

## **Human Resources Challenges in Industrial Marketing**

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**ABSTRACT** – Human Resources Challenges in Marketing as a discipline in general, and industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing in particular, has drawn upon a number of different theoretical perspectives from domains as diverse as organizational theory, systems analysis, economics, psychology, sociology and anthropology to further our understanding. However, to build this understanding and increase the relevance of Human Resources Challenges in marketing research, we need to be aware of the ontological assumptions and stances that such theoretical perspectives use. The purpose of this special issue is therefore to offer a platform for the exploration, comparison, application, and consideration of ontological choice and its implications in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research. To achieve this we review early industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship in this first section. In the second section, we identify the large and flows that mark the development and advancement of industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research. In the final section, we provide an overview of the papers in this special issue in the form of a thematic exploration of theoretical developments in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing management research.

**KEYWORDS:** Industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing, research On to logy, Human Resources Challenges in Human Resources Challenges in Marketing

### **Introduction**

Reviewing the past and exploring the future of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research Human Resources Challenges in Marketing as a discipline in general, and industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing in particular, has drawn upon a number of different theoretical perspectives from domains as diverse as organizational theory, systems analysis, economics, psychology, sociology and anthropology (Buvik, 2001; Murgolo-Poore, Pitt, & Berthon, 2003). As Human Resources Challenges in Marketing researchers, we not only draw upon these diverse theoretical perspectives, but we also regularly combine differing theoretical perspectives, from within and outside them an agreement and Human Resources Challenges in Marketing disciplines, to further our understanding. However, to build these new theoretical understandings and increase the relevance of Human Resources Challenges in marketing research, we need to be aware of the ontological assumptions and stances that such theoretical perspectives use. Knowing how conceptually close or distant differing theoretical approaches are to the Human Resources Challenges in Marketing phenomena of interest and how compatible they are in the terms of their underlying properties and characteristics in providing explanations will have a major impact on the contribution researchers may make in using such theories (Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2011). Given the importance of ontology in framing research contributions, it is surprising that greater attention is not paid to exploring different ontological and epistemological approaches in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research (Easton, 1998). The purpose of this special issue is therefore to offer a platform for the exploration, comparison, application, and consideration of ontological choice and its implications in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research. To achieve this we review early industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship in this first section. In the second section, we identify the larger ebbs and flows that mark the development and advancement of industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research. In the final section, we provide an overview of the papers in this special issue in the form of a thematic exploration of theoretical developments in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing management research.

### **Taking stock of early industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship**

Why would our introduction to this special issue of IMM, with a remit to explore the role and development of theory in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing, consider the origins and identity of the field? George Day (1996:14) reflected on the importance of histories thus: “Histories serve many functions. They reveal our origins, celebrate our successes, and remind us of our debts to our intellectual ancestors. A history also helps interpret the past by identifying the reasons for important transitions.” Therefore, prior to embarking on an exposition of theory in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing it is worth pausing momentarily to consider the foundations of the field. In so doing, we will be much better served when appraising current

thinking on the topic in the subsequent papers in this issue and industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship in general. With almost a century of Resources Challenges in Marketing research having been undertaken, it also seems fitting that we pay tribute to early contributions from neophyte industrial marketers. The of this section is not to provide a periodization of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing, nor is it intended to consider schools of industrial marketing thought, - many good examples of this already exist (cf. Shaw & Jones, 2005; Wilkie & Moore, 2003) - or even provide a historiography of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing 1 but rather to revisit our disciplinary identity. Identifying the genesis of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing is problematic. Although it was not until the latter half of the 20th century before industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing really began to gain momentum as a field of interest within Human Resources Challenges in Marketing in its own right, considerations of transactions between organizations are as old as the discipline of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing itself (cf. Copeland, 1924; Elder, 1935; Mehren, 1930; Shaw, 1916; Weld, 1916). It was, however, with Melvin T. Copeland's collection of short case studies, *Human Resources Challenges in Marketing Problems (1920) and Cases in Industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing (1930)*, that the subject of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing arguably receives its earliest mention and consideration, although the first dedicated text to deal with the topic was John Hutchinson Frederick's (1934) *Industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing*. Although one can argue that the discipline of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing itself was conceived with studies of industrial markets as noted: the origins of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing lie in the Mid-West of the USA and are rooted (pun intended) in studies of the Human Resources Challenges in Marketing of agricultural products (e.g. Weld's, 1916 *Studies in the Human Resources Challenges in Marketing of Farm Products*). Although industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing is regarded as one of the traditional elements of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing (Zober, 1971), it was not, however, until the publication of IMM in September 1971 that the first dedicated outlet for industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing scholarship was available. With its publication, industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing finally emerged as a legitimate sub-field within Human Resources Challenges in Marketing. Since then, research on industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing has flourished (CF. Reid & Plank, 2000; Webster, 1978; Wilkinson, 2001, for thoughtful discussions of the evolution of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing scholarship). However, it was quite some time before the first courses in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing were being offered, and research in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing began to gain any critical momentum. The early momentum in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research had appeared to stall for a short period between the mid-1930s and mid-1960s. Indeed, by the early 1960s E. Raymond Corey<sup>2</sup> (Professor of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing at Harvard Business School for over forty years, and one of the founders of the Harvard Business School Press in 1984) was lamenting the paucity of scholarship on industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing. He notes; "Surveying the great volume of Human Resources Challenges in marketing literature, one is struck by the fact that a relatively small amount of it is devoted to the problems and techniques of Human Resources Challenges in marketing industrial goods. Instead, particular interest has been shown in consumer goods selling on the part of those writing in the Human Resources Challenges in Marketing field" (Corey, 1962: v). Corey (1962) introduced a text on cases and concepts in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing and taught what is regarded as the first university course dedicated to industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing in 1957 at the Harvard Business School (Vargo & Lusch, 2011). Other institutions followed Harvard's lead, and arguably the greatest advance in Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship in the latter part of the twentieth-century was in the domain of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing. Contributions from numerous researchers (cf. Comfrey & Lilien, 1978; Heinritz, 1971; Robinson, Faris, & Wind, 1967; Sheth, 1973; Webster & Wind, 1972a, 1972b) laid the foundations of the field and raised its profile in areas such as organizational buying behavior and industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing. This resulted in hundreds of papers being published by scholars as being drawn to the emerging area of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing (Johnston & Lewin, 1996). The mid-life crises had been averted.

#### **Industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing and its major areas of research: A view from the field**

In a comprehensive review of scholarship in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing, LaPlaca and Katrichi (2009) identified six major areas of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing discourse: sales and sales management, buyer behavior, innovation/NPD, Human Resources Challenges in marketing strategy/management, channels/distribution, and buyer-seller relationships. It is to these topics that we now briefly turn. In so doing, we issue a caveat concerning the period in which our discussion is framed. Our attempt to take stock of the field largely confines itself to scholarly texts between Copeland's contribution of collecting cases (1930) and the early 1980s, when conferences and academic movements devoted to the topic of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing (e.g. the inaugural Industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing and Purch using group conference held in Manchester in 1984, the Institute for the Study of Business Markets founded in 1983 at Penn State, and the Centre for Business and Industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing founded in 1996 at Georgia State) would indicate the formalization of the field. A second caveat refers to the extent to which industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholars can fairly lay claim to these topics, given that they are also in some cases distinct fields in their

own right (e.g. innovation/NPD). Never the less, we have endeavored to restrict our discussion where possible to recognized industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholars.

### **Sales and sales management**

In a survey-based paper published in the *Journal of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing* in 1945, training and supervising salespersons was ranked by scholars in the field as of considerable importance in terms of key concepts to teach students (Converse, 1945: 16). Although admittedly much of the content in such classes was probably devoted to the issue of retail sales to the public, we might assume that some pioneers were already thinking about the Human Resources Challenges in marketing practices that occur within the supply chain. It is not surprising that early studies in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing emphasized selling given that much of the early momentum in Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship take place against a backdrop of financial hardship in the early- to mid-part of the 20th century. The sales era (1930-1950) is one regarded as companies promoting hard-selling techniques, and the customer frequently taking a secondary role to profit (Friedman, 1998). This coincided with the Great Depression, which ultimately forced companies to pay more attention to the needs of customers. Particularly notable during this period is the efforts of Fredericks' 1919 text *Modern Salesman* agreement, in which he emphasizes the importance of sales strategy, territory management and expounds the qualities of sales personnel in a comprehensive text for its time providing coverage of 34 sales-related topics. This work was later advanced by Thomas (1982) who published on aspects of interpersonal purchase influence in organizations in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

### **Buyer/buying behavior**

Of all the areas in which industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research has been undertaken, organizational buying behavior arguably has the greatest lineage (cf. Fearon, 1989 for an insightful historical discussion of the evolution of the purchasing function). The Wall Street crash of October 1929 ushered in the period of the Great Depression in the U.S. (which became ultimately a global recession), and would continue during the early part of the second global World War, causing an era of fiscal concern, high unemployment, and devastation to numerous key sectors (including construction, forestry, and most heavy industries). The first New Deal (1933-1934), witnessed the inception of the National Recovery Administration, which oversaw the policy decision to set maximum prices and wages, and attempts to control cutthroat competition. The senescence it acted businesses to manage their buying decisions and budgets more carefully. Against this backdrop, there was considerable optimism over the broader role that Human Resources Challenges in Marketing could play during the Second World War and in a post-war world with the promotion of democratic forms of government (cf. Bernays, 1942, calling for marketers to extol the virtues of democracy).

1.2.3. Innovation/NPD Although the viability of certain new products has been a longstanding area of interest to marketers (Burchard, 1935), the area of innovation and new product development (NPD) is a somewhat curious sub-field within industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research as it straddles many domains and disciplines, such as design and technology studies. This said, early contributions around product development can be found in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship. For example, in the first edition of the *Journal of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing*, Bernard Lester (1936) emphasized the importance of invention and new product creation. However, considerations of NPD and innovation in Human Resources Challenges in Marketing (and industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing) literature been somewhat limited. A reading of the contents of several early texts on industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing also offers little or no consideration to issues of products or product development, instead dealing with commodity goods (Weld, 1916). Even as recently as the 1960s, academics were bemoaning the paucity of research on innovation and new product adoption within industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing (Webster, 1969), and Human Resources Challenges in Marketing management in general (Shaw, 1995). Despite some insightful contributions on NPD and innovation from industrial marketers (Choffray & Lilien, 1978; Choffray & Lilien, 1980; Mansfield, 1968; Souder & Chakrabarti, 1978; Von Hippel, 1978), such studies are relatively few in number. This may be due in part to the interface between the Human Resources Challenges in Marketing function and the R&D function not being characterized as amicable (Souder, 1980), and with marketers questioning in where within the organization the role of innovation rests (Kebker, 1951).

### **Human Resources Challenges in marketing strategy/management**

Considerations of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing management and strategy can be traced back to the founding of the discipline (Lester, 1936; Weld, 1916), and particularly in the work of Charles W. Hoyt (1912) and Percival White (1927), in their research on scientific Human Resources Challenges in marketing management. Work of Hoyt and White attempted to introduce scientific principles to the function of sales and Human Resources Challenges in Marketing activities and

provide the foundation for Human Resources Challenges in Marketing management that foreshadowed "... the Human Resources Challenges in Marketing concept and Human Resources Challenges in Marketing management of the 1950s" (Cochoy, 1998: 204). It was, however, arguably not until the 1950s and 60s, with pioneering companies such as General Electric (Business Week, 24, 1950) that Human Resources Challenges in Marketing management became more prominent in the corporate planning and strategy process (Biggadike, 1981). Although, curiously, much of this Human Resources Challenges in marketing strategy literature was being developed by non-marketers (Wind & Robertson, 1983). Unfortunately, the influence that Human Resources Challenges in Marketing and marketers enjoyed in the broader strategy literature has been in decline since this period (cf. Day, 1992; Wind & Robertson, 1983). This situation is perhaps best summed up by Ames (1970) who, in examining trappings vs. substance in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing, observed that Human Resources Challenges in Marketing concepts, methods and inputs are frequently ignored in the decision perspectives of other business functions.

### **Channels/distribution**

Arguably, the oldest of the industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing topics is the concept of distribution channels. This term was coined by Clark, 1922, and some of the earliest contributions in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing can be found in the area of distribution channels (or routes to market) which Breyer (1934, 1964:163) characterized as "the elemental structure" of the Human Resources Challenges in Marketing institution. Economists in the US, as the first marketers, attempted to understand how agricultural markets operated (Converse, 1959); "... which led them to study the functioning of real Human Resources Challenges in Marketing channels, and more precisely the shipment of perishable commodities from rural areas to urban places" (Cochoy, 1998: 196). The study of channels grew in popularity as several excellent books of readings appeared, in particular Mullen's (1967) *The Human Resources Challenges in Marketing Channel: A Conceptual Viewpoint*; Stern's (1969) *Distribution Channels: Behavioral Dimensions*; and Bucklin's (1970) *Vertical Human Resources Challenges in Marketing Systems*, among others.

### **Buyer-supplier relationships**

Perhaps the most recent of the six major areas of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing relates to that of buyer-supplier relationships, particularly given the substantial interest in concepts such as relationship Human Resources Challenges in Marketing in the 1980s and 90s. This said, however, the nature of exchange and relationships between organizations and social actors is long-standing, and has been a subject of interest in the broader social sciences literature for some interest in various facets of dyadic relational exchange can be traced across all areas of the social sciences in sociology (Lombard, 1955; Riley, 1954), psychology (Husband, 1953; Roe, 1956), organizational behavior (Aldrich & Whetten, 1981), and even human resources (Kirchner & Dunnette, 1959), where the main headway in being made outside of the Human Resources Challenges in Marketing field. Previous Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship focused on the level of individual firms or entire channels of distribution (Achrol, Reve, & Stern, 1983). This trend continued to be reversed from the 1980s onwards with growing interest in the concept of relationship Human Resources Challenges in Marketing and relational exchange in mainstream Human Resources Challenges in Marketing (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Jackson, 1985). Indeed, work in the 70s by Bonoma, Zaltman, and Johnston (1977) provided early (perhaps the first) conceptual dyadic and network models of buying behavior. In addition, members of the Industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) group showed an interest in relationships and interactions (Ford, 1980; Ford, Hakansson, & Johanson, 1986; Håkansson, 1982), which later evolved into a network perspective (Easton & Araujo, 1986).

### **Industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research ebbs and flows**

As Williams and Plouffe (2007: 418) observe: "Evaluating an academic discipline's knowledge production and diffusion is a daunting, complex, and ultimately essential responsibility for any community of scholars ... When aggregated together, however, a collection of journal articles can reveal the larger ebbs and flows that mark a field's advance as well as issues in need of addressing before future progress can be achieved". What then can we take from the foregoing discussion in terms of identifying and understanding the ebbs and flows of industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing discourse? Although the focus of scholarly research in Human Resources Challenges in Marketing has and continues to be from a perspective of consumer Human Resources Challenges in Marketing, much to the lament of some industrial marketers, Webster (1978) predicted that industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing would grow as a discipline due to the distinctiveness of the topic, a prediction that seems to have been indicated. The field has not been without its detractors, however; Fern and Brown (1984) maintained that industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing did not warrant specialist sub-field of study. As the editors of this special issue, we contend that the papers presented here offer support for Webster's assertion. The present special issue also has a role to play in theory development and reflection on industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship. So, having taken stock of prior theoretical developments in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research, what are the larger ebbs and flow that are revealed?

Flows:

- Industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing has considerable lineage. Almost a century of scholarship has passed in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing and its foundations have been established. With the global recession and changes to market places, however, industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing scholars may have to question many of these foundations and consider new approaches to industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing.
- Industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship has retained its tradition of focusing on practice. The industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing literature has the custom producing research that has relevance for its constituent audience (practicing managers) and not merely for internal consumption for other scholars.
- No one epistemological or ontological viewpoint dominates. Industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research is characterized by contrasts, with studies using a wide range of methodological approaches and research traditions (i.e. critical realism, social constructivism, positivism).
- Industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship has an important role in wider Human Resources Challenges in marketing theory development. Although the representation of Resources Challenges in marketing themed papers in leading journals (e.g. Journal of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing) tends to be rather limited, those papers that are published often receive very high citation figures. For example, Morgan and Hunt's (1994) paper on relationship commitment and trust has received close to nine thousand citations to date and Dwyer et al.'s (1987) concept ualisation of relationships has received close to six thousand citations. Indeed, the 1994 Journal of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing paper by Shelby Hunt (a contributor to this special issue) and Robert Morganis one of the most highly cited Human Resources Challenges in marketing papers outside of the Human Resources Challenges in Marketing discipline.
- Industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing scholarship has retained a strong disciplinary identity. With the Industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing and purchasing annual conference, and the Institute for the Study of Business Markets, as well as its scholarly journals (chiefly IMM), industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing has created a highly engaged community of scholars .Ebbs As well as these flows, industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing scholarship faces a number of challenges.
- Arguably, the singular challenge that is most pressing in industrial scholar ship is its underrepresentation in the broader Human Resources Challenges in marketing literature (cf. La Placa & Katrichi, 2009). For example, although out lets such as the Journal of Consumer Research (first published in 1978; a similar period to IMM), were introduced with the stated editorial remit to explore all aspects of consumers and consumerism(including buyers in a conventional business-to-business sense; see Thomas, 1982), a strong bias towards research in c B on summer behavior has remained evident.
- The challenge for 2B marketers in this regard rests with their capability to propose, defend and refine theory that helps explain phenomena in industrial markets. This shortcoming has been observed in earlier studies of the field. For example, Reid and Plank (2000:120) observed in their extensive review of two decades research in business-to-business Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research: "We do not believe that we are generally at the stage where we have tested one or more particular theories extensively enough that further research could not yield additional insights and knowledge." At present, we may argue that such end ours remain limited, particularly when comparisons are drawn with the consumer behave our literature and the popularity mid-range theory such as Consumer Culture Theory. Reflecting on these ebbs and flows in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing management research, we may ask the question - how is theory commonly used in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research? In an evaluation of papers on the topic since 1978, Reid and Plank (2000: 123) argued that "Theory building efforts [in B2B Human Resources Challenges in marketing] have ... been mixed. Only limited success has been achieved in developing mid-range theory..." This situation appears to have improved little in the interim. In addition, a widely accepted general theory of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing has yet to be formulated and adopted by the Human Resources Challenges in marketing research community. Never the less, there is a wealth of general theoretical models that Human Resources Challenges in Marketing researches use, both implicitly and explicitly, to guide their research. General theories are intentionally both broad and integrative and removed from any specific social setting (e.g. a particular culture, industry sector, business type such as goods or services, or market context such as business or consumer markets). This means that they are broad enough to be used to explain a larger number of phenomena, while at the same time their integrative nature means that their use serves to less general theories (Brodie, Saren, & Pels, 2009). The explicit use of general theories provides an invaluable indication as to how and why theoretical unity may be attained in some situations. In addition, general theories may also explain key problems in attaining this unity. Theories differ from the common mid-range theories typically used to explain industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing and network phenomena .Mid-range theories are closer to the social data and seek to provide a theoretical bridge between empirical findings and general theory (Merton, 1968). For example, the mid-range theory, dissonance theory, neither a collection of empirical observations made of a certain culture at a

certain time (i.e. empiricist) nor a sort of totalizing theory of behaviour as proposed by Parsons (i.e. general), but is characterized as an intermediate theory that fulfilled a necessary next step in the progression of sociology to a total system theory (Rappert, 2007). In industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing management we have the example of social exchange theory (which views social change and stability as a process of negotiated exchanges between parties: Blau, 1964) as a commonly used-range theory. Of relevance to industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing researchers, Holt (2011) reviewed thirty-one organization theories that could provide mid-range theoretical support for the study of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing organization, which lends further support to the importance and interest in the growth of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing as a discipline.

### **An overview of the content of the special issue**

This brings us to a summary of the contributions to the present special issue on the role of theory in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research. It is fitting given the remit of the special issue that many of the authors have played an important role in advancing the topic of Human Resources Challenges in Marketing (industrial and general) years. The papers in this collection will help provide guidance and shape thinking for both students and scholars alike through of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research as we embark on a second century of industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing Human Resources Challenges in Marketing scholarship. In our call for papers for this special issue of Industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing Management, we invited contributions that explored, compared, and/or contrasted differing general theoretical perspectives, and contributions that focused on the application of general theoretical perspectives specific issues in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research. We sought contributions that would help to build stronger theoretical link ages between the industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing literature and the common issues it identifies in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing practice, and general theory. There are two types of contributions to this special issue. On the one hand, we have a number of invited papers from leading thinkers the field of industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research. On the other hand, we have a number of competitive papers that were selected from those submitted to our call for papers. All papers were subject to review. These papers fell into four broad themes; (i) general theoretical approaches to industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research, (ii) the choice and use of mid-range theory, (iii) methodology in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research, and (iv) clarifying concepts in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research. We present each of these themes in turn. Dimitrios Tsagdis and Ross Brennan draws upon structuration theory and economic geography to explore spatial embeddedness in business relationships. They propose a conceptual framework built around the processes of proximation and distanciation, which they argue can be generative or competitively degenerative. These processes are investigated empirically through a qualitative study, grounded in structuration theory, of a peripheral region of England that has suffered lengthy industrial decline. Competitively generative proximation processes were found to be the most prominent in the region such processes involve a mixture of cognitive cost-benefit calculation and affective commitment to the region. Important enduring relational states are identified and elaborated, notably regional loyalty and relational isolation.

### **Methodology in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research**

The question of methodological choice and approach is an important one for theory development in any discipline. We therefore asked for papers that addressed the question; how might general level theories inform new or novel methodological approaches to industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing issues? We have two invited and two competitive papers addressing this topic. In the first invited contribution Achieving accuracy, generalization-to contexts, and complexity in theories of business-to-business decision processes Arch Woodside and Roger Baxter explore case study research (CSR), and argue that that bridging qualitative and quantitative research methods is possible to achieve accuracy, complexity, and generality across cases in B2B decision processes. It describes several CSR theories and methods that are useful for describing, explaining, and forecasting processes occurring in business-to-business (B2B) contexts. Their discussion includes summaries of six B2B case studies spanning more than 60 years of research. They advocate a paradigm shift from the current empirical positive is algebra dominant logic to case-based Boolean for management decision researchers, embracing the view that isomorphic theory of realities of B2B processes is possible CSR methods. In the second invited contribution, the past and the future of business Human Resources Challenges in marketing theory, Ian Wilkinson and Louise Young take a complex systems approach to understanding and modelling business Human Resources Challenges in marketing systems. Their focus is on the dynamics and evolution of such systems and the processes and mechanisms driving this, rather than the more usual comparative static, variables based statistical models. They maintain that order emerges in a self-organizing, bottom up way from the local or micro actions and interactions of those involved. In particular they describe the development of agent based simulation models and the identification and modelling of underlying mechanisms and processes, and conclude by discussing the implications of this approach for business Human Resources Challenges in Marketing theory and research. In the first competitive paper Structural antecedents of institutional entrepreneurship in industrial networks: A critical realist explanation, Wouter Van Bockhaven, Paul Matthyssens, and Koen focus on the ongoing debate regarding the manageability of networks They explore how a critical realist epistemology

can facilitate a more multi-layered explanation of collective change. In line with recent literature, they combine the IMP approach with neo-institutional theory and identify the cognitive and normative boundary conditions for managed change in networks. The mechanisms underlying the transition from emergent to intentional change are illustrated with a case study describing difficulties experienced by Dutch steel wholesalers in realigning their business strategy with market conditions even when it is necessitated by upstream and downstream pressures. This paper is one of few examples of critical realist case-study research to guide scholars on how to translate this epistemological orientation into methodological choices. The second competitive paper by James McCabe, Philip Stern and Scott G. Dacko entitled Purposeful empiricism: How stochastic modeling informs industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research draws upon non-traditional research perspectives and domains (specifically Dirichlet stochastic modelling) in order to understand, explain, and better predict key aspects of buyer-seller relationships and industrial networks. Using stochastic modelling, large-scale regularities that emerge from the individual interactions between idiosyncratic actors can be characterized by a well-understood theoretical model. When these macroscopic patterns repeat across a wide range of firms, industries and business types this commonality suggests directions for further research. They provide empirical examples that support the argument for the use of stochastic modeling techniques in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing management. They maintain that analysis of the behavioral patterns that emerge from networks of overlapping buyer-seller relationships in the different markets acts as a lens to inform and focus research towards the evolution of market structure and network relationships.

### **1. Clarifying concepts in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research**

The clarification of concepts and constructs is a vital part of theory construction, and an important aspect of what Weick (1995) terms the arising. We therefore asked for papers that examined how common concepts in industrial Human Resources Challenges in Marketing research, such as interaction, action, actor, agency, practice, relationships, episodes, and value might be conceptualized and explored from different general theoretical perspectives. We have two invited and one competitive paper addressing this theme. In the first invited contribution The theory and practice of business, David Ford and Stefanos Mouzas aim to contribute to the development of the concept of business networking which they define as the conscious attempts of an actor to change the structure or process of interactions within particular relationships or the wider network in which it operates. Their paper draws on early research in Human Resources Challenges in Marketing and distribution that contributed strongly to the IMP research theme and contrasts this research with the more recent managerial tradition in Human Resources Challenges in marketing research. The paper builds on this early research and that of the IMP Group to present a structure for the analysis of business networking. The paper illustrates this analysis with a case study and draws conclusions on the concept of business networking and on its practice. In the second invited contribution A never ending story: Interaction patterns and economic development by Håkan Håkansson and Alexandra Waluszewski, the concept of interaction is explored. They argue that when the content and the effects of industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing and purchasing processes are scrutinized empirically, these activities appear as perhaps the most important source for business development, industrial renewal, efficiency and innovation. Based on extensive empirical research results, they suggest that interaction is the main ingredient in these processes. This implies that the supplier-customer interaction has a central development function for efficiency and innovativeness, for companies as well as for the economy at large. Thus, they contend that there is a strong need to include and consider this key engine for dynamics (and its role in developing material structures as well as ideas) in any theoretical study of economic development. The competitive paper The dynamics and evolution of trust in business relationships by Yimin Huang and Ian Wilkinson focuses on the concept of trust. They maintain that trust is a dynamic and evolutionary process and that trust changes depending on the experience and outcomes of the actions and interactions and other events taking place over time in the focal as well as in connected relations. They propose a view of business relations as complex adaptive systems, and the psychological, social and economic mechanisms driving these changes in trust are identified. Their model has important implications for generating, sustaining and protecting trust in business relationships and networks and for future research we end this extended commentary and introduction to the special issue with a word of thanks to everyone who was involved in its creation. We were overwhelmed by the support and delighted by the profound interest that the topic generated. The many authors who submitted papers commented on how much they enjoyed the opportunity to address issues of theory and theory development in industrial Human Resources Challenges in marketing research as a topic in its own right. As editors, we were humbled by their efforts. As researchers, we were inspired by their passion. With sincere gratitude that we acknowledge the contribution made by the many knowledgeable and dedicated researchers that helped with the review process for this special issue.

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