

What do we know about buyer–seller negotiations in marketing research? A status quo analysis

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to provide an overview of the current status quo of negotiation research in marketing. In this context, we first conduct a quantitative analysis of existing literature on buyer–seller negotiations. Specifically, we undertake 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 are subjected to both content and co-citation analyses. To this end, we modify 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, we derive sound implications for research and practice.

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1. Introduction

Owing to the often significant investments, customized product solutions, and high risks of many business-to-business transactions, buyer–seller interactions play a key role in industrial markets (Gemünden, 1997; Håkansson, 1988; Håkansson & Ford, 2006). In this context, business negotiations, defined as single interaction episodes, seem to be particularly relevant, as the majority of exchange conditions – for example, the price, date of delivery, and guaranteed warranties – are negotiated between the partners in the value chain (Anderson & Narus, 2004; Fang, 2006). This is all the more true, because in recent years buyer–seller negotiations' situation has changed in many markets. Companies are, for example, experiencing increasing performance pressures (Roseira, Brito, & Henneberg, 2010). Consequently, they are forced to achieve the best possible results in each buyer–seller transaction. The successful management of negotiations has therefore gained increasing importance (Guo & Lim, 2005). Consequently, the analysis of buyer–seller negotiations should also be of key importance in marketing research.

Although there is currently a trend towards status quo analysis within marketing research, for example status quo analyses of relationship marketing (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006), customer satisfaction (Szymanski & Henard, 2001), or of services and

relationships' marketing models (Rust & Chung, 2006), there is no study that provides an overview of marketing studies with regard to negotiations. Such an overview would be particularly interesting as negotiations are important not only in industrial markets, but also in other sectors, for example retail (Dabholkar, Johnston, & Cathey, 1994) and B2C e-commerce (Liang, 2009). In addition, an overview of negotiation-related contributions could help transfer findings and identify blind spots within marketing research.

Against this background, this study's main purpose is to provide an overview of the current status quo of negotiation research in marketing. In this context, we first conduct a quantitative analysis of extant literature on buyer–seller negotiations within marketing. Specifically, we undertake a screening of all the top marketing journals to identify negotiation-related articles. In a next step, we subject the identified articles to qualitative analyses. To this end, we perform a content analysis of the identified articles and structure the existing findings according to a modified IMP Group model. Furthermore, we conduct co-citation analyses to investigate whether the existing findings are built upon each other; that is, whether they refer to each other. The results are then presented to various negotiation experts for an evaluation of their practical relevance and usefulness. From this multi-step procedure, we derive concrete implications for both practice and research.

2. Quantitative and qualitative analyses of the status quo

Recognizing that buyer–seller interactions in general, and business negotiations in particular, play key roles in industrial markets (Anderson & Narus, 2004; Fang, 2006), this paper seeks to analyze the current status quo of negotiation research in marketing. Since no

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Table 1
Journals screened within our analyses of status quo.

Name of journal	Period under observation
Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)	1964–2008
Journal of Retailing (JR)	1964–2008
Journal of Marketing (JM)	1968–2008
Industrial Marketing Management (IMM)	1971–2008
Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS)	1973–2008
Journal of Consumer Research (JCR)	1974–2008
Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing (JBIM)	1986–2008
Marketing Letters (ML)	1989–2008
Journal of Business to Business Marketing (JBBM)	1993–2008
Journal of Service Research (JSR)	1998–2008

such analysis has been conducted, we first of all screened a large amount of marketing literature for articles dealing with buyer–seller negotiations. These articles were then subjected to qualitative analysis.

In this context, our literature sample consisted of ten international, high-ranking marketing journals (Harzing, 2010), from which three are specifically dedicated to industrial marketing. Our analysis considered contributions to the journals from their first year of publication until 2008. Table 1 presents an overview of our literature sample.

2.1. Quantitative analysis

As already noted, the aim of the first analysis step is to provide a quantitative overview of the status quo of negotiation-related research in marketing. In this context, we were interested in determining (1) the amount of contributions that has addressed negotiation to date; (2) the absolute and relative frequency of the negotiation-related contributions in the particular journals; and (3) the nationalities of the authors investigating negotiation in marketing.

In order to answer these questions, two doctoral students screened the abovementioned journals independently to ascertain their handling of the negotiation issue. In this context, introductions to new sections and special issues, editorials, errata, calls for papers, awards, volume indexes, and bibliographies were not considered, resulting in a total of 15,195 screened articles. To support our literature sample's screening process, we considered the term negotiation as a single interaction episode between at least two market participants, in which the exchange conditions (e.g., price or delivery date) are determined (Mintu-Wimsatt & Calantone, 1996). We assume that through the mutual exchange of offers and counteroffers, the negotiation parties will find a compromise solution, which will lead to a contract or a commonly accepted agreement

(Morley & Stephenson, 1977; Young, 1975). The negotiation topic thus can be identified in our literature sample by keywords, such as bargaining, negotiation, agreement, compromise, arrangement, deal, pact, settlement, and contract (Bazerman, 2006; Davis, Laughlin, & Komorita, 1976; Kennan & Wilson, 1993; Young, 1975). Subsequently, we counted all the identified articles. This enabled us to generate concrete data to define statistical relationships.

2.1.1. Absolute and relative numbers of negotiation-related articles

Based on our screening of the 15,195 contributions in top marketing journals over the past 45 years, we identified 78 papers focusing on this area of research. This represents 0.51% of the total amount of articles published in the marketing journals analyzed. It is worthwhile making use of benchmarks to interpret this figure. Just between 1998 and 2000, a total of 93 contributions to marketing journals were devoted to the research area of internet marketing. This represents an average of 26% of all the submitted articles in the examined journals (Ngai, 2003).

2.1.2. Absolute and relative numbers of negotiation-related articles sorted by journal

Containing 16 of the 78 negotiation-related papers, the *Journal of Marketing Research* best emphasizes this research area – compared to the other journals analyzed. However, it is important to mention that two of the three analyzed industrial marketing journals (*Industrial Marketing Management* and the *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*) rank among the four most negotiation-related journals (in absolute figures).

These absolute figures provide first insights into different journals' negotiation affinity. However, it is crucial to consider the relative figures of negotiation-related papers. This is due to the fact that the numbers of publications per journal differ between the journals. In this context, we found that with a relative ratio of 1.64% – 11 relevant articles compared to a total of 355 contributions – the *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* is the analyzed journal that has the most affinity for negotiations. Furthermore, it becomes clear that all three industrial marketing journals rank among the four most negotiation-relevant journals. This result suggests that negotiations are especially important in the industrial market, as reflected by the coverage of this research field in the industrial marketing journals. Nevertheless, a relative ratio of less than 2% in the most negotiation research-intensive marketing journal should be considered as a clear signal of the lack of negotiation research within marketing research. This becomes obvious from a comparison with the *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, the journal with the most affinity for internet marketing research. With 18 relevant articles compared to a total of 63 contributions between 1998 and 2000, this journal contained 29%

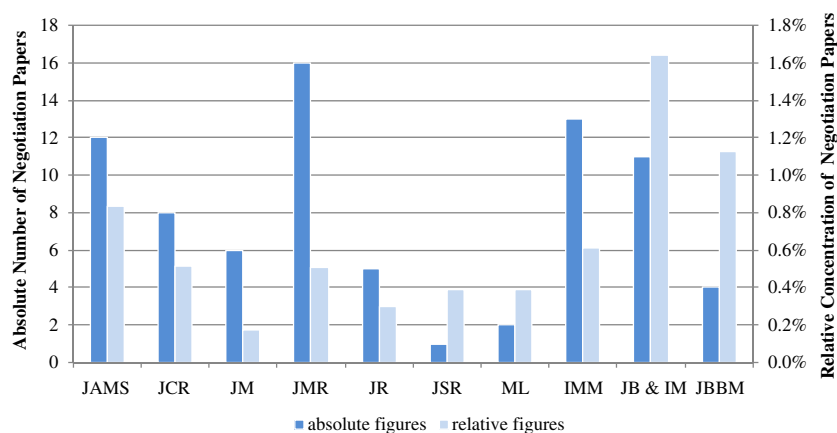


Fig. 1. The absolute and relative number of negotiation-related publications per journal. Note: Relative Concentration of Negotiation Papers represents the percentage of articles dealing with negotiations in the years referenced for each journal.

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