

CALL FOR PAPERS
Special Issue of the Journal of International Business Studies

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

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Introduction

The focus of this Special Issue is on international marketing (IM) topics and this call invites manuscripts dealing with a wide range of topics that fall into and, in fact, shape the IM literature. At its core, international business (IB) is inherently intertwined with marketing. For centuries, individuals and firms have sought to *expand sales* through exporting, which constitutes the most common foreign market entry and expansion mode; for many firms *export marketing* has defined IB. The broader IB's view of export development asserts internal and external triggers to exporting (cf. Cavusgil & Nevin, 1980; Wiedersheim-Paul, Welch, & Olson, 1978), both of which are export marketing centered. Indeed, many early contributors to the literature on market entry and export development process were closely associated with the marketing discipline (e.g., Bilkey & Tesar, 1977; Czinkota, & Johnston, 1981; and Kaynak & Kothari 1984). Over time, some firms continue to reap the benefits of increased sales and profits via export marketing, whereas others, recognizing the broader and longer-term potential of global markets, have sought to establish different forms of presence in markets abroad. In short, regardless of entry mode or firms' structural configuration, market expansion and increased sales via [in]direct marketing internationally is a critical *raison d'être* for IB. Such a view highlights the critical role for IM activities, while emphasizing the important role of IM contributions within the broader IB field.

Significant interest in and focus on scholarly research in IM began to intensify during the 1980s, and heightened research attention has been given to IM problems and challenges facing firms over the past three decades. Early scholarly works in IM were limited in scope, addressing, *inter alia*, which export market entry triggers as well as motivations and explanations for internationalization decisions were the most noteworthy (Ford & Leonidou, 2013). Since then, IM scholars have crafted a growing, multifaceted, and well-developed body of knowledge.¹ Despite these advances, the increased importance and relevance of IM has been underappreciated and understudied (Day, 1996). As a clear demonstration of this lacuna, IM topics appearing in the top journals remain sparse and a casual survey of several leading marketing and IB journals signals the relative paucity of scholarly works addressing IM issues. Given IM's critical importance for IB practice, the overarching goal of this Special Issue is to reinforce IM's centrality and influence in IB by inviting IM contributions that address a broad array of topics,

particularly areas in need of greater scholarly attention as well as enduring issues of importance to managers.

Today, research in IM has evolved across numerous themes with some areas receiving disproportionate scholarly attention (Leonidou et al., 2017). Market entry and export marketing are among the oldest topics of interest for IM researchers which remain as relevant and important today. Collectively, origin-related research topics likely constitute the most popular IM theme among IM researchers and potentially the most-researched area with hundreds of publications (cf. Papadopoulos et al., 2011; Samiee & Chabowski 2017).² In general, much intellectual capital has been devoted to international aspects of buyer behavior topics (Leonidou et al., 2017). In contrast, some important IM research areas are receiving insufficient scholarly attention. To this end, over two decades ago Day (1996) asserted “Studies of cross-cultural differences in buyer behavior or the effect of country of origin do not suffice when the big issues needing answers are about global competitive interactions, global new product development and launch practices, sharing of market insights across borders, or the coordination and integration of multicountry operations.” Thus, this Special Issue is intended to inspire and broadly direct researchers’ focus on developing IM projects that fill key knowledge gaps in IM thought, open new pathways for examining unexplored aspects of IM, and/or highlight particular IM topics that warrant closer scholarly scrutiny. Inasmuch as buyer behavior remains among key marketing topics, novel exporting and international or cross-cultural contributions dealing with this topic are also welcomed. As we detail below, we cast a wide net to motivate contributions on a broad range of IM topics, while recognizing the importance of novel and ground-breaking themes.

The Scope of the International Marketing Special Issue

Given the ubiquitous nature of various levels of international involvement across firms and industries, a host of new and exciting challenges about customers, suppliers, and relationship management are raised. Today’s global marketplace is characterized by intense competition from a multitude of foreign and indigenous companies, and heterogeneous customer behavior due to differences across cultures. Technological advances are creating novel business segments (e.g., social media, collaborative consumption/shared economy), while undermining long established global brands and products (e.g., Polaroid and instant photography, Kodak and film photography, Sony and floppy drives, photorefractive keratectomy and prescription glasses, CDs and MP3/FLAC), and promoting new forms of interaction for businesses and customers (e.g., social media, SMS, online reviews).

In such a dynamic global environment, how can companies design and implement IM strategies that maintain or improve their market positions? Which IM strategies help firms engage customers on an international scale such that they can achieve their IM strategy goals? Moreover, a trend that is evident from reviews of the IM literature is the lopsided research attention to the traditional components of IM strategy. Global product (e.g., international branding policies and global brand development and management), and pricing policies (for example, with respect to managing or curtailing parallel markets), global product/service innovation and management (including international collaborative projects), brand- and design-related intellectual property protection (e.g., aimed at reducing or eliminating counterfeiting and imitation possibilities), and international distribution and retailing strategies are among the issues of growing importance in IM strategy.

Additionally, relationship development and customer engagement pertain to, not only firm-based plans and strategies across markets, but also customer attitude, behavior, and connectedness among customers and with the company. They involve behavioral outcomes that go beyond a customer's purchases to include referrals, influence, and knowledge. Although research in marketing has advanced domestically (e.g., Kumar & Pansari, 2016a), it has yet to be extended and validated internationally and embedded within IM/IB strategy frameworks. Cross-national studies can reveal whether the firm is valuing its customers as specified in its IM plan, and afford the company the opportunity to compare customer lifetime value against goals and benchmarks, and globally allocate marketing resources accordingly (Kumar & Pansari, 2016b). What drives overseas customers to provide referrals and help the company to attract new, valuable customers (cf. Wangenheim & Bayón, 2007)? Furthermore, the ramifications of the international context (e.g., existing differences across developed and emerging markets), the impact on the development of IM strategies that help firms create, raise, and maintain customer relationships and its corresponding influence on performance deserve research attention.

Even though the Internet and information technology (IT) is continuing to have a significant influence on customers and businesses, a citations-based review of the IM literature reveals that IT-related topics do not constitute a knowledge base in IM (Samiee and Chabowski 2012). This finding is corroborated by Leonidou et al. (2017). These scholars noted that less than four percent of the academic articles reviewed, included facets of Internet connectivity. Also, a literature review of 29 academic journals addressing the Internet's impact on relational approaches to foreign market entry, identified only 94 published articles, representing about three percent of all articles reviewed by Watson et al. (2018). These reviews demonstrate the acute need to incorporate IT (e.g., EDI, e-commerce) in projects addressing various aspects of the IM process, including initial online exporting research, market entry and development, export customer acquisition by both manufacturers and channel intermediaries. Furthermore, a research focus on cross-border e-commerce, especially as means of internationalizing the scope of smaller firms' marketing is encouraged. Firms invest significant sums to adopt promising technologies to improve their marketing performance, yet little research has been devoted to assessing the performance impact of digital tools (e.g., CRM software) in terms of maintaining or growing relationships internationally.

Social media have been influencing both the demand and the supply side of exchange. On the demand side, firms are engaging people by allowing them to participate in the co-creation and product development processes. Enterprises are increasingly engaging the public in idea generation via social media (e.g., Dell Ideastorm, LEGO ideas) and new product development and starting capital (e.g., Quirky, Kickstarter.com). The extent to which firms engage social media audiences internationally (including both global and local social media sites) for one or more aspects of co-creation and the influence of such activity on the MNCs' offerings and competitiveness across markets are yet to be explored. The exploration of the extent to which customers from around the world participate in knowledge development processes and help firms improve their existing products and/or create innovative ones, also remains a fertile research area (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Equally important research issues on the demand side also warrant research attention. For example, customers located in distant parts of the world use social media, but the impact of such engagement and the positive or negative ripple effect they create in or across social networks with respect to local and global brands has received

insufficient research attention and deserves closer scholarly scrutiny (McAlexander et al., 2002). Relatedly, the global ubiquity of the Internet and social networks has made these media a major target for cybercriminals. Regular revelations of firm and customer data breaches are bound to have a consequential impact on, not only firm image and customer engagement process, scope, and depth, but also on demands for greater privacy and protection by customers and governments. Thus, research efforts should be expended to uncover the impact of, for example, cross-national privacy regulations on the efficacy of relationship development and management as well as online marketing processes.

Globalization has transformed the way in which business relationships are initiated, managed, and evaluated, and customer engagement is likely to play a prominent role in a business-to-business context. Business relationships are complex, interpersonal, and interdependent and relationship marketing efforts can make a difference in promoting common goals and facilitating joint activities that create value for both partners; value that each company could not achieve outside of the relationship or with other partners (Palmatier, 2008). In an international context, companies need to manage their cross-border relationships more skillfully to address geographic separation, cultural distance, administrative (e.g., currencies, legal jurisdictions), and economic differences between the local and foreign markets (Katsikeas, Samiee, & Theodosiou, 2006), and the increased levels of risk and uncertainty inherent in international operations (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). How does the international environment affect the activities, strategies, structures, and decision-making processes of companies with respect to their business relationships? How can companies manage their overseas business relationships as value-bearing assets? Are cross-border business relationships part of a value-creating network that delivers superior value to the end customer? What is their role in overcoming the liability of foreignness? Likewise, the role of overseas business partners (e.g., distributors, suppliers) in knowledge development, innovation, and goal achievement are also areas needing research attention.

Furthermore, the fit between IM strategy and international relationships deserves research attention. How can companies ensure that their many suppliers and partners abroad are well-aligned with their IM strategy? Strategy standardization offers significant economies of scale in value-adding activities (e.g., R&D, production, marketing), facilitates the development of a consistent corporate/brand image across countries, enhances coordination and control of international operations, and reduces operational and managerial complexity, whereas adaptation is based on the premise that variations between countries necessitate the adjustment of the marketing strategy to the idiosyncrasies of each local market. The contingency approach suggests that IM strategy can range between these two extremes and the appropriateness of the selected IM strategy should be evaluated on the basis of its performance outcomes (Katsikeas, Samiee, & Theodosiou, 2006). Despite the long-standing tradition along these lines, sense-making in some overarching topics is needed. For example, the pursuit of a market-orientation strategy demands sensitivity to local market conditions and IM strategy adaptation. Given the importance of market orientation for many firms, there is a need to better understand how market orientation influences IM strategy. On the one hand, market and customer orientation demand the pursuit of more localized or adapted IM strategies. On the other, a high degree of IM strategy standardization seemingly impedes a high degree of market orientation. How do firms reconcile their IM strategies and market orientation drives? Moreover, how do customer relationships in particular and business relationships in general interact with the perennial issue of adaptation or standardization of IM strategy? Do overseas business relationships help the company determine

which specific strategy elements are feasible or desirable to standardize or adapt? If so, under what conditions, and to what degree? To what extent is co-creation possible and appropriate under each IM strategy scenario?

The goal of this Special Issue is to center-stage the critical role of IM within IB by bringing together high quality contemporary research on international or cross-cultural buyer behavior, global segmentation and targeting, customer engagement and business relationships, IM strategy. It will also be important to assess how these issues affect achieving competitive advantage and enhanced performance in international market operations. The overarching purpose of the Special Issue is to add to the body of existing knowledge in IM in terms of theory development and the advancement of management practice. We are open to both conceptual and empirical manuscripts and welcome submissions using different methodological approaches. We are looking for manuscripts that are characterized by conceptual and methodological rigor, add substantively to the current IM literature, and address timely marketing problems and issues that are of particular relevance to IM/IB practitioners.

Review and Submission Processes

As co-editors, we will take an active role in interacting with authors throughout the submission period. As such, we welcome substantive inquiries regarding the Special Issue to provide insights that may be useful in developing or improving manuscripts. All manuscripts for the Special Issue will be reviewed as a cohort, and the co-editors will be actively involved in this process.

Accordingly, we request that authors submit their manuscripts between July 17, 2019, and July 31, 2019, at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jibs>. All submissions will go through the JIBS regular double-blind review process and follow the standard norms and processes. For more information about this call for papers, please contact the JIBS Managing Editor (managing-editor@jibs.net).

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About the Guest Editors

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¹A systematic survey of IM literature published in the top six IB/IM journals for the 1995-2015 period uncovered 1,722 published works (Leonidou, Katsikeas, Samiee, and Aykol 2017).

²Estimates vary. For example, Samiee and Chabowski (2017) identified over 300 country-of-origin publications listed in the *Web of Science* database, whereas Lu et al. (2016) estimate the number of origin-related publications to exceed 600.