum in a forthcoming editorial.

Wesley J. Johnston

*Department of Marketing, Georgia State University,
Atlanta, Georgia, USA*

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