How to Build Great Research Groups

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ABSTRACT

Business school leaders would like to attract and keep the top research talent in order to stay competitive, attract high-potential students, and recruit the most promising young faculty. To accomplish these objectives, a successful research environment for its business academic researchers needs to be established, so that they can produce a sustainable research stream. We examine important antecedents including business school research strategy, leadership, governance, and policy, and from these we develop a set of conditions that are related to long-term success of research programs in academic business institution. As detailed illustrations, we elaborate the experiences of two active research institutions—the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Group and the Contemporary Marketing Practices (CMP) Group — and discuss how each of these groups has implemented the conditions for success. We conclude with general observations on the environmental conditions most conducive to sustainable business school research, and present implications regarding the role of the journal editor as a gatekeeper.

Keywords: CMP, Contemporary Marketing Practices Group, IMP, Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group, leadership, policy, research capabilities, research conditions, research group, strategy, success.

1. INTRODUCTION

For business researchers, establishing a solid research track record is a prerequisite to success. Business schools often have lofty publication expectations of their newly hired assistant professors before considering promotion and tenure. It is often in the best interest of the junior researcher to play it safe and pursue research in well-established research streams, at least until achieving tenure, when it may be possible to take more chances on more groundbreaking (and riskier) research. In fact, a promotion and tenure committee may be interested in seeing not just a number of publications in top journals, but two or three established research streams where the researcher has made contributions to the literature. Business schools also benefit greatly from the success of their top academics. More big research grants, and more A-level journal publications, leads to a solid research reputation, which in turn makes it easier to hire junior professors from top research institutions, attract top graduate and doctoral students to their programs, and offer chairs to big-name senior academics looking for a career change. It is in the interest of business school managers to know how to build an environment conducive to academic research at the highest level.

We examine the factors that have led to the establishment of a successful environment for business academic researchers. More particularly, we examine issues including business school research strategy, leadership, governance, and policy, and from this framework, we develop a set of conditions that are closely related to long-term success of academic research programs in business schools. We then present a brief history of two active research institutions, the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Group and the Contemporary Marketing Practices (CMP) Group, and discuss how each of these has implemented the conditions for success in their own particular settings. We conclude with general observations and implications for the environmental conditions most conducive to sustainable business school research, and briefly discuss the role of the journal editor as a gatekeeper in the process of supporting radically new research streams.

Throughout our discussion, we focus on the creation of the research stream as the desired outcome. Business school managers would like to invest efficiently, in terms of both their financial outlay and human resources. If a large investment is made, say, to funding a research center or institute, hiring faculty from top schools and recruiting the best junior researchers, the expectation would be to have a stream of research as an output from this investment. That is, the researchers would be able to conduct high-level research that results in sustainable research output in terms of published articles, additional outcomes that further the research stream in the pipeline, as well as other research planned and/or seeking funding approval.

Before continuing, we would like to make a distinction between a research stream and a school of thought. Consider, for example, the innovation literature (Di Benedetto, 2013) that shows the emergence from the first few articles through growth and now maturity. In the early years, there was a narrow range of research streams: new product process, R&D-marketing interface, organizational issues, accelerated time to market, and a few other research streams. Twenty years later, as the innovation discipline matured, more academics had decided to be “innovation scholars,” the research field became more multidisciplinary and multinational, construct measures were more fully developed, and a wider range of methodologies were used. By this time, new research streams had emerged that were not even on the radar screen 20 years earlier: organizational learning, product architecture, mass customization, open innovation, entrepreneurial innovation, transformational leadership, information technology in innovation, and many other research streams. We define each of these as “research streams” within the innovation “school of thought.” Although scholars in a group are all innovation scholars, they have narrower and deeper research expertise. That is, research streams emerge through time, as scholars raise new questions for academic research. One could even subdivide this further if one considers that a research stream, which was originally, say, case-based or qualitative research, then attracts survey or experimental research, or *vice versa*.

The importance is that the scholars taking the chances and doing research, which is not business-as-usual, need to be supported and recognized, and encouraged to take changes, and this can come from their own institution, as well as their chosen research organization. As an example, years ago, we saw the first few Ph.D. graduates in innovation; earlier, a typical concentration would be a mainstream choice such as marketing or management. By the early 2000s, the first few assistant professors had been promoted and tenured based on an innovation publication record (many articles in *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, and so on) rather than mainstream marketing or management. This was a significant turning point because it meant that one could pursue a career in innovation management *per se*. As such, it is probably a significant milestone in the recognition of innovation as a school of thought.

2. STRATEGIES FOR RESEARCH SUCCESS

A goal of business school administration is to foster an environment of successful academic research. Especially in the case of the most research-intensive business schools, having a core of solid, productive researchers leads to recognition and ranking among the top business schools. This scholarly recognition attracts new PhD graduates eager to establish careers in a strong research environment, as well as mid-career academics looking for a chaired position. It also ensures the school is on the short list for the best students applying for Ph. D. programs in business. But this is more easily said than done. What, indeed, is successful academic research? Those of us who do business research know that we intend to make contributions that will resonate with the practitioner community and aid their decision-making skills. Yet, we must also please the editors and reviewers in the academic community, and preferably place our research in the highest-rated journals in our field. It is easy for business school managers to establish quantitative goals for hiring, promotion, and tenure such as number of articles published in A-level journals. However, what can managers do to facilitate their faculty's achievement of their publication goals? In this section, we review issues such as business school research strategy and policy, leadership and governance issues, as well as choice of assessment metrics, which will aid in identifying the conditions most conducive to long-term research program success.

2.1. Strategy, Leadership, and Policy

At research-intensive business schools, the aim of the research strategy should most probably be to conduct demonstrably impactful research that influences society; can be deployed usefully in developing education; and can be communicated to and used by practitioners. Fulfilling this aim starts with publishing research with a high impact on the research community, which generally means publishing in influential journals.

This ambitious goal demands great performance expectations of faculty members, in the form of high-quality world-class research. Faculty members must be committed to rigorous, theory-driven, empirical research and theory development—outcomes that are central goals for any reputable business school.

A business school's leadership can seek a governance structure that reflects and supports key areas including research and education. The governance structure also should support the recruitment, retention, and expansion of faculty members, in line with support for personal development. Equally important is to set up research groups. Faculty members choose that (those) research group(s) that is (are) organized around themes they want to research and teach. Less important to a research group is the range of methodological approaches that researchers employ.

When developing its policies, a research group could be considering a range of initiatives including the following:

- Which publication strategy should the research group follow? When the group wants to be proactive in both academia and society, the group will need to contribute to the ongoing debate about present and future societal challenges to which its research and education are relevant. Such dissemination often results in dialogue, interaction, and reflection that can fertilize further research and identify new challenges. It also provides awareness, which can strengthen the position of the group in competition for research funding. We will discuss the issue of publications in more details in the following section "Assessing for Success."
- What will be the research group's funding strategy that will allow the group to undertake its research projects? To increase the number and quality of funding applications, the group could set up a funding committee to develop and leverage industry contacts. Colleagues who have been involved with research funding bodies could give feedback on outgoing funding applications. Another possibility is to form a writing club; this could involve peer reviews of funding applications, and it could, in the longer term, result in further collaboration between faculty members. This institution of brown-bag seminars and seminars with world-class researchers constitutes another avenue for discussing research ideas, detailing the funding landscape, and considering future developments, among others. For further ideas, such as building strategic alliances with key research centers, we refer to Lindgreen et al. (2019b).
- How will the research group contribute to the school's education? The group could contemplate offering research-based education; for example, when faculty members collaborate with students on research projects, those students become co-authors of conference papers or journal articles. Alternatively, the group claim a teaching-based approach, acknowledging that they discuss research-based issues with, say, executive

students and thus gain inspiration for their research through their teaching. We will return to this issue in a forthcoming editorial.

- Which services will the research group offer to the wider academic community? Such services should demonstrate impact on the research community. It could include reviewing for conferences and journals, participating in international networks, starting collaboration with international scholars, and arranging workshops, sessions, or panels at conferences. It might also include being journal editor, member of influential journal advisory/editorial review boards, or at least being a reviewer for such journals.
- How will the research group interact with the wider society and, most importantly, deliver societal value? In the context of public life, value is an important measure on the contribution to business and social good of activities for which strict financial measures are inappropriate or fundamentally unsound. The group could demonstrate the ability to inform and engage broader audiences through media interviews or workshops with practitioners. For further ideas about possible actions pertaining to the multiple aspects surrounding public value, we refer to Lindgreen et al. (2019a).

2.2. Assessing for Success

Increasing academic success is assessed not only on the journals that work is published in, but also by the scholarly impact of the work. Journal rankings such as the Association of Business Schools' Academic Journal Guide (AJG; formerly ABS) and the Australian Business Deans Council's ranking (ABDC) often are employed. The AJG ranking, for example, is compiled by a scientific committee comprised of 58 subject area expects spanning 22 research fields. Although the subject area expects do not act as representatives of their relevant learned societies in that research field, these experts do solicit advice from both learned societies and eminent scholars to judge the quality of a journal. Other important inputs include a journal's impact factor, submission and acceptance rates, age of journal, the journal's editor, reviewing process including the editorial review board, authors publishing in the journal, and the inclusion of the journal in other rankings, among others.

While the ranking of the journal is still an important indicator, other indicators of research quality are emerging that provide a broader view of innovation and academic contribution. Thus, there is a need for a meaningful portfolio of measures. As discussed by Brodie (2015), "one size does not fit all," rather what is needed is a dashboard of metrics coupled with qualitative judgment. The question then arises: which metrics should be used to judge research quality?

Citations increasingly provide an important measure of the research quality. Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science are among the many software programs that retrieve and analyze academic citations. In addition to the number of publications and the number of citations, it is possible to include measures such as average citations per publication, Hirsch's h-index, Egghe's g-index, the hg-index (to retain the advantages of both h and g measures, as well as to minimize their disadvantages; cf. Soutar, Wilkinson, and Young, 2015), and the i10-index. The so-called Field-Weighted Citation Impact takes into account the differences in research behavior across different research disciplines meaning that citations are compared with the average number of citations by all other similar publications (in the Scopus database). Another means of judging research quality is to set up an effective benchmarking, that is, to identify a pertinent group of scholars or research groups that are committed to maintaining the very best research, for example, the Russell Group universities in the UK or the Group of Eight universities in Australia.

And yet, research is more than just publishing in influential journals. Research should have an impact that establishes the reputation of scholars or research groups among multiple stakeholder groups: scholars, the business community, and students, to name a few. PlumX Metrics, another software program provide information about how scholars interact with articles, books, conference papers, and book chapters, among others. In addition to citations, categories include usage (e.g., clicks, downloads, views, and library holdings), captures (e.g., bookmarks, favorites, and reference managers), mentions (e.g., blogs, news articles, comments, reviews, and Wikipedia links), and social media (e.g., likes, shares, and tweets). Other measures include, for example, an article being included on doctoral seminar reading lists or awarded best paper awards.

It also becomes important to assess the contribution that research makes to influence practice. To make this assessment, there needs to an understanding of how research is used by both academics and practitioners. This requires paying explicit attention to the socialization of knowledge and the role academic research can play in these processes (Brodie and Peters, 2019; Nenonen et al., 2017). Therefore, faculty members also seek to publish in reputable practitioner-oriented journals (e.g., *Harvard Business Review*, *California Management Review*, and *MIT Sloan Management Review*, all on the FT 50 journal ranking) and to publish with well-respected publishers monographs and research anthologies that may contribute significantly to establish the reputation of scholars or research groups. This effort also is evidenced when popular media report on research findings and when government-sponsored research networks, in collaboration with scholars or research groups, communicate pertinent knowledge to industry and the wider public.

Methods for assessing research quality continue to be debated and developed. Aguinis et al. (2019) argue that the use of journal rankings comes “with negative effects on the field’s research methods, knowledge generation, and social dynamics.” For example, the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) movement advocates, among others, that research be evaluated on its scientific content rather than publication metrics of the journal in which that research was published. This could include some of the above measurements, for example, the research’s influence on policy and practice. To illustrate, Cardiff Business School, a leading UK business school and one of only two business schools to be ranked in the top 10 of the UK government's five research assessment exercises since 1992, now envisions itself as a school that improves social and economic conditions. The school's approach is interdisciplinary teaching and research that addresses grand challenges; also, the school has chosen to operate a progressive approach to its own governance (Kitchener, 2019a, 2019b).

3. CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS FOR A RESEARCH STREAM

Recently, Brodie and Juric (2018) reflected on the conditions that led to the successful development of a new research stream on customer engagement. Two seminal articles published in 2011 and 2013 initiated the research stream. The first article established the conceptual domain of customer engagement (Brodie et al., 2011a), and the second refined this conceptualization with empirical research (Brodie et al., 2013). As of July 2019, each article has had over 1,700 citations in Google Scholar. These two articles have led to a stream other influential publications that have broadened the research stream (Breidbach & Brodie, 2017; Brodie et al., 2019; Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, 2014; Storbacka et al., 2016). The first academic book on customer engagement (Brodie, Hollebeek, & Conduit, 2016) and three special issues of journals (*Journal of Marketing Management*, and *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, *Journal of Strategic Marketing*), which involved contributions from over 100 authors from North America, Europe, and Australasia, have played important roles in establishing this research stream. Building on this work, other special issues of journals, other articles, and book chapters are all contributing to what is now a substantial international stream of research. Scopus and Google Scholar have reported a steady increase in the number of articles using the concept of customer engagement and related concepts since 2011.

Drawing on the initial reflections by Brodie and Juric (2018) about the conditions that led to the development of the customer engagement research stream, we propose that there are five necessary initial conditions that determine the success of a research stream, and, additionally, five key conditions that build on these initial conditions and also impact the success of a research stream. The five initial conditions are:

1. *Research problems leading to research opportunities*: The first initial condition is to have the capability to identify an important research problem, which is of practical and academic interest that creates future research opportunities.

2. *Initiating research stream*: The second initial condition that builds on the first is to have the capability to initiate the research stream by bringing together talented groups of scholars to realize research opportunities. Key attributes include having scholars with creative curiosity, the ability to spot new opportunities, a passion to publish in the best journals, an ability to work cohesively as a team, and having complementary abilities.

3. *Clarity in expression*: The third initial condition is to have the capability to provide clarity in academic arguments that provide foundations for the emerging research stream. Academic scholarship requires an understanding of academic conventions, especially for written expression and theoretical framing. However, innovative new research streams are often challenging the *status quo*, meaning that careful consideration needs to be given as to why established academic conventions need to be challenged.

4. *Teamwork within a network of scholars*: The fourth initial condition is to have the capability to develop a network of talented scholars who continue to embrace research opportunities. The network starts with a core group that provides leadership to facilitate an international network and broaden the stream of research. Workshop forums and special sessions at conferences targeted at special issues of journals and books play an important role. Having well-known international scholars can play an important role in adding credibility to the emerging network. Central to the success of this formation and operations of teams is openness and honesty, as well as respect for the variety of skills, abilities, and roles different

researchers can play. The network needs to build on mutual trust, and that can be enhanced by not only collaborating on research projects, but also socializing together.

5. *Platform to consolidate knowledge*: The fifth initial condition is that the network of scholars needs to produce research that consolidates the knowledge in the area. This provides foundations for further innovative research. For example, in 2016, the customer engagement research stream produced the first academic book on customer engagement, which took stock of the development of the research area (Brodie, Hollebeek, & Conduit. 2016). The book consisted of 16 review chapters, and 39 authors form Europe, North America, Australasia who have gone on to produce journal articles to further advance the research area.

The five key conditions that build on the initial conditions and impact the success of the research stream are:

1. *Role of theory and theorizing*: The first key condition is the need for fresh thinking about the role of theory and theorizing that leads to new approaches (Brodie & Peters 2019). We suggest greater emphasis needs to be given to the process of theorizing rather than to the focus on theory. Being "stuck in the middle, neither being firmly based in real-world data, nor reaching a sufficient level of abstraction" should be avoided (Gummesson, 2004, p. 317).

2. *Sustaining leadership and innovation*: The second key condition is to put a process in place to sustain leadership and innovation. The group who provides the leadership to initiate the research stream needs to broaden as the research stream expands. With the research stream developing, the network needs to embrace distributed leadership that will lead empowerment to propagate new initiatives and to keep the momentum in the research stream. Eventually, when the network has achieved its research ambitions, it might embrace broader challenges in the field or, more drastically, reinvent itself by identifying a new important research problem and thus initiating a new research stream.

3. *Getting research accepted*: The third key condition is that scholars within the research stream have the persistence to get research accepted in high-quality journals. Innovative research that challenges conventional thinking can meet barriers in the review process because of “similarity bias” of reviewers. Similarity bias occurs when research does not fit norms and practices that reviewers are familiar with. Editors have an important role in recognizing and supporting innovative research that challenges conventional thinking.

4. *Getting research recognized*: The fourth key condition is that the research stream needs to become visible and understood by other researchers. Workshops, forums, and special sessions at conferences where leading scholars outside the research stream participate can play an important role in creating visibility and understanding for the research stream. In addition, online platforms such as Google Scholar, Mendeley, Academia, and publishers’ platforms are playing an increasingly important role in creating recognition. Acceptance is more short term and micro (i.e., individual); in contrast, recognition is more long term and macro (i.e., collective). Individual authors get their manuscripts accepted for inclusion in high-quality journals. The research gets recognition when the research stream starts to head toward maturity with more manuscripts accepted for such journals and the authors starting to influence later scholars to pursue research in the stream.

5. Tenacity and resilience: The fifth key condition is for the researchers to have tenacity and resilience. Research that challenges conventional thinking can be expected to meet resistance, and it is tempting to give up. However, if the group of scholars believes strongly in what they want to achieve there usually is a way to succeed. Innovative manuscripts take time to develop, and the review process based on rigorous critique can play an important role in improving manuscripts leading to clarity in expression. Researchers in a new research stream that challenge conventional wisdom need the conviction to stick with the stream, even in the face of rejection at high-quality journals. It is easy just to give up and focus on writing something more conventionally accepted. That is, rather than making the radical contribution (which is risky, as reviewers or editors may not recognize the contribution), researchers can settle for making an incremental contribution, which still builds theory and is publishable, but at lower risk of rejection. A researcher with the required tenacity and resilience can overcome this rejection. Winston Churchill's famous speech at Harrow School in 1941 is of relevance here: “Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never - in nothing, great or small, large or petty - never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense.” Senior, tenured academics might find it easier to take chances later in their academic career and include a more radical research direction in their project portfolio. However, when senior, tenured academics have to deliver X number of articles in high-quality journals (this is, for example, the case in the UK where research assessments have been conducted since 1986), such academics will hesitate pursuing radical research.

4. REVIEW OF THE IMP AND CMP RESEARCH PROGRAMS

In this section, we first give a short history of the activities of the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Group and then of the Contemporary Marketing Practices (CMP) Group.

4.1. Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group (IMP)

Coming together in 1976, researchers from five different countries formed the IMP Group (Turnbull, Ford, & Cunningham, 1996). The aim was to “*make a comparative analysis of operations, strategies and organization structures of companies involved in export marketing to, and international purchasing from France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom*” (Cunningham, 1980: 322). The scale of the research project was enormous, based on 876 interviews, with the focus always on the interactions between the parties involved.

A basic starting point of the research project was the recognition of the interdependencies that exist in buyer-suppliers relationships; something that the more traditional American approaches to understanding organizational buyer behavior had ignored (Robinson, Faris, &

Wind, 1967; Sheth, 1973; Webster and Wind, 1972). The researchers' view, based on understanding buyer-supplier relationships as an interaction approach, rejected the traditionally accepted '4Ps' approach. Instead, the researchers believed that "the great majority of business purchases do not exist as individual events and hence cannot be fully understood if each one is examined in isolation" (Turnbull, Ford, & Cunningham, 1996: 45). The researchers challenged the prevailing view of understanding organizational buying behavior on four different grounds (see Cunningham, 1980; Håkansson, 1982; Turnbull et al., 1996).

The first was to challenge the prevailing view in which the industrial buyer behavior literature concentrated on analyzing discrete purchasing decisions. Instead, based on some of the researchers' earlier work, their view was of the buyer-supplier interaction based on relationships, which often varied in length, complexity, and dynamism (Cunningham & White, 1973; Håkansson & Östberg, 1975; Ford, 1978, 1980). Such relationships were influenced not only by the different technological capabilities of the companies involved, but also by the roles of the different individuals involved in the buying and selling process, which was far more complex than 'a buyer' and 'a salesperson.'

A corollary of this was the second ground, which refuted the idea that business-to-business marketing involved the manipulation of the 'marketing mix' variables so often applied in more traditional business-to-consumer marketing. Rather than segmenting a market into different passive segments each of which then could be targeted by an optimally designed set of the 4Ps, the interaction approach demanded a more insightful understanding of what each party wanted from the relationship.

The third ground laid down challenged the adoption of the traditional view derived from the economic theory that saw markets as consisting of an atomistic structure with numerous buyers and sellers, with buyers moving freely between competing suppliers. Instead, the researchers' earlier work had identified the fact that business-to-business marketing was typified by a high degree of stability in buyer-supplier relationships, accentuating the importance of understanding the relationship management mechanisms utilized by both parties (Ford, 1978; Håkansson, Johanson, & Wootz, 1976).

The final ground of the early IMP researchers concerned the traditional separation in studying either the approaches adopted by industrial purchasing agents or industrial marketers. Instead, seeing them as opposite sides of the same coin, the researchers emphasized the similarity of the tasks, with both parties "involved in the search for suitable trading partners. Both parties recognize the costs of change and the benefits and risks involved in becoming dependent upon the other" (Cunningham, 1980: 323).

Having set out their grounds, the IMP Group proceeded with their program of research. Since we were not involved in this early process, it is not clear to us whether or how agreement was reached on the methodology to adopt. Cunningham (1980: 324) argues that, given the diverse theoretical backgrounds of the individuals involved, it was clear that "no single theoretical model could be imposed." Rather, he suggests that an incremental process of accommodating different ideas eventually resulted in the interaction model adopted. In order to understand buyer-seller interaction, it was argued that four sets of variables had to be studied simultaneously: the elements and processes of the interaction itself; characteristics of the individuals and organizations involved; the environment within which the interaction occurs; and the atmosphere affecting and affected by the interaction. This model "draws upon inter-organizational theory, the "new institutional, economic theory" in addition to concepts such as risk reduction, power and dependence, interpersonal and distribution channel power, industrial buying behaviors and the internationalization process of the firm" (Cunningham, 1980: 324).

This original study, termed the 'IMP 1' study to distinguish it from subsequent rounds of additional data collected, focused exclusively on industrial products, ignoring services. As explained in both Cunningham (1980) and Håkansson (1982), a 'choice matrix' was developed that categorized suppliers' product technology into raw materials, parts, and equipment; and distinguished between the customers' manufacturing technology as to whether it involved unit production, batch, and mass production, or process manufacture.

An extraordinary amount of data was then collected. The 876 interviews were conducted with companies in France (260), Germany (161), Italy (117), Sweden (180) and the United Kingdom (158) (Cunningham, 1980, p. 330). Approximately half of these were marketing study interviews, and half were purchasing study interviews. Due to the complexity, and the strategic sensitive of the relationships being studied, only personal interviews were used. Care was taken that only those with direct involvement in and experience of the relationship were interviewed. There were often multiple interviews in the same company, covering different customers or suppliers.

The objective at this early stage clearly was on theory building, not theory testing. As argued by Cunningham, "the development of a better theoretical understanding of the process of interaction between companies across different national and cultural barriers is a major academic objective. The research is not intended to test a model but rather to lead to the formulation of a model which integrates industrial marketing and organizational buying behavior" (1980: 337).

This early work of the IMP Group resulted in two books, which set much of the scene for the work that was to come: Turnbull and Cunningham (1981) and Håkansson (1982). Instrumental in encouraging the group was the Annual IMP Group Conference, held every year since 1984 (apart from 1987 in which no conference was held). This conference has been supplemented in some years with an additional 'IMP Asia' conference being held. The 'membership' of the IMP Group always has been seen as a very flexible concept: while there certainly are the core team of the original researchers, there are many others who remain connected to varying degrees. Membership of the group has always been free, and the IMP

Group website currently shows a total of 403 people registered as members (www.impgroup.org). While this may be seen as evidence of success, it also has a natural disadvantage in that it is almost impossible to keep to the tight focus that categorized the IMP 1 study, with the conferences now increasingly general in scope, dealing with some topics or methodologies that some core members would see as peripheral distractions. This view is counter-balanced by others calling for more inclusion of different topics and methodologies (Cunningham, 2008). However, one developmental theme that has consistently stayed within IMP thinking is the extension of the area of study from relationships and interactions between buyer and suppliers to see such relationships as being embedded within a broader network (Håkansson & Snehota, 1989).

The annual conference has resulted in a significant amount of published work: from some different sources (Henneberg et al., 2009; Wuehrer & Smejkal, 2013; see also the IMP Group's website), we can calculate that over 4,000 papers have so far been presented at the annual IMP conferences. Since the conference held in Turku in 1998, a special issue of *Industrial Marketing Management* has been dedicated to highlighting the best papers from the conference. To date, there have been 19 such special issues of *Industrial Marketing Management*, and 2 special issues in the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*. There have also been another 22 special issues of *Industrial Marketing Management* that have been edited by members of the IMP Group (for an excellent understanding of the co-creation activities that have taken place between *Industrial Marketing Management* and the IMP Group, see Möller & Halinen, 2018). Researchers from the IMP Group have contributed significantly to the academic debate over the years. Appendix 1 lists notable publications along with their number of Google citations as of November 2018.

4.2. Contemporary Marketing Practices Group (CMP)

In contrast to the IMP Group, the CMP Group operated on a far smaller scale involving a network of fewer than 30 scholars. The research in the fullest sense only lasted for not much more than a decade, but the timely nature of the research meant it had made an important contribution. Of note, the CMP research is still being cited. For example in the last three years the *Journal of Marketing* article (Coviello et al., 2002) has averaged over 30 Google Scholar citations per year. As with the IMP program, the CMP program was initiated by concern that the mainstream marketing management approach was failing to reflect the changes taking place. Since the 1980s, a fragmentation of mainstream marketing has occurred. Greater emphasis was now placed on marketing processes, relationships with customers, and relationships with other stakeholders including suppliers, channel intermediaries, and other market contacts. To reflect this change, Berry (1983) coined the term "relationship marketing." Relationship marketing had gained support in the literature to the point where some researchers (e.g., Grönroos, 1990; Sheth, Gardner, & Garrett, 1988) suggested it as a "new marketing paradigm."

While the arguments for a paradigm shift in marketing were persuasive, there was a lack of research to understand the nature of the changes in marketing practices. This motivated a research group at the University of Auckland's Business School to establish an international investigation into marketing practices. The program's original objective was to profile marketing practices in a contemporary environment and to examine the relevance of relational marketing in different organizational, economic and cultural contexts. The research was initiated by seminal articles by Coviello, Brodie, and Munro (1997), which outlined the conceptual framework, and Brodie et al. (1997), which reported empirical research undertaken in New Zealand.

Over the next decade, the research from the CMP group has grown to include a core group of researchers in New Zealand, the USA, the UK, and Argentina with a broader network of researchers in countries such as Canada, Finland, Holland, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Russia, Thailand, Malaysia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, China, and Australia who replicated and expanded the original research undertaken in New Zealand. The CMP research program resulted in over 50 published research articles (Brodie, Coviello, & Winklhofer 2008). These included an article in the *Journal of Marketing* (Coviello et al., 2002). Appendix 2 lists of the most highly cited articles.

Central to the CMP research program was the development of a typology of market and marketing practices. This was developed into the survey instrument that served as a basis for the research in the different countries. The CMP typology was informed by six general theoretical frameworks that relate to economic and social processes. These frameworks are services marketing, inter-organizational exchange relationships, channels, networks, strategic management, and the value chain and information technology within and between organizations (Coviello, Brodie, & Munro, 1997). In parallel with its process of drawing on general theories, the typology also was informed by applied theory and empirical research about marketing practices. This included research undertaken with middle managers, who acted as participant observers for their organizations. In addition to responding to a structured questionnaire, survey participants were required to reflect on the practices in their organizations. This provided qualitative assessments of the organization's marketing practices, changes to marketing practices in general, and any influences on these practices. When analyzing the results, researchers moved between statistical analysis of the quantitative data and the qualitative analysis of individual responses and groups of cases. Thus, the mid-range theorizing process was characterized by abductive reasoning, where conceptual work is intertwined with empirical research (Brodie & Peters, 2019; Dubois & Gadde, 2002).

The CMP typology recognizes concepts associated with the market activity and concepts associated with management activities. The five concepts or dimensions relating to external or market activity are the purpose of exchange, nature of communication, type of contact, duration of exchange, and formality of exchange. The four concepts or dimensions relating to management activity are managerial intent, managerial focus, managerial investment, and managerial level of implementation. Having identified the dimensions that distinguish between market and managerial practices, the literature was then re-analyzed based on those dimensions to identify various ideal types of practice. For the initial classification scheme, four practices subsequently were identified (Coviello, Brodie, & Munro, 1997). The three most relevant practices to contemporary marketing are:

> *Transactional practice* is the traditional managerial approach. It is defined as a practice using the '4P' transactional approach to attract customers in a broad market or specific market segment.
>
> *Traditional relationship practice* is the relationship approach articulated since the 1980s and which has its roots in service marketing and business-to-business marketing. It is defined by the development of personal interactions between employees and individual customers.
>
> *Network practice* is characterized by the development of relationships with customers and companies within the network and has its roots in the IMP Group (Axelsson & Easton, 1992).

With the emergence of e-business and the internet in the 1990s, it became necessary to revise and expand the original CMP framework to include another generic type of practice. The framework now recognized the powerful influence that information and communication technologies were having in facilitating change in business and marketing. As with the development of the original CMP typology, an extensive content analysis was undertaken of the marketing, management, and information systems literature to conceptualize the emerging practice. Consistent with the original typology, attention was given to the five market-related dimensions and the four management-related dimensions that distinguish this practice from other practices. This led to an additional practice (Coviello, Milley, & Marcolin, 2001; see also Lindgreen, Palmer, & Vanhamme, 2004).

> *Interactive practice* is defined as 'using interactive information and communication technologies to create and mediate dialogue between the firm and identified customers.' (Brodie et al., 2011b, p. 83).

Importantly, the mid-range theorizing process used by the CMP research program enabled the development of a comprehensive typology that could investigate multiple practices empirically. Rather than a simple either/or dichotomous classification of practices (transactions versus relationships), the typology assumes alternative types of practices within companies are not assumed to be mutually exclusive. Thus, empirical research can identify companies with different combinations of transactional, relational, network, and interactive practices. Some companies may have practices with a stronger transactional emphasis, while others have practices with a strong relational emphasis, and yet other companies may have practices that are pluralistic. This broader view of markets and marketing means the typology can be used to investigate a comprehensive range of relevant empirical phenomena and then to classify these phenomena that are not mutually exclusive.

The survey phase of the CMP research led to generalizations about contemporary marketing practice, which challenged the view that a new paradigm for marketing was emerging based on relationships:

- While there is some support for consumer goods companies being more transactional, and business and service companies being more relational, there are many exceptions.
- Companies can be grouped equally into those whose marketing practices are predominantly transactional, relational, or a transactional/relational hybrid. Each

group includes all types of companies (consumer goods, consumer services, business-to-business goods, and business-to-business services).

- Marketing practices tend to be pluralistic in that all types of practice are in evidence, and managerial practice has not shifted from transactional to relational approaches per se.
- Companies that adopted pluralistic practices tend to perform better.

In parallel to the survey-based investigations undertaken in the first phase of CMP research, some qualitative studies also were conducted. The qualitative research evidence regarding the influence of context on the implementation of relational marketing. It also offered insight into managers' perceived challenges and barriers to implementing relationship marketing. Other case study investigations were undertaken to understand specific sectoral influences. Examples include studies in wine (Beverland & Lindgreen, 2004; Lindgreen, 2001; Lindgreen, Antioco, & Beverland, 2003), the distribution of dairy products and online shopping (Lindgreen et al., 2000), and the automotive industry (Lindgreen et al., 2006). Such studies considered industry context more closely than did earlier CMP research, while others extended the early focus on marketing practices to encompass more specific topics such as innovation in marketing (Palmer & Brookes, 2002) and managerial perspectives specific to business-to-business marketing (Palmer, 2002). These extensions complemented the findings of other qualitative and identified key trends impacting marketing practice (Brodie et al., 2000; Brookes & Brodie, 2000; Lindgreen, 2001).

5. REFLECTIONS ON CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Earlier, in Section 3, we identified five necessary initial conditions that determine success of a research stream, and an additional five key conditions that build on the initial conditions and also contribute to success. At this point, we review and assess how both IMP and CMP groups achieved the conditions and established successful research streams.

5.1. Initial condition 1: Research problems leading to research opportunities

The first necessary initial condition is the capability to identify an important research problem that is of practical and academic interest that creates the research opportunities.

IMP: Given the remarkable success of the IMP Group in terms of both the number of articles published and the citations achieved, it is clear that a research problem with opportunities was indeed identified. It seems as if the source was a critical examination of the current theories to understand industrial marketing, which simply did not match with the reality that the early researchers saw around them. A number of these early articles clearly showed the importance of longer-term relationships rather than an approach of optimizing individual sales through systematic manipulation of the marketing mix variables (see, for example, Cunningham & White, 1973; Ford, 1978; Håkansson & Östberg, 1975). The identification of the research problem itself was laid down beautifully and emphatically in the four challenges identified above (see Cunningham, 1980; Håkansson, 1982; Turnbull et al., 1996).

CMP: The CMP research program was initiated by practical problems that also were of academic interest. As discussed in the previous section, from the 1980s, relationship marketing gained support in the literature to the point where some researchers (e.g., Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyne, 1991; Grönroos, 1990; Sheth, Gardner, & Garrett, 1988) were suggesting it as a new marketing paradigm. While the arguments for a paradigm shift in marketing were persuasive, there was lack of research to support the case. This led to the CMP program's objective to profile marketing practices in a contemporary environment, and to examine the relevance of relational marketing in different organizational, economic, and cultural contexts. Of note is the CMP research aligns with the research agenda by Day and Montgomery (1999) who in their *Journal of Marketing* article "Charting New Directions for Marketing" identified "How do firms relate to their markets?" as one of the four most important issues for academic research in the marketing discipline in the 21st century.

5.2. Initial condition 2: Initiating research stream

The second initial condition is to be able to initiate the research stream by bringing together talented groups of scholars to realize research opportunities.

IMP: As discussed in detail in the previous section, the IMP Group was formed by some researchers from five different countries coming together in 1976 (Turnbull, Ford, and Cunningham, 1996). The aim was to "make a comparative analysis of operations, strategies and organization structures of companies involved in export marketing to, and international purchasing from France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom" (Cunningham, 1980: 322).

CMP: The program was initiated by a group of researchers at the University of Auckland consisting of Nicole Coviello, Richard Brookes, Vicki Little, and Rod Brodie The group's research was characterized by a creative curiosity, an ability to spot opportunities, a passion to publish in the best journals, and an ability to work cohesively as a team to take advantage of the different members' complementary abilities. As discussed, the two seminal articles by Coviello, Brodie, and Munro (1997) and Brodie et al. (1997) created international recognition, and an international research group subsequently was formed.

5.3. Initial condition 3: Clarity in expression

The third initial condition is to be able to provide clarity in academic arguments provide foundations for the emerging research stream.

IMP: One way in which the IMP Group supported its members in achieving this clarity was through the annual conference submission process. This helped authors to tighten their logic and clarity before ultimate submission to a journal after the conference. Full papers would be submitted some months before the conference itself took place. This meant that there was a period available in which the papers could be sent for review and then returned to the authors for improvement before being finally accepted. The papers were subsequently uploaded to the

Group's website. It is therefore lamentable that external network pressures have forced a change in this practice: in spite of the conference never claiming copyright of the uploaded papers, several journal editors started rejecting submissions on the basis that the papers already had been published on the website. This has led to a change in procedures, whereby an extended paper is submitted and reviewed, but which is not made more widely available.

CMP: The seminal articles by Coviello, Brodie, and Munro (1997) and Brodie et al. (1997) provided the foundations for the emerging research stream. The subsequent sequence of articles by Coviello, Brodie, and others led to the refinement of the core academic arguments that CMP was based on (see Appendix 2). This sequence of articles clarified the importance of the research, and this led to the *Journal of Marketing* article by Coviello et al. (2002) that established the CMP perspective within the mainstream literature of the marketing discipline. As with IMP, CMP ran some workshops, forums, and there was a sequence of conference papers also that also led to the clarity in expression. Peer review played an important role in this process, as did the rigorous reviews for the leading journals where the research was published.

5.4. Initial condition 4: Teamwork within a network of scholars

The fourth initial condition is to be able to develop a network of talented scholars who embrace research opportunities.

IMP: The IMP Group excelled in creating, maintaining, and developing a network of scholars. Since its inception in 1976, the researchers involved managed to pull together a tightly knit and academically cohesive team that negotiated the way forward in terms of how to get a number of different academics from different countries and different theoretical backgrounds (Cunningham, 1980) to agree a common way forward to study business relationships in an international context. The argument is put forward that "it is also important to include leading scholars who add credibility." Interestingly, this was not the approach initially taken by the

IMP Group. The (perhaps apocryphal?) story goes that one of the early ‘rules’ of the group was “no professors to be included,” based on the assumption that leading scholars had made it to the top by adopting the prevailing approach to studying marketing as the manipulation of the marketing mix variables, and that they would not be willing/able to contribute to a radical new interpretation of industrial marketing.

CMP: The publication of the conceptual article by Coviello, Brodie, and Munro (1997) and the empirical article by Brodie et al. (1997) generated interest from the UK and other European scholars who were attracted to the common sense practical aspects of the research. These scholars approached the University of Auckland group to join the research program. The network was enhanced by some Ph.D. studies. This included Adam Lindgreen (Cranfield University, 2000), Roger Palmer (Cranfield University, 2001), Mairead Brady (Strathclyde University, 2001), and Vicky Little (University of Auckland, 2004). CMP research was presented at the International Colloquium on Relationship Marketing, initiated by David Ballantyne in the 1990s, and participants of this colloquium became part of the network. The network started to meet on an annual basis to discuss future directions for research. These meetings focused on openness and honesty, as well as respect for the variety of skills, abilities, and roles of the members of the network.

5.5. Initial condition 5: Platform to consolidate knowledge

The fifth initial condition is that the network of scholars needs to produce research that consolidates the knowledge in the area that provides the platform for further innovative research.

IMP: The IMP Group has been extraordinarily proficient at providing a platform in a variety of ways. First, until the process was forced to change (as discussed above), the conference papers were always uploaded onto the website and made freely available, acting as a resource for all the researchers. Second, David Ford put considerable effort in to editing a number of books that sought to consolidate the existing best research (Ford, 1990, 1997, 2002). Third, there have been the special issues of *Industrial Marketing Management*, with 19 special issues being based on the best conference papers and a further 22 special issues based on other topics of particular interests. These special issues have acted to consolidate knowledge of both what was discussed in the particular year's conference and also to consolidate thinking of other topics of special interest. The final consolidation approach has been via other books. This has taken different forms. First, before the conference was allocated a special issue of *Industrial Marketing Management* an attempt was made to consolidate knowledge from the conference by producing edited books based on selected papers (see, for example, Naudé & Turnbull, 1998; Walter, Ritter, & Gemünden, 1997).. Secondly, Ford and Håkansson have worked with a range of different IMP members over the years to produce a number of books on their latest thinking (see, for example, Ford et al., 1998; Ford et al., 2002; Håkansson et al., 2009). The most recent attempt to consolidate the IMP Group's thinking can be found in Håkansson and Snehota (2017). This book was based on work done in 2015 and 2016, during which workshops "at which researchers presented original research papers on three topics, namely (a) managerial, (b) policy and (c) research implications of the IMP research findings" (Håkansson and Snehota, 2107:x). These three themes were then integrated into a further workshop in 2016, which resulted in the book.

CMP: The most focused effort to consolidate knowledge about CMP was in the special issue of the *Journal of Business Research* in 2008 that was edited by Brodie and Brady (2008). This, special issue included seven articles that examined theoretical, empirical and educational issues. Brodie, Coviello, and Winklhofer (2008) provided the overview in their "Contemporary Marketing Practices research program: a review of the first decade." Other research that consolidated knowledge included books by Brookes and Palmer (2004) and Lindgreen (2008) and over 10 book chapters.

5.6. Key condition 1: Role of theory and theorizing

The first key condition that builds on the initial conditions is to have fresh thinking about the role of theory and theorizing.

IMP: As mentioned above, a core objective of the original IMP 1 research project was indeed “the development of a better theoretical understanding of the process of interaction” (Cunningham, 1980: 337), based upon both a broad understanding of different academic fields, but also a keen understanding of the practicalities of practicing managers. In this way, IMP researchers have attempted to bridge the gap that can exist between general theory on one hand and empirical observation on the other.

The IMP Group has been fortunate to have at its core some extremely competent and original thinkers whose very starting point was to reconceptualize our understanding of how business-to-business markets function. This continual reconceptualizing and refining have continued, with notable contributions being made in terms of the ARA Model (Håkansson & Johanson, 1992) and also the expansion of the original thinking of the importance of interactions and relationships to include the study of the networks within which interactions and relationships are embedded (Håkansson & Snehota, 1989).

CMP: The CPM approach was informed simultaneously by theory and practice work with managers, attempting to work with managers to develop a mutual understanding of how to operationalize mid-range theories (Brodie, 2013) using abductive reasoning (Brodie & Peters 2019). The abductive reasoning process led research that theorized with managers (Nenonen et al. (2017). The theorizing approach led to multi-method research designs. The CMP group initially used sequential designs with alternative methods being employed in stages, that is, using results from one stage to feed into the next stage in the sequence. The preferred CMP approach now, however, is to use a “parallel design” where methods are carried out in parallel, with results feeding into each other simultaneously. For example, most CMP surveys are undertaken with middle managers, who act as participant observers for their organizations. In addition to responding to a structured questionnaire, middle managers are required to reflect on the practices in their organizations and, in so doing, provide qualitative assessments of their marketing practices, changes to marketing practice, and influences on these practices. When analyzing the results, CMP researchers move back and forth between the statistical analysis of the quantitative data and the qualitative analysis of individual responses and groups of cases.

5.7. Key condition 2: Sustaining Leadership and Innovation

The second key condition that builds on the initial conditions is to have ways to sustain leadership an innovation to keep the momentum in the research stream.

IMP: Assessing the level of innovation attained is a multi-dimensional construct, and there are a number of areas in which the IMP Group has excelled. This includes the number of books published, the number of conference papers and journal articles published, the number of *Industrial Marketing Management* (and other) special issues published, and the number of citations (some of which are shown in Appendix 1) all of which point to a very high level of sustained innovation indeed. One aspect of innovation is the focus of that innovation: to what extent should it be encouraged to be kept narrow, or allowed to broaden? It is interesting that almost from the start of the IMP 1 research project, the level of innovation was kept extremely narrow and deep. Cunningham argues that in the original research project envisaged, the focus was to be on understanding "managers' perceptions of, and attitudes to, the buying and marketing behavior of their customer and suppliers," and also on "an analysis of how companies interact" (1980: 328). With the subsequent almost 40 years of work on developing our understanding of interactions, relationships, and networks, a lot of extremely innovative work has emerged.

However, two areas identified by Cunningham largely have been ignored, the first of which is developing our understanding of the international dimension of how relationships are managed. As anyone attending the more recent IMP conferences will acknowledge, this international aspect is not a prominent theme. Second, a specific area of interest of the original work was to study “the education, experience and cultural backgrounds of marketing and purchasing executives in the five countries” (Cunningham, 2018: 328). To date, this examination of the composition of the different actor groups involved in the buying and selling process has largely been absent. The third area of potential innovation concerns the introduction of new research approaches and methodologies beyond the more traditional case study approach that has typified so much of the IMP Group’s work. Over the years, this discussion has provided a natural tension between those researchers who want to maintain the traditional methodological focus, and those researchers who seek to introduce more methodological and analytical variance.

CMP: The founders of the CMP group provided the hub for innovation with other members of the CMP group. As discussed in the previous section, the CMP typology evolved to include IT-enabled interactivity. This ensured that CMP’s conceptual foundations were redeveloped to remain contemporary. An important aspect of the CMP research that kept it contemporary was to apply action research with “living case studies” where the executive students were treated as participant observers of the marketing practices in the organization they worked for (Little, Brookes, & Palmer 2008). From the mid-2000s, some members started to undertake research within the broader service-dominant logic perspective (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) that was superseding the narrower relationship marketing perspective. As discussed by Brodie, Loebler, & Fehrer (2019), service-dominant logic is becoming a unifying paradigm, which hopes to provide the foundations for a general theory of the market and value cocreation. The CMP research with its focus on the theory-practice interface to develop mid-range theory (Brodie et al. 2011b) provided fresh thinking for empirically grounding service-dominant logic research (Brodie & Loebler 2018; Lusch & Vargo 2014; Vargo & Lusch 2017). Hence, the innovation associated with the CMP research stream was subsumed into the broader service-dominant logic research stream.

5.8. Key Condition 3: Getting Research Accepted

The third key condition that builds on the initial conditions is that scholars within the research stream have the persistence to get research accepted in high-quality journals.

IMP: As noted above, the IMP Group has had considerable success in getting its work published via numerous conference papers, journal articles, and a large number of books. It has a sustained record of getting its research accepted across a wide range of channels. Special thanks in reaching a wider audience must go to the previous editor of *Industrial Marketing Management*, Peter LaPlaca, who regularly attended the conferences and gave the IMP Group access to so many special issues over the years, covering both the conference papers and other, more focused issues (see the review by Möller and Halinen, 2018). This tradition has been continued by the journal's current editors-in-chief, Adam Lindgreen and Tony Di Benedetto. Three articles, in particular, deserve mention: Bengtsson & Kock (2000), Walter, Ritter, and Gemünden (2001), and Ritter, Wilkinson, and Johnston (2004) that are all among the top-10 most cited articles in the journal since 2000, with 1,995, 1,166 and 859 citations respectively.

It is a moot point as to whether the IMP Group's introduction of the IMP Journal was a good idea or not. The journal was launched in February 2006, but ceased to exist as an independent journal in December 2014. As of 2018, the journal was combined with the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, in which it was given its special subsection. On the one hand, for the IMP Group to have its own journal could be interpreted as being too internally focused, with there being a need to reach an audience wider than just the IMP Group itself if it was to continue to influence the broader marketing community. An equally valid interpretation of events is that it was done too hastily, and that the journal should have been given more time to be nurtured and grow (Purchase, 2018).

CMP: As with all new research streams that challenge conventional thinking, there are initial problems in getting the work accepted. For example, an article, which outlined the CMP typology, was rejected in 1996 from a special IMP issue of the *International Journal of Research in Marketing* on markets as networks. However, this rejection led to an improved version that had great clarity of expression that was accepted for the *Journal of Marketing Management* (Coviello, Brodie, & Munro, 1997). As discussed above, there was a sequence of CMP articles, which refined the academic arguments about CMP that led to the submission to the *Journal of Marketing* (Coviello et al., 2002). While this article eventually was accepted, there were some challenges that needed to be overcome. One of the most controversial demands was that the editor required that a sample of US companies be collected, even though the research had samples of companies from Scandinavian, New Zealand, and Canada. A key factor for the *Journal of Marketing* article getting accepted, and also the other CMP work getting accepted, was very clear communication to the editors about the important contribution of the research. This was particularly important when resubmitting revisions to overcome the similarity bias of reviewers and editors.

5.9. Key Condition 4: Getting research recognized

The fourth key condition is that the research stream that builds on the initial conditions needs to become visible and understood by other researchers.

IMP: There is no doubt that the IMP Group has extremely high visibility. It has a well-attended conference each year, and it also has some additional workshops/seminars each year to which some people are invited. A good recent example is the book by Håkansson and Snehota (2017), which was the output of four such workshops. While these are all evidence of visibility and the research being understood by others, there is certainly incontrovertible evidence for its success in being cited. As shown in Appendix 1, a number of the articles and books have received very high citations indeed.

Given the Group's close co-operation with *Industrial Marketing Management* over the years, this journal is the one that is most aspired to by many within the IMP Group. This raises the issue not just of where the work is published, but also where it is cited, in that citations on their own are good, but citations in the top journals are better. The conclusion reached by Di Benedetto et al. is that "The citations patterns show very low citation rates for IMM in the top-tier marketing journals … indicating that IMM's share of knowledge imported by top marketing journals remains relatively small" (2018: 14). The journal citing most articles in *Industrial Marketing Management* is overwhelmingly *Industrial Marketing Management* itself. There is, however, clear evidence pointing to the increasing impact factor of *Industrial Marketing Management* over recent years, in spite of a "decreasing emphasis being placed on marketing strategy research in general (and consequently business-to-business/industrial marketing research" in the top journals (Di Benedetto et al., 2018: 15). The overall picture painted, therefore, is that the IMP Group's work, along with other articles in the business-to-business area, struggle to be cited in the top journals.

CMP: The two initial seminal articles and the *Journal of Marketing* article play pivotal roles in getting the CMP research recognized. This led to high visibility and high citations for about 20 articles (see Appendix 2). The recognition for the CMP work is because of its unique contribution in bridging theory and practice in a way, which provided practical implications. As discussed above, further recognition came from the books and book chapters.

5.10. Key Condition 5: Tenacity and resilience

The fifth key condition, which draws on all of the other nine conditions, is for the researchers to have tenacity and resilience. Research that challenges conventional thinking can be expected to meet with resistance, and it is tempting to give up.

IMP: The importance of this condition in determining the success of the IMP Group's work does not seem particularly applicable. This is for two reasons. The first is that right in the beginning when launching the IMP 1 research study, a number of the researchers had already had their work published in the mainstream literature, and hence were both accepted by the academic community and knowledgeable about the process of getting published. Secondly, from an early stage, the group worked hard to support itself; as the Group expanded in numbers, so running the annual conference on a shoe-string demanded hard work and commitment from the organizing committee each year, but it did build a wonderfully internal supportive network for older and newer members alike.

CMP: As discussed above, the importance of this condition in determining the success of the CMP Group's work was in getting the two initial CMP articles accepted and then getting the *Journal of Marketing* article accepted. In these cases, the researchers' tenacity and resilience played and important roles in getting through the review processes. However, as with IMP, once the visibility and recognition were achieved, this condition did not play such an important role.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Business school managers would like to build, and maintain, their research portfolios; individual researchers working within a business-school framework would like to keep adding to their publication track record at leading journals. To accomplish these goals, managers need to consider how to invest effectively in research such that they can nurture sustainable research streams. We identified five initial conditions, as well as five key conditions, which are most conducive to a sustainable and productive academic research environment. We also presented detailed examples of these conditions in practice, in two successful research institutions, the IMP and CMP Groups. Our examination of the IMP Group presented evidence showing how this group has made significant research contributions. Similarly, the examination identifies unique aspects of the CMP research stream that led to its success for over a decade. We assess that the 10 conditions are robust and identify the essence of what has led to the success of two research streams.

Of the 10 conditions, the condition of “sustaining leadership and innovation” requires further consideration. The IMP Group has grown considerably over time. This raises the issue as to the ideal size of a research group in order to sustain innovative research. If there are too few members, there may not enough be enough variance in ideas to sustain the innovation. If there are too many members, the innovation may become too diffuse and lack focus. Within the IMP Group, the rapid increase in the number of members has led naturally to this debate. The discussions center around whether the IMP research should stay focused, or whether it should welcome a fragmentation in focus and acceptance of a wider range of methodological approaches. In contrast, the CMP group always was small, so the question did not arise. However, perhaps the CMP group did not grow enough to sustain leadership in innovation.

Having its beginnings in the 1970s, the IMP Group has had a head start of almost 20 years over the CMP Group. As IMP became developed, the research published has increased, but the cohesiveness of its brand position has become less clear, as different topics and methodologies are adopted. In contrast, the main research thrust of the CMP group only lasted a decade, where there was a singular focus based on the original research objective to profile marketing practices in a contemporary environment and to examine the relevance of relational marketing in different organizational, economic and cultural contexts. Rather than expand with a broader range of topics and methodologies, the CMP researchers migrated into other research streams, as the research had served its purpose. The pioneering CMP research that developed a typology of marketing practices based on mid-range theory using abductive reasoning is now playing a major role in service-dominant logic (Brodie & Loebler, 2018). Another research stream built upon the CMP research to develop an instrument to measure companies’ use of purchasing practices and identified four configurations of practices ranging from transactional over interpersonal dyadic and interpersonal network to integrative relational configurations (Lindgreen et al., 2013).

As a final thought, one must also consider the substantial role of the journal editor(s) in supporting emerging research streams. An editor may on occasion see some promise in a radical new research study that has received reject reviews due to its being “too different” or “too challenging.” The editor may overrule the reviewers and make a major revision recommendation instead, thereby giving the author with the promising, but radical new research idea another chance to make a contribution. This editorial decision requires vision or insight on the part of the editor and is highly idiosyncratic. If the paper has been rejected from several A journals for being “too different,” it might be a good idea for the author to try a good lower level journal. The editor may be willing to take a rider on a paper if the editor is convinced of the promise in the research, and especially so if the editor is looking to boost the profile of the journal. After all, not all of the influential articles in marketing or other business disciplines were published in the A journals. If anything, the highest-profile journals may sometimes be quite conservative in their selection decisions, depending on the editor at that given time.

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The editorial is part in a series of the co-editors-in-chiefs’ reflections on important aspects of planning, undertaking, and publishing research in business-to-business marketing management, reflections that should help prospective researchers eventually to see their findings published in *Industrial Marketing Management* and other top journals (LaPlaca, Lindgreen, & Vanhamme, 2018, 2019; Lindgreen & Di Benedetto, 2018; Lindgreen et al., 2019a). Sometimes, these pieces are co-written with other authors to get the broadest possible perspective on a given topic to the benefit of prospective authors.

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Walter, A., Ritter, T. & Gemünden, H.-G. (Eds.) (1997). *Relationships and Networks in International Markets*. London: Pergamon Press.

Walter, A., Ritter, T. & Gemünden, H.-G. (2001). Value creation in buyer-seller relationships: theoretical considerations and empirical results from a supplier's perspective. Industrial Marketing Management, *30*(4), pp. 365–377.

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Appendix 1 IMP Research: selected books and journal articles and number of citations

Author(s), Title, and Details	Number of citations
Anderson, J., Håkansson, H., & Johanson, J. (1994). Dyadic business relationships within a business network context. *Journal of Marketing*, *58*(4), pp. 1–15.	3,078
Bengtsson, M. & Kock, S. (2000). 'Coopetition' in business networks: to cooperate and compete simultaneously. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *29*(5), pp. 411–426.	1,995
Ford, D. (1980). The development of buyer- seller relationships in industrial markets. *European Journal of Marketing*, *14*(5/6), pp. 339–353.	1,748
Ford, D. (Ed.) (1990). *Understanding Business Markets: Interactions, Relationships and Networks*. London: Academic Press.	1,506
Ford, D., Gadde, L.-E., Håkansson, H., Lundgren, A., Snehota, I., Turnbull, P., & Wilson, D. (1998). *Managing Business Relationships*. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.	2,298
Håkansson, H. (Ed.) (1982). *International Marketing and Purchasing: An Interaction Approach*. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons.	4,164
Håkansson, H. (1987). *Industrial Technological Development: A Network Approach*. London: Croom Helm.	2,067
Håkansson, H. (1989). *Corporate Technological Behaviour: Co-operation and Networks*. London: Routledge.	1,301
Håkansson, H. & Ford, D. (2002). How should companies interact in business networks? *Journal of Business Research*, *55*(2), 133–139.	1,725
Håkansson, H. & Johanson, J. (1992). A model of industrial networks. In Axelsson B. & Easton, G. (Eds.). *Industrial Networks: A New View of Reality*. London: Routledge, pp. 28 – 34.	1,284
Håkansson, H. & Snehota, I. (1989). No business is an island: the network concept of business strategy. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *5*(3), pp. 187–200.	2,130
Johanson, J. & Mattsson, L.-G. (1987). Interorganizational relations in industrial systems: a network approach compared with the transaction-cost approach. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 17(1), pp. 34–48.	1,672
Johanson J. & Mattsson L.-G. (2015). Internationalisation in industrial systems: a network approach. In Forsgren, M., Holm, U., & Johanson, J. (Eds). Knowledge, Networks and Power. London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp 111-132.	2,824
Snehota, I. & Håkansson, H. (1995). *Developing Relationships in Business Networks*. London: Routledge.	4,812
Walter, A., Ritter, T., & Gemünden, H.-G. (2001). Value creation in buyer-seller relationships: theoretical considerations and empirical results from a supplier's perspective. Industrial Marketing Management, *30*(4), pp. 365–377.	1,166
Wilson, D.T. (1995). An integrated model of buyer-seller relationships. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *55*(2), pp. 133–139.	3,182

Appendix 2 CMP Research: Journal articles and number of citations

Author(s), title, and Details	Number of citations
Brodie, R.J., Coviello, N.E., Brooks, R.W., & Little, V. (1997). Towards a paradigm shift in marketing? An examination of current marketing practices. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *13*(5), pp. 383–406.	544
Brodie, R.J., Winklhofer, H., Coviello, N.E., & Johnston, W.J. (2007). Is e-marketing coming of age? An examination of the penetration of e-marketing and firm performance. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *21*(1), pp. 2–21.	224
Brookes, R.W., Brodie R.J., Coviello, N.E., & Palmer R.A. (2004). How managers perceive the impacts of information technologies on contemporary practices: reinforcing enhancing or transforming. *Journal of Relationship Marketing Management*, *3*(4), 7–26.	58
Brady, M., Saren, M., & Tzokas, N. (2002). Integrating information technology into marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *18*(5/6), pp. 555–578.	152
Coviello, N.E. & Brodie, R.J. (1998). From transaction to relationship marketing: an investigation of managerial perceptions and practices. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, *6*(3), pp. 171–186.	339
Coviello, N.E. & Brodie, R.J. (2001). Contemporary marketing practices of consumer and business-to-business firms: how different are they. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, *16*(5), pp. 382–400.	188
Coviello, N.E., Brodie, R.J., Brookes, R.W., & Palmer, R.A. (2003). Assessing the role of e-marketing in contemporary marketing practice. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *9*(7), pp. 857 – 881.	58
Coviello, N.E., Brodie, R.J., Danaher, P.J., & Johnston, W.J. (2002). How firms relate to their markets: An empirical examination of contemporary marketing practice. *Journal of Marketing*, *66*(3), pp. 33–46.	660
Coviello, N.E., Brodie, R.H., & Munro, H.J. (1997). Understanding contemporary marketing: development of a classification scheme. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *13*(6), pp. 501–522.	660
Coviello, N.E., Brodie, R.J., & Munro, H.J. (2000). An investigation of marketing practice by firm size. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *15*(5/6), pp. 523–545.	343
Coviello, N.E., Milley, R., & Marcolin, B. (2001). Understanding IT-enabled interactivity in contemporary marketing. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *15*(4), pp. 18–33.	245
Coviello, N.E., Winklhofer, H., & Hamilton, K. (2006). Marketing practices and performance of small service firms: an examination in the tourism accommodation sector. *Journal of Service Research*, *9*(1), pp. 38–58.	123
Lindgreen, A., Davis, R. Brodie, R.J., & Buchanan-Oliver, M. (2000). Pluralism in contemporary marketing practices. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *18*(6), pp. 294–308.	123
Lindgreen, A., Palmer, R., & Vanhamme, J. (2004). Contemporary marketing practice: theoretical propositions and practical implications. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *22*(6), pp. 673–692.	105
Lindgreen, A., Palmer, R., Vanhamme, J., & Wouters, J.P.M. (2006). A relationship-management assessment tool: questioning, identifying, and prioritizing critical aspects of customer relationships. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *35*(1), pp. 57–71.	209

Lindgreen, A. Palmer, R. Wetzels, M., & Antioco, M. (2008). Do different marketing practices require different leadership styles? An exploratory study. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *24*(1), pp. 114–26.	53
Pels, J. (1999). Exchange relationships in consumer markets. *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 33(1/2), pp. 19–37.	172
Pels, J., Brodie, R.J., & Johnston, W.J. (2004). Benchmarking business-to-business practices in emerging and developed economies: Argentina compared to the USA and New Zealand. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 19(6), **19**(6), 386–396.	51
Pels, J., Coviello, N.E., & Brodie, R.J. (2000). Integrating transactional and relational marketing exchange: a pluralistic perspective. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, *8*(3), pp. 11–20.	98
Wagner, R (2005). Contemporary marketing practices in Russia. *European Journal of Marketing*, *39*(1/2), pp. 199–215.	71