
Guest editorial

Emerging technologies and value creation in business and industrial marketing

We live in a time of enormous transformations fueled by information and communication technology (Gupta *et al.*, 2017). The *World Economic Forum* has suggested that this transformation announces the beginning of a new era – the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Schwab, 2016). The Fourth Industrial Revolution builds on the increasing digitization of information and represents new ways in which information and communication technology becomes embedded within products, processes, firms and societies overall. This new era is marked by technology breakthroughs in a number of fields, including artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, the Internet of Things (IoT), decentralized consensus (such as blockchain technologies), virtual reality, 3D printing and others. The breadth, depth and velocity of change brought about by these new technologies are expected to have a profound impact on organizations across a wide range of industries.

The business and industrial marketing field is certainly not immune to these transformations. Today, information and communication technologies enable new approaches to how B2B firms create value in a variety of areas. They enable firms to co-innovate within business communities, they facilitate access to critical resources, such as financial, human or social capital via crowdfunding (Paschen, 2017), and they even allow computers to reliably make decisions with minimal or no human involvement, e.g. AI systems (Syam and Sharma, 2018). Socio-technical systems, including the ones mentioned above, are indeed more than mere mediators of B2B transactions – they shape industrial marketing processes and outcomes in significant ways and give rise to altogether new industrial marketing opportunities.

The theme of this special issue “Emerging technologies in business and industrial marketing” suggests the need for a broader and more in-depth investigation of the role and impact of emerging technologies in business and industrial marketing. The articles in this special issue build on existing conceptualization of business and industrial marketing and examine IT-mediated value creation in three key areas: innovation, the business and industrial marketing process, and competitive advantage.

With respect to *innovation*, *article one* by Codini *et al.* (2019) investigates how open innovation digital platforms

facilitate knowledge co-creation with online business communities through interactive, coupled processes. Using an exploratory case study approach, their findings suggest that open innovation digital platforms assume the role of co-creators, oriented towards activating co-creation processes via the exploration, acquisition, integration and development of knowledge in dispersed business networks.

The next four papers examine value creation in the context of the *B2B marketing and sales process*. *Article two* by Diba *et al.* (2019) discusses social media platforms in the context of the industrial buying process. The authors develop a framework for managers by which to assess the roles that social media can play at different stages of the industrial buying process. In *article three*, Li and Zhang (2019) also examine the use of social media but focus on understanding their impact on key constructs in the post-sales process, such as customer loyalty, trust and purchase risk. The study results suggest that social media enhance buyers’ trust beliefs and can indirectly improve buyer loyalty, but also that they have no impact on purchase risk. *Article four*, by Paschen *et al.* (2019), focuses on AI and machine learning. In their conceptual article, the authors introduce a framework by which to elucidate any AI system into six building blocks and discuss how AI systems impact market knowledge in business and industrial marketing. *Article five*, authored by Blair *et al.* (2019) focuses on managing service quality in industrial service ecosystems using IT-mediated crowds. The authors suggest a conceptual model by which to elucidate service quality gaps in service networks and develop propositions on how crowdsourcing can help firms manage these gaps. *Article six*, by Nath *et al.* (2019) examines the determinants of attitudes to and usage of social media and consumer generated websites for travel planning. The authors develop and empirically test a model using constructs from the information systems (IS) and marketing literature and discuss their findings with respect to the relevance for the demand (consumer) and supply (B2B) side.

The final area for value creation examined in this special issue focuses on *competitive advantage*. The first two articles examine the employer/employee topics within the B2 context. Dabirian *et al.* (2019), in *article seven*, develop an instrument to measure employer branding value propositions for IT firms as a means to gain competitive advantage in an industry where talent is a highly competed-for resource. In *article eight*, Duncan *et al.* (2019) explore brand image of B2B firms through the lens of employee reviews on social media and demonstrate the value that firms can gain from this type of “competitive intelligence”.

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This paper forms part of a special section “Emerging Technologies in Business and Industrial Marketing”, guest edited by Jeannette Paschen, Leyland Pitt and Jan Kietzmann.

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Finally, in *article nine*, [Bonnin and Rodriguez \(2019\)](#) look at how the topic of “corporate narrative” plays an important role for B2B firms’ ability to reduce uncertainty and to make sense of innovation.

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