

Editorial: Special Issues in *Industrial Marketing Management*: Past, Present, and Future

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Special issues in *Industrial Marketing Management* (IMM) have a long tradition. The first special issue was published in 1996, and since then, IMM has published an average of four special issues per year. Recently, there has been an increased interest in proposing a special issue in IMM. However, the acceptance rate of special-issue proposals in 2022 is still relatively low, about 15 percent. *Industrial Marketing Management* has two associate editors (who report to the journal's co-editors-in-chief) who are responsible for managing all aspects of the process related to special issues.

What is a special issue?

Traditionally, a special issue of an academic journal has a twofold objective. First, a special issue identifies an emerging 'hot topic' of importance to the journal and its readers, with much potential for future research growth, and the collection of eventual articles in the special issue presents what is known so far by researchers that specific research topic. Second, once published, the special issue should become a valuable 'go-to' resource for researchers interested in the research topic, so that the special issue will support and drive research for the following years.

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At IMM, a special issue is a collection of articles on a specific research topic that contributes to industrial and business-to-business (B2B) marketing management. Articles within a special issue are of the same quality as are regular articles published in IMM. The articles are well written, well researched, are based on sound methodological standards, and are expected to make a significant contribution to the specific research topic in industrial and B2B marketing management. As such, special issues provide researchers with an excellent opportunity to learn about the latest research and developments in a specific research topic in B2B and industrial marketing. Special issues are also a useful resource for practitioners who want to keep abreast of the latest research developments on a specific research topic.

A recent IMM special issue here serves as an illustration. In 2020, IMM published the special issue *Managing through a Crisis: Managerial Implications for B2B Firms*, which was edited by Anthony Di Benedetto, Carsten Lund Pedersen, and Thomas Ritter (2020). The theme of the special issue was how business-to-business firms can manage through a crisis—in particular, the COVID pandemic—and what can be learned about surviving future crises. The special issue featured conceptual and theoretical pieces by, among others, Henry Chesbrough and Jagdish Sheth, as well as several empirical articles written by researchers from around the world.

Industrial Marketing Management allows authors of articles in special issues to publish their manuscripts online as soon as these manuscripts are accepted (e.g., in the first subsequent volume of IMM). This means that articles belonging to a particular special issue may be spread over several volumes (this depends on when manuscripts are accepted for publication), but the articles are at the same time also grouped under the special issue theme online (the so-called ‘virtual special issue’).

What do I need to know about serving as a guest editor?

Special issues are put together by a team of guest editors who are experts in the specific research topic within industrial and B2B marketing management. The guest editorial team is composed of researchers who have demonstrated expertise in the research topic. Usually at least one of the guest editors is familiar with IMM and its readership and review process, has previously published articles in the journal, and has also served as a reviewer.

The first task of the guest editorial team is to identify a relevant and timely research topic for the special issue. In addition to being relevant, a research topic needs to be of interest to IMM’s

readership and to have the potential to attract around 20 or more high-quality submissions. The research topic needs to be clearly defined, as this ensures that the articles eventually included in the special issue are cohesive and provide a clear picture of the state of the research-topic field. Once the research topic has been selected, the prospective guest editors should write a call for papers; it would be advisable to be inspired by previous calls for papers for special issues in IMM. Once the call for papers has been drafted, the prospective guest editors should contact the associate editors for IMM special issues. If the special-issue proposal is accepted, the special-issue process can begin. The guest editors will be required to promote their special issue, to solicit high-quality submissions, and to oversee the review process to ensure that accepted manuscripts for the special issue meet the regular standards of IMM. Guest editors typically work closely with the journal's associate editors for special issues. For example, the associate editors oversee the review process to ensure that manuscripts selected for the review process fall within the scope of the special issue (and IMM in general) and are of high quality. The journal's co-editors-in-chief may also be involved in the process, especially concerning decisions about manuscript acceptances. Once decisions have been reached for all the manuscripts submitted to the special issue, the guest editors are asked to write an editorial (i.e., an introduction followed by an overview of the special issue), summarizing the special issue's key themes and findings in the articles, and providing context for the journal's readers.

Overall, the guest editors have a most important role in ensuring that the special issue is well organized, relevant, and of high quality. This requires careful planning, coordination, and attention to details.

How do we ensure a transparent process and avoid conflicts of interest when editing special issues?

At IMM, we understand the importance of transparency, which here refers to the integrity of the review process and which bears on the credibility of the journal. For example, there should be equal opportunities for all authors and their works to be considered for publication. Therefore, we do our best to avoid conflicts of interest that may arise in the guest editing of special issues. Our guidelines (Appendix 1) include clear guidelines on important topics for guest editors. For example, guest editors (in whatever combination of these guest editors) can submit only one regular manuscript to be reviewed for possible inclusion in their special issue, and the review

process for this manuscript must be handled by the IMM's associate editors. In addition, the guidelines clearly specify situations in which the review process of manuscripts should be handled by IMM's associate editors as opposed to the guest editorial team (e.g., when guest editors have been co-authors with authors of submitted manuscripts to special issue, when guest editors work (or have worked) at the same institution as authors of submitted manuscripts to special issue, and so forth). The guidelines are updated regularly to address arising challenges and circumstances.

The schedule for publishing a special issue may depend on several factors, including the research topic of the special issue, the number of manuscripts initially submitted, the review process, the reviewers' availability, the authors' responsiveness, and the complexity of the submitted manuscripts. Typically, it takes anywhere between 18 months and 36 months from the time a special issue is proposed to IMM's associate editors to the time the special issue is published.

The following is the general process for editing a special issue:

1. The guest editors identify an interesting research topic that would fall within the scope of industrial and B2B marketing management.
2. The guest editors develop their call for papers.
3. After the call for papers has been submitted to the IMM's associate editors for their consideration, the guest editors are notified of whether their call for papers has been accepted or rejected.
4. If the call for papers has been accepted, and if the guest editors agree to accept the role and follow the guidelines presented to them (Appendix 1), the guest editorial team promotes and disseminates their call for papers.
5. The guest editors review the submitted manuscripts and select manuscripts to be sent for review.
6. The journal's associate editors review the list of selected manuscripts (Appendix 2) and confirm that the manuscripts can be sent for review.
7. The selected manuscripts are sent out to three reviewers, and the guest editorial team works with the authors and reviewers to assist in the revision process.
8. After the necessary rounds of revisions, the selected manuscripts complete a final check and are then accepted for publication.

9. The guest editorial team writes an editorial (i.e., an introduction followed by an overview of the special issue), summarizing the special issue's key themes and findings in the articles, and providing context for the journal's readers.
10. The special issue is published, and the guest editorial team again promotes the special issue (e.g., through social media channels).

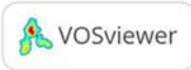
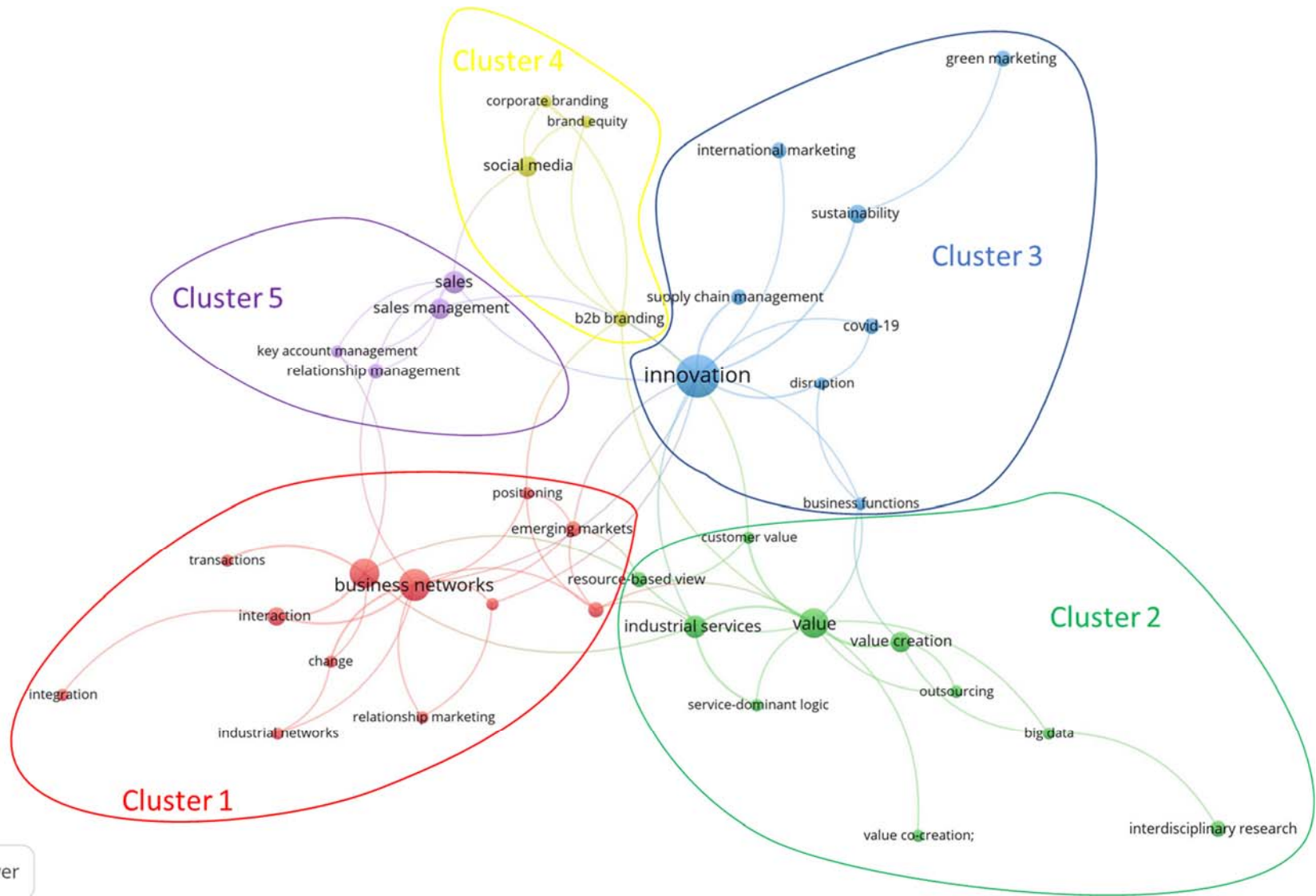
Past, present, and future topics of the special issues in *Industrial Marketing Management*

To better grasp past and present research topics in IMM special issues, we conducted a bibliometric analysis of 129 special-issue editorials written by the guest editors or editors-in-chiefs' announcements of special issues.

Since the point of interest was research topics, we conducted a co-occurrence analysis of all keywords for the selected documents. This analysis enabled the identification of broader and narrower research topics that special issues were dealing with. To visualize and group the co-occurrences, we clustered keywords and visualized the clusters through the process of network visualization of the data, by using VOS viewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

In total, 355 keywords were identified in the selected documents. In the process of clustering, we kept a minimum of two co-occurrences per keyword criteria, and 37 keywords met the criterion (minimum strength is set to 1, there was no normalization of the layout with the attraction = 2 and repulsion = 0). Circle sizes indicate the number of occurrences of keywords. The analysis resulted in five distinct clusters that describe past and present research topics in IMM special issues. Clusters and their interconnections are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Five clusters defining past and present research topics in *Industrial Marketing Management's* special issues



Cluster 1: Networks and relationships

Cluster 1 contains 11 keywords: business networks, industrial networks, business relationships, relationship marketing, change, integration, interaction, positioning, transactions, customer relationship management, and emerging markets. This cluster stems from the network and relational perspectives of industrial and B2B marketing management that were particularly dominant in special issues in the 1990s. The cluster has been developed under the strong influence of the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Group. For example, IMM has always supported the IMP Group by publishing a special issue of the group's IMP annual conferences. Special issues in Cluster 1 include issues by Andersen, Medlin, and Törnroos (2020), Möller and Halinen (2017), Halinen, Medlin, and Törnroos (2012), and Freytag and Ritter (2005).

Cluster 2: Value and services

Cluster 2 contains nine keywords: value, customer value, value creation, value co-creation, industrial services, service-dominant logic, resource-based view, outsourcing, and big data. This cluster focuses on value as one of the central concepts in industrial and B2B marketing management research, as well as the derivatives of this concept such as customer value, value creation, and the actual value co-creation concept. In addition, this cluster includes services and service-dominant logic. Special issues that have dealt with research topics of Cluster 2 include Eggert et al. (2020), O'Cass and Wetzels (2019), Kohtamäki and Rajala (2016), Lindgreen (2012), Jacob and Ulaga (2008), and Ulaga (2001).

Cluster 3: Innovation and sustainability

The central concept of Cluster 3 is innovation, with the following eight keywords: innovation, disruption, business functions, international marketing, sustainability, green marketing, supply chain management, and COVID-19. This cluster gathers topics focused on the role of various types of innovation in industrial and B2B marketing management, as well as related concepts such as disruption and disruptive role of new challenges such as COVID-19. Furthermore, the cluster gathers environmental and social aspects in industrial and B2B marketing management under sustainability and green keywords. Some special issues from Cluster 3 are Pattinson et al. (2022), Markovic et al. (2021), Chakrabarti, Henneberg, and Ivens (2020), Lee, Özsomer, and Zhou (2015), and Gupta, Rudd, and Lee (2014).

Cluster 4: Branding

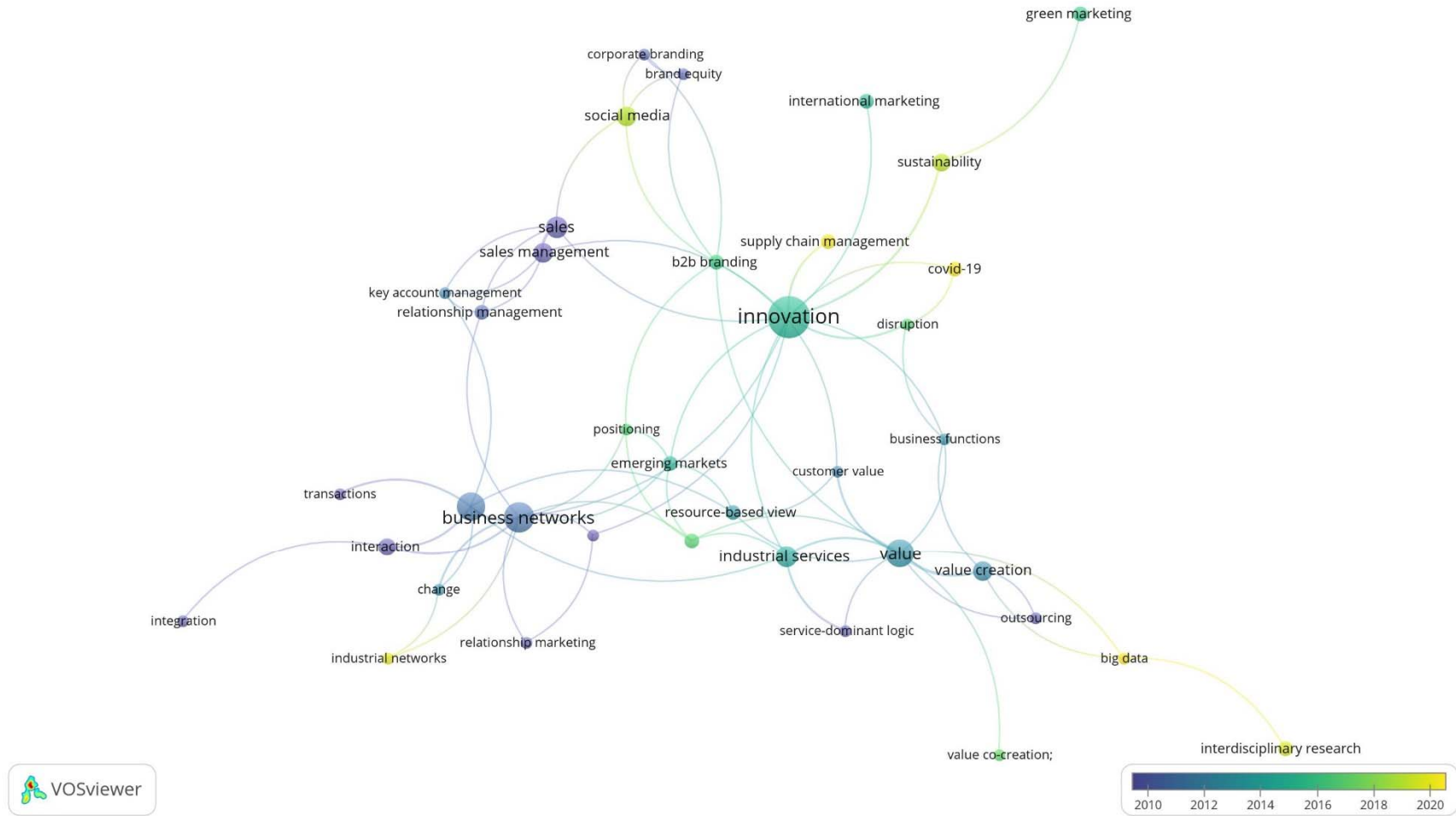
The focus of Cluster 4 is branding, and it contains four keywords: B2B branding, corporate branding, brand equity, and social media. Branding hence represents a third pillar that gathers relevant topics for industrial and B2B marketers, and interestingly, this pillar includes social media topics as well. Some special issues from this cluster include Agnihotri and John-Mariadoss (2022), Wang and Hao (2018), Leek and Christodoulides (2011), and Lindgreen, Beverland, and Farrelly (2010).

Cluster 5: Sales management

Cluster 5 focuses on sales and sales related concepts and encompasses four keywords: sales, sales management, key account management, and relationship management. Business-to-business sales have been particularly salient in industrial marketing management over the past years, and interestingly, the first IMM special issue focused on selling and sales management in industrial firms. Illustrative special issues from this cluster include Sharma and Syam (2018), Möller and Parvinen (2015), Honeycutt (2002), and Honeycutt (1996).

Temporal representation of topics in IMM special issues (Figure 2) shows how the interests of B2B marketing management researchers evolved over time. Networks and relational perspectives were early topics in special issues as was B2B sales research (as shown in darker shades in Figure 2). Later topics included value and innovation, while the topics of today are, among others, sustainability, social media, COVID-19, and big data (shown in lighter shades in Figure 2).

Figure 2: Temporal representation of past and present topics in *Industrial Marketing Management* special issues



There are, of course, many potential future research topics that could be interesting for a special issue in IMM. Some examples of interesting research topics include:

1. The use and misuse of technology in industrial marketing: This could include topics such as the use of metaverse, avatars, and other advanced technologies to improve industrial marketing and sales strategies and tactics.
2. Business-to-business branding and customer loyalty: This could include topics that explore the role of branding in building customer loyalty and trust in B2B markets, and the ways in which industrial firms can create strong and enduring brand identities.
3. Sustainable and responsible industrial marketing: This could include topics that discuss the role of social responsibility and sustainable development goals in industrial marketing, and the ways in which firms can balance the needs of their customers and stakeholders with the need to protect the environment and promote social welfare.
4. The dark side of disrupted industrial markets: This could include topics examining the way new technologies can negatively impact employee wellbeing, corruption in industrial markets and distribution, and the strategies companies can use to check availability, author responsiveness, and item complexity to combat the normalization of corruption in this changing environment.
5. Cross-cultural and international aspects of industrial marketing and sales: This could include articles that examine the challenges and opportunities of industrial marketing in different cultural and regional contexts, and the ways in which firms can adapt their marketing strategies to be successful in global markets.

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Appendix 1: Guidelines for guest editing of special issues of *Industrial Marketing Management*

A: General	
1	All papers must be processed through the Editorial Manager System (EMS)
2	As a Guest Editor (GE), you must check your EMS regularly (every other day at latest) during the whole editing period.
3	GE should promote VSI and aim to attract at least 15 submissions.
4	All decisions by the GE usually are final (but can under special circumstances be overruled by the editors-in-chief).
5	GEs are responsible for language editing of the final Call for Proposals (CfP). We suggest that the professional proofreading is done prior to sending the final version of the CfP to the Associate Editors (AE).
6	All manuscripts within the special issue are published as soon as they are accepted in the system (in the next volume of IMM). This means that manuscripts belonging to the one VSI will be scattered across the volumes (in line with the acceptance time) but at the same time they will be available in the Virtual Special Issues section that will gather them all under the VSI topic. Therefore, when preparing your Guest Editorials please do not refer on the specific order of manuscript or to the specific pagination, while you can still describe each accepted manuscript properly.
7	The deadline for all submissions that are part of special issues is the first day of the month, and once confirmed and agreed upon, the deadline cannot be postponed.
B: Review process	
1	<p>Papers that do not pertain to B2B or industrial markets must be desk rejected, as soon as possible without waiting for the submission deadline. For example, papers dealing with supply-chain (management) issues that do not pertain to B2B or industrial markets must be desk rejected.</p> <p>Papers that do pertain to B2B or industrial markets but are desk rejected due to lack of fit with the special issue topic can be resubmitted by the authors as regular submissions to the journal. However, if papers are rejected because they are poor, they cannot be resubmitted to the journal. GE must explain in their decision letter why they reject a paper.</p>
2	<p>The next step is to run a plagiarism check. If the similarity report shows that submission is above 10% similar to previously published works, GE should reject the paper or ask authors to rewrite the paper to correct the large blocks of similar text. When informing authors do not impose that they were plagiarizing, as there is only a limited way that certain things could be said, but that you would like to be careful and try to avoid a potential problem. Authors could request a similarity report and GE should provide it.</p>
3	<p>Prior to sending paper to reviewers, GEs are asked to provide AEs with a list of papers they wish to forward for review. This list should include the paper titles, information about the authors and their affiliations and abstracts (please see template). The AEs will check if the paper meets IMM minimum standards (e.g., scope, quality) or if it clearly needs to be rejected and inform the GEs accordingly.</p>

