



## Editorial

## Letter from the editor

## Breaking news

The recently published *Journal Citation Reports* impact factor for *Industrial Marketing Management* for 2010 is 1.694. This is the highest impact factor that IMM has ever achieved and is indicative of the increased quality of manuscripts submitted to this journal and the increasingly high standards for acceptance that our review board has maintained. I want to thank our review board of 356 regular reviewers and the many others who review for special issues and as ad hoc reviewers for specialized topics. Without their efforts and commitment *Industrial Marketing Management* could not have achieved this milestone.

## The IMP group

This entire issue is devoted to the best papers presented at the 2010 IMP Group Conference held in Budapest, Hungary. The track chairs and conference management team selected fifty papers out of the 200 presented at the conference to be sent out for review. This entire process was managed by the team of Tibor Mandjak, Judit Simon and Zsuzsanna Szalkai, all of the Marketing and Media Institute at Corvinus University of Budapest. This is the 54th special issue in IMM's history and it marks the thirteenth time we have devoted an issue of *Industrial Marketing Management* to the best papers from an IMP Group conference. *Industrial Marketing Management* first presented an IMP special issue for the best papers at the 1998 conference and has continued to support the annual conference of the premier group of industrial marketing researchers in the world. IMM receives more submissions and has more reviewers from the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group than any other marketing organization.

Since the mid 1970s, the IMP Group has employed a dynamic model of buyer–supplier relationships, the Interaction Model, to conduct comparative empirical studies of industrial marketing and purchasing, first within and across a number of European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and UK) and later on a global scale. A common experience from these investigations has been that business exchange cannot be understood as series of disembodied and independent transactions of given resources – but rather as complex relationships between buying and selling organizations, where what is exchanged is created in interaction. The IMP Group is based on three pillars of research:

- Firstly, the IMP Group represents a research tradition of empirically based studies of how companies are doing business and of what is created when businesses and other organizations interact.
- Secondly, the IMP Group represents a dynamic approach to economic exchange; i.e. a set of tools developed in order to investigate business exchange as a dynamic phenomenon.
- Thirdly, the IMP Group represents network of researchers.

For more information on the IMP Group, please visit their website at <http://www.impgroup.org/>.

## This issue

The annual IMP special issue is always a difficult one to put together. Tibor Mandjak, Judit Simon and Zsuzsanna Szalkai have done an outstanding job. Several things make this issue especially challenging to develop. The greatest challenge is to have this issue available for distribution at the following year's IMP conference. The 2011 IMP conference will be at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland, between August 30 and September 3. The entire set of papers, administrative documents and other materials must be submitted for publication by late June to allow sufficient time to be printed and shipped to the conference site. (Compare this to 18 to 24 months for other special issues not timed for specific delivery and you will gain an appreciation for the difficulties faced by our stalwart trio.) Another challenge is the number of papers considered. Over 200 papers are presented at the 2010 IMP conference and these must be culled to 50 for further review. (Finding a large number of reviewers willing and capable of doing this is an additional challenge.) Reviews are returned, decisions made and authors are informed of the results of the first round. Those fortunate enough to receive a “revise and resubmit” letter then must revise their papers, have them reviewed again and most required further revision before being accepted. A very special thanks to Tibor, Judit and Zsuzsanna for an outstanding effort and fantastic results! For the first time, attendees at the 2011 IMP conference will be given temporary free access to all issues of IMM from 1971 to the present.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who helped to review papers for this special issue. Without their time and effort this issue could not have been developed; they added greatly to the quality of the papers appearing in this issue.

ANDERSEN, Poul	Arhus University	Denmark
ARAUJO, Luis	Lancaster University	United Kingdom
BAXTER, Roger*	AUT University	New Zealand
BIGGEMANN, Sergio*	University of Otago	New Zealand
BLATZ, Debra	Northern Illinois University	United States
BLOIS, Keith	University of Lancaster	United Kingdom
BORGHINI, Stefania*	University Bocconi	Italy
BRENNAN, Ross*	Middlesex University	United Kingdom
COVA, Bernard*	Euromed Management	France
DAMGAARD, Torben	University of Southern Denmark	Denmark
FERREIRA, Fabiana	University of Porto	Portugal
FINCH, John*	University of Strathclyde	United Kingdom
FORD, David*	Euromed Management	France
FREYTAG, Per*	University of Southern Denmark	Denmark

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GADDE, Lars-Erik*	Chalmers University of Technology	Sweden
GEERSBRO, Jens	Copenhagen Business School	Denmark
GELEI, Andrea	Corvinus University of Budapest	Hungary
HÅKANSSON, Håkan	Norwegian School of Management, BI	Norway
HALLEN, Lars	Mid-Sweden University	Sweden
HAVILA, Virpi	Uppsala University	Sweden
HELM, Sabrina	University of Arizona	United States
HENNEBERG, Stephan*	Manchester Business School	United Kingdom
HERTZ, Susanne	Jönköping International Business School	Sweden
IVENS, Björn*	Otto-Friedrich-University	Germany
LYNCH, Patrick	Waterford Institute of Technology	Ireland
MATTHYSSENS, Paul*	University of Antwerp	Belgium
MATTSSON, Lars-Gunnar	Stockholm School of Economics	Sweden
MOUZAS, Stefanos*	University of Lancaster	United Kingdom
NAUDÉ, Peter*	Manchester Business School	United Kingdom
O'TOOLE, Thomas	Waterford Institute of Technology	Ireland
PALIWODA, Stan	University of Strathclyde	United Kingdom
PARDO, Cathy	EMLYON Business School	France
PREVOT, Frederic	Euromed Management	France
RITTER, Thomas*	Copenhagen Business School	Denmark
RITVALA, Tiina	Aalto University School of Economics	Finland
ROD, Michel	Sprott School of Business, Carleton University	Canada
RUNFOLA, Andrea	University of Perugia	Italy
SCHEID, François	EMLYON Business School	France
SHAW, Eleanor	University of Strathclyde	United Kingdom
SHERESHEVA, Marina	State University - Higher School of Economics	Russia
SIMON, Judit*	Corvinus University of Budapest	Hungary
SNEHOTA, Ivan	University of Lugano	Switzerland
SPENCER, Rob*	Euromed Management	France
STORY, Vicky	Nottingham University Business School	United Kingdom
SUTTON-BRADY, Catherine*	The University of Sydney	Australia
SZALKAI, Zsuzsanna	Corvinus University of Budapest	Hungary
SZCZEPANSKI, Robert	Poznan University of Economics	Poland
TÄHTINEN, Jaana*	University of Oulu	Finland
TIKKANEN, Henriikki*	Helsinki School of Economics	Finland
TUNISINI, Annalisa*	University of Urbino	Italy
TUUSJARVI, Eiren	University of Helsinki	Finland
WALUSZEWSKI, Alexandra	Uppsala University	Sweden
WANG, Yi Jen*	University of Marketing and Distribution Sciences	Japan
WILKINSON, Ian	University of New South Wales	Australia
ZOLKIEWSKI, Judy*	Manchester Business School	United Kingdom

\*Indicates that this person is also a regular reviewer for IMM.

## Articles in this issue

This issue begins with an introductory article by our three guest editors, Tibor Mandjak, Judit Simon and Zsuzsanna Szalkai. In "A Framework for the Analysis of Global, Regional and Local Business Networks," Mandjak, Simon and Szalkai investigate the relationship of the two complex concepts of network management and the spatial characteristic of networks. They develop a theoretical framework which can help to investigate the topic empirically as well as making contributions to reveal deeper theoretical relations. Following from this conceptual framework, Mandjak, Simon and Szalkai pose several questions for further research: Is there a relation between networking and the spatial characteristic of the network, or not? From a managerial point of view, is there a difference in local, regional or global networks and in the networking in these various networks?

This is followed by "A literature review and future agenda for B2B branding: challenges of branding in a B2B context" by Sheena Leek

and George Christodoulides. They note that the existing body of research knowledge on brand management has been predominantly derived from business-to-consumer markets, particularly fast moving consumer goods and has only recently started to expand in other contexts. Branding in business-to-business markets has received comparatively little attention in the academic literature due to a belief that industrial buyers are unaffected by the emotional values corresponding to brands. Leek and Christodoulides provide a critical discussion of the fragmented literature on business-to-business branding which is organized in five themes: B2B branding benefits; the role of B2B brands in the decision making process; B2B brand architecture; B2B brands as communication enablers and relationship builders; and industrial brand equity. Drawing on the gaps and contradictions in the literature they conclude with an agenda for future research that will close many of these gaps.

The third paper is by Enrico Baraldi, Gian Luca Gregori and Andrea Perna and is entitled "Network evolution and the embedding of complex technical solutions: The case of the Leaf House network." Using a case study of the network surrounding an eco-sustainable technology, Leaf House, Italy's first zero-carbon emission house, Baraldi, Gregori and Perna discuss the connection between *network evolution* and *technology embedding*. They performed an exploratory case study and applied theories on technological development within industrial networks, with a specific focus on their resource layer and on the three settings involved in embedding an innovation: "developing", "producing", and "using". Baraldi, Gregori and Perna develop four propositions on the connections between network evolution and embedding: First, technology embedding entails both downstream network expansion and upstream restrictions. Secondly, conflicts among actors increase as technology embedding approaches the producing and using settings. Third, the more the shapes a technology can assume, and fourth, the more each of these shapes involves actors acting in different settings, the easier it is to embed it.

This is followed by "Barriers to the 'Key supplierization' of the firm" by Ohanes Missirilian, Catherine Pardo, Philippe Portier and Robert Salle. The phenomenon of key supply management (KSM) in business companies is far less investigated than the phenomenon of key account management (KAM) which beneficiaries, both in practice and in an academic context, from a growing interest. Missirilian, Pardo, Portier and Salle conducted an empirical analysis of a sample of 10 international companies which have recently launched KSM programs or are currently working on launching such programs. They examine the difficulties that these companies encountered when implementing such programs and organize these difficulties around three dimensions: 1) the difficulties in implementing real supplier portfolio approaches; 2) the narrow view of value co-creation with suppliers, and 3) the persistent lack of integration of the purchasing function with other internal functions within the company. Missirilian, Pardo, Portier and Salle conclude that KSM is far from being a mere symmetric phenomenon of KAM. They also discuss several implications in relation to the implementation of KSM programs within companies.

In the fifth article in this special IMP issue, "Resource acquisition strategies in business relationships," Ghasem Zaefarian, Stephan C. Henneberg and Peter Naudé integrate the IMP Group approach with aspects of the resource-based view of the firm to develop and test a typology of relationship strategies based on different resource acquisition foci. They conducted interviews with thirty CEOs and other senior marketing managers in the UK and the USA. In-depth content analysis identified five main resource acquisition strategies behind building business relationships: money bonds, new market bonds, utilization bonds, intellectual bonds, and credibility bonds. They also carried out a quantitative study with 658 senior managers in the USA to test for the generalizability of these findings. Results of a one-way repeated ANOVA and multinomial logistic regression analysis show significant differences between the five resource

acquisition strategies for business relationships. However, a pair-wise comparison shows evidence for the existence of hybrid strategies. In addition, an investigation of the association between the resource acquisition strategies of business relationships on the one hand, and business strategy on the other, revealed equifinality of alternative business strategies vis-à-vis the applied relationship strategy. Finally, their analysis revealed no significant differences between the distributions of resource acquisition strategies types for knowledge intensive versus non-knowledge intensive business services. However, they found that resource acquisition strategies distribution is significantly associated with company size.

This is followed by an article by Kim Sluys, Paul Matthyssens, Rudy Martens and Sandra Streukens. In "Building capabilities to manage strategic alliances," Sluys, Matthyssens, Martens and Streukens attribute a large part of a firm's alliance success to its ability to successfully manage its alliances, also called its level of alliance management capability. They contribute to this growing body of literature by (1) verifying the impact of alliance management capability on alliance performance and (2) analyzing the drivers of alliance management capability. Sluys, Matthyssens, Martens and Streukens measure this capability through four types of alliance learning processes and study how each of these processes affects alliances outcome. Furthermore, they take into account several possible drivers of alliance management capability such as organizational culture, commitment of the top team, alliance experience and the alliance function. Sluys, Matthyssens, Martens and Streukens refine the results by examining how these factors affect each of the four learning processes underpinning alliance management capability.

"Network mobilizers and target firms: analyzing mobilization around the issue of clean Baltic Sea" by Tiina Ritvala and Asta Salmi is the next article. They examine why and how firms participate in issue networks that aim at solving contemporary complex problems. Ritvala and Salmi build on network and stakeholder literatures to understand mobilization from a relational perspective. Drawing on a single embedded case study of four initiatives to save the Baltic Sea, Ritvala and Salmi develop a multilevel model for firm participation in issue networks. Besides discovering diverse motivational factors, the model sheds light on the interaction between individual, organization, and network levels factors explaining mobilization. The authors argue that there is high theoretical, managerial, and societal relevance for studying the dynamics of issue networks – a topic which could be better incorporated in the research agenda of business network scholars.

In the eighth article "Constructing and contesting markets through the market object," John Finch and Susi Geiger focus on the work that market actors undertake in order to stabilize and de-stabilize market objects. Finch and Geiger revisit Igor Ansoff's classic product-market strategy matrix to show how marketing management literature typically equates stability in markets with commodification and inertia. To escape this inertia, marketers often 'warm up' or destabilize existing market objects by changing the material bases of the object, for instance in incremental product development. But this 'warming up' invites other market actors to also question or destabilize the networks that are supposed to hold the market object in its new (market) space. Finch and Geiger utilize archival research to trace one case each of market and product development within the pharmaceutical realm, demonstrating: first, the effort market actors put into 'cooling down' and 'warming up' market objects; second, how contested such efforts can be; and third, how the object's material attachments may limit its symbolic malleability.

"The involvement and influence of emotions in problematic business relationships," by Jaana Tähtinen and Keith Blois is the next article. They discuss emotions as mediators in business-to-business relationships. Within consumer marketing, emotions have been widely studied, and calls have been made for business relationship research to take account of managers' emotions. Tähtinen and Blois address the gap by firstly

establishing the relevance of emotions in problematic business relationships and secondly showing how emotions are a major component in determining the outcomes of the problematic relationships. Interview data in the form of narratives describing problematic relationships is analyzed and identifies both the emotions experienced by participants and their role in the future course of the business relationship.

The tenth article is by Daniela Corsaro, Carla Ramos, Stephan C. Henneberg and Peter Naudé. In "Actor network pictures and networking activities in business networks: an exploratory empirical study," Corsaro, Ramos, Henneberg and Naudé discuss the processes of managerial cognition. In particular, actors' network pictures, defined as the cognitive representations of managers' business surroundings have attracted much attention. However, there has so far been little empirical research on the impact that network pictures have on managerial behavior. The purpose of this paper is therefore to understand if and how specific pertinent network picture characteristics – namely power, dynamics, broadness, and indirectness – are associated with different behavioral choices, i.e. networking strategies. Based on an experiment with 445 international managers across different industries, Corsaro, Ramos, Henneberg and Naudé found that managers' choices when managing business relationships, i.e. their strategic actions, are affected by the way they perceive their surrounding business network. However, amongst the different theoretical models of networking activities tested, only the power dimension showed significant associations with all four network picture characteristics tested. This study is the first to empirically test the connection between cognition and behavior in business-to-business markets, as well as one of the few to apply an experimental design to study a business-to-business marketing related phenomenon. Also, it paves the way for future understanding of the association between network picture characteristics and networking strategies in interaction between actors.

This is followed by "Studying innovation processes in real-time: the promises and challenges of ethnography," by Thomas Hoholm and Luis Araujo. They discuss the promises and challenges of innovation ethnographies. Hoholm and Araujo depart from the notion that innovation processes are highly contingent, messy and non-linear and examine ways in which these processes have been studied. They focus on the challenges posed by the use of ethnographic methods to study innovation in-the-making. Their discussion is illustrated by an example culled from a longitudinal, real-time study of an innovation process in the food industry, inspired by actor-network theory (ANT) and its injunctions to focus on controversies and follow the actors. Hoholm and Araujo conclude that although innovation ethnographies pose plenty of theoretical, methodological and practical challenges, they remain a promising and powerful method to map out the complex and tortuous paths of these processes.

The next article is "The structure and evolution of business-to-business marketing: a citation and co-citation analysis," by Klaus Backhaus, Kai Lügger and Matthias Koch. The field of business-to-business (B2B) marketing has grown considerably in the past four decades. However the state of knowledge about its structure and evolution remains limited. Who are the key players and what are the key papers in B2B marketing? What main research topics have been investigated over time? Backhaus, Lügger and Koch answer these questions by applying bibliometric methods to the existing body of scholarly B2B research. The key findings reveal a highly dynamic discipline in the 1970s and 1980s, when new knowledge was being intensively exchanged among an increasing number of B2B researchers. Since that time, the pace of development has slowed, and diversification in the discipline manifested itself in a distinctive number of core research subfields. Yet initial research topics such as organizational buying behavior, where much research is still undone, are not addressed by modern B2B scholars.

In the thirteenth article "Roles, role performance, and radical innovation competences," Vicky Story, Lisa O'Malley and Susan Hart

examine how networks support the development of RIs, focusing on when and how network partners become involved and how their role performances support the development of the four competences. Despite the importance of radical innovations (RI), few firms have the capability to develop such innovations internally; success is increasingly linked with relationships and networks. However, the way(s) in which relationships and networks support RI is less clear. Successfully launching RIs require the development of four distinctive competences; discovery, incubation, acceleration and commercialization. The study context is the automotive industry, which is heavily dependent upon RI and complex interrelationships. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with network participants involved in developing several RIs. Five task-oriented and three network-oriented roles are uncovered and the performance of these roles supports the development of different competences, with some roles being exclusively connected with particular competences and others supporting several competences. Focusing on role performance offers a useful means for distinguishing between acontextual actors, and the activities and resources they bring. In doing so, Story, O'Malley and Hart enhance our understanding of the links between network participants, role performances and the development of RI competences, and identify a number of important implications for theory and practice.

This is followed by "The status quo of buyer-seller negotiations in industrial marketing" by Uta Herbst, Christoph Meister and Markus Voeth. They provide an overview of the current status quo of negotiation research in marketing. In this context, Herbst, Meister and Voeth conducted a quantitative analysis of existing literature on buyer-seller negotiations. Specifically, they undertook a screening of 10 high-ranking marketing journals so as to identify the body of negotiation-related articles within marketing. In a next step, the identified articles were subjected to both content and co-citation analyses. To this end, Herbst, Meister and Voeth modified the interaction model of the IMP Group in order to comprehensibly structure the existing findings. In a last step, these findings are presented to various negotiation experts to verify their practical relevance. From this multi-step procedure, Herbst, Meister and Voeth derive sound implications for research and practice.

Marina Y. Sheresheva and Nadezhda A. Kolesnik are the authors of "Stochastic perspective of industrial distribution network processes." They investigate contemporary distribution processes in the transitional Russian industrial market. The main trend in distribution during the recent decades manifests itself in a growing number of network-type distribution chains. Based on the evolutionary trends in distribution research, Sheresheva and Kolesnik investigated distribution networks processes using mathematical tools of probability theory. They consider a distribution network as a stochastic process, where a focal agent optimizes the distribution chain at each decision-making node by switching between possible partners. This permits the application of time-homogeneous Markov chains theory to explore the partner selection process. Sheresheva and Kolesnik present an approach that allows for the estimating of implicit non-price variables of partner choice in a supply chain.

In "Organizational relationship termination competence: a conceptualization and an empirical test," Thomas Ritter and Jens Geersbro examine the impact of relationship termination on organizational performance. Most firms are involved in a number of customer relationships that drain the firm's resources. However, many firms are hesitant to address this problem. Ritter and Geersbro investigate customer relationship termination at the organizational level. They develop and analyze the organizational dimensions of organizational termination in order to improve our understanding of the management of termination. The impact of these termination dimensions on the percentage of unwanted customers is developed and tested using PLS on data gathered from a cross-sectional survey of more than 800 sales representatives. Ritter and Geersbro found that a firm's percentage of unwanted customers decreases significantly as acceptance of termination increases, if the firm's definition of unwanted customers is well

understood, and if a firm has clear termination routines. In addition, general focus on profitability and external constraints on relationship termination are found to significantly affect a firm's relationship termination competence. These findings suggest that managers should regard termination as a legitimate option in customer relationship management. In order to decrease the number of unwanted customers, managers must accept termination as a valid option, clearly define the types of customers that the organization does not want to serve, and implement termination routines within the organization.

The next article is "Bridging and bonding forms of social capital in a regional strategic network," by Jens Eklinder Frick, Lars Torsten Eriksson and Lars Hallén. Research on networks emphasizes the importance of bonds between actors. Social reciprocity strengthens network bonds, which is assumed to have positive effects on business relationships between firms. However, the importance of weak ties is also stressed in network research. An important policy issue is therefore if more attention should be devoted to the creation of bridges to other social groups and loosening bonds between network actors. The difficulty in doing so is described and analyzed by Frick, Eriksson and Hallén focusing on a regional strategic network, which is viewed in three network perspectives. Frick, Eriksson and Hallén collected interview data from all participating managers in a regional strategic network in 2004 and again in 2010. The findings shed light upon the paradox of using a regional strategic network to counteract over-embeddedness and freeing the involved actors from existing network lock-ins instead of further strengthening such social institutions.

This is followed by "Networks and capabilities as characteristics of logistics firms," by Lianguang Cui, Susanne Hertz. They describe and analyze how three basic types of logistics firms differ in terms of their core capabilities and network development as well as the effects of these differences. Based on the resource-based view and the industrial network approach, Cui and Hertz develop a conceptual framework to differentiate logistics firms. Two case studies of logistics firms are used as examples to demonstrate how the framework can be used. Logistics firms have clear differences in capabilities and network focus. These firms follow different dominating logics of value creation that make them develop in different ways and think totally differently. This research enhances our understanding of the different logics of logistics firms and their interdependence. They are complementary and interacting in the logistics service supply chain. Moving between the basic types of logistics firms means changing the capabilities and network focus, which is costly and difficult. The conceptual framework can be used as a tool to comprehend multiple types of logistics firms. It also helps us to analyze related strategic moves.

Annalisa Tunisini, Roberta Bocconcelli and Alessandro Pagano are the authors of the next article, "Is local sourcing out of fashion in the globalization era? Evidence from Italian mechanical industry." Their article concerns a study on the changes affecting leading cluster companies' supplier relationships. Tunisini, Bocconcelli and Pagano investigate the conditions and mechanisms which industrial cluster companies rely on local suppliers in the current context of international competitive pressure and easier access to international supply sources. The research methodology is qualitative and based on a long-term longitudinal research of three case studies of Italian industrial cluster companies that are leading firms in specific niches of the mechanical industry. Tunisini, Bocconcelli and Pagano focus on two main questions: 1) under which conditions have industrial cluster companies relied on local suppliers? And 2) what has been the evolution of relationships between industrial cluster companies and their local suppliers? Their empirical analysis shows that local suppliers have been playing strategic roles in different ways in distinct historical phases, contributing actively in terms of knowledge and competence development, production flexibility, delivery performance and cost efficiency.

In "Interpartner legitimacy in regional strategic networks," Sabine Gebert-Persson, Heléne Lundberg and Edith Andresen discuss if, and

how, interpartner legitimacy affects the success or failure of network formation and development processes *on a network basis*. Existing network theories and research tend to focus on resource exchange rather than on how actors perceive each other in terms of being legitimate or not. The purpose of the article is to analyze the interpartner legitimacy's influence on the formation and development processes of regional strategic networks (RSNs) from a network level. Gebert-Persson, Lundberg and Andresen discuss two Swedish cases in terms of pragmatic, moral and cognitive interpartner legitimacy. The cases and the following discussion illuminate that interpartner legitimacy is important to incorporate into the analytical model to better understand the processes of negotiations on the rules and norms which set the possibilities for survival of multi-actor interactions.

This is followed by an article by Katy Mason and Martin Spring. In "The sites and practices of business models" Mason and Spring examine business models by drawing on the business model literature. Mason and Spring first identify technology, market offering and network architecture as the three core elements of business models. The theoretical routes of each element are then examined through the associated literatures: technology and innovation studies, industrial marketing, operations strategy, and evolutionary economics. Multiple dimensions of each element are identified and the resultant framework is used to explore developments within the recorded music market across three centuries. Mason and Spring analyze changes in the recorded music market since the 1870 to explore how business models emerged, took on multiple sites and evolved through their practice over time. They then look at how interlinking business models become spread out across the business network as different network actors play their part. The recorded music market generates important insights into how business models are created, developed and practiced. Mason and Spring suggest that firms, business networks and markets form embedded systems within which multiple overlapping business models can be considered as constituent parts. In this way, the business model is understood as having agency to shape action; but in turn actions (of others in the business network as well as within the firms themselves) also shape the business model.

Daniela Corsaro and Ivan Snehota's article looks at alignment in business relationships. 'Alignment' and 'misalignment' are terms commonly used both in strategy and in marketing. In B-to-B marketing, in particular, researchers investigated alignment/misalignment between customers and suppliers and recently discussed the effects of misalignment. Research in this field remains however fragmented. There is ambiguity about the objects of alignment and misalignment, the processes that characterize their change, the effects on the relationship development and the methods used to assess them. In general, the empirical research that has examined alignment and misalignment in business relationships is limited. Corsaro and Snehota develop a theoretical framework to assess alignments/misalignments in parties' interpretations of a problem and its solution for the customer, in order to address the following questions: How and why do alignment and misalignment change over time? When can misalignment be positive for the relationship development? Using data from a longitudinal study involving 84 customers and suppliers in the ICT Security Industry,

Corsaro and Snehota identified several interesting characteristics of misalignment in business relationships. The first finding is that there are no patterns in how alignment changes, but there is a slight tendency toward increasing misalignment over time. Second, change in the alignment is mostly linked to parties' perceptions of the available resources and how these resources are combined, along with parties' interpretations of critical events. Finally, the research suggests that when parties are aware of misalignment, when misalignment is perceptual and when there are no external constraints to action, the effort to align practices produces positive effects, even when misalignment persists.

The final article in this special IMP issue is Stan Paliwoda's critical evaluation of IMP research and its contribution to our understanding of business markets. Paliwoda looks at the beginnings of the IMP movement in 1976 and the significant and rapid advancement of the "IMP approach" in the study of business markets. He reports on the broadening base of IMP researchers from a small group of researchers at the original five universities (Universities of Uppsala, Bath, UMIST, ESC Lyon and the Ludwig Maximilians University) in four European countries to now encompassing over 1000 members from over 400 universities in 45 countries. These early and very significant contributions included a network approach to business transactions and the development of interorganizational relationships. Paliwoda raises several concerns as to the direction and impact of current IMP research topics and methods and its further impact on the understanding of business markets.

#### The next issue

Our next issue of IMM will feature a special section on Business-to-Business branding that was put together by Sheena Leek and George Christodoulides. The special focus articles will be supplemented with a selection of recently accepted articles from the "regular" review process.

Submissions to *Industrial Marketing Management* are again on the increase and we expect to receive even more submissions in 2011 than we did in the record year of 2010. We could use additional reviewers. If you are a successful B2B author and would like to become a reviewer for IMM. Please send your CV to me at the e-mail address below. IMM welcomes articles on any aspect of industrial or business-to-business marketing from academic researchers and marketing practitioners from around the world. Simply attach your manuscript (MSWord files only please) to an e-mail and send it to me at the address below. We are also interested in developing special issues that focus of specific topics of interest to marketing practitioner and researchers; send me your proposal.

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