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## Three decades in the making: The evolution of entrepreneurial marketing

### 1. Introduction

Three decades ago, a small but dedicated group of scholars with an interest in the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface organised the first meeting of the Research Symposium at the University of Illinois at Chicago, with the endorsement of the American Marketing Association (AMA). The discourse at the subsequent annual meetings regularly held in the United States with the occasional symposium in Europe and South America evolved from definitions and tactics to embracing the wider role of marketing in entrepreneurship and vice-versa, and later to investigating how an entrepreneurial mind-set can help in marketing decision-making. In addition to the strong following in North America, the “Interface” attracted established and emerging scholars around the world, particularly in Europe, UK, Australasia and South America. There have been numerous Special EM Sessions in various international conferences that led to special issues and books.

The motivation for this special issue stemmed from the co-editors and the EM research community’s desire to capture the advances in EM research as it celebrates 30 years of coming into being. We feature how the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface has evolved over the past thirty years. Each decade is characterised by the vision and leadership of distinguished scholars and their influence on the development and growth of the discipline. The first decade (1987–1997) was characterised by founding steps with scholars from both disciplines finding a home to pursue the debate about this unique interface. The second decade (1998–2008), best described as adolescence, saw the emergence of discourse on EM and SME marketing, publications of research approaches and a strong international collaborative leadership from US, Europe and UK scholars (Gerry Hills, Claes Hultman and David Carson) with the backing of an international Advisory Board. The annual “Blue Book” containing the proceedings from the UIC symposium was the official repository of EM conference papers. The interface came of age in the third decade (2009–2019) that saw a growth in dedicated journal special issues as more and more scholars were doing EM research (see [Morrish, 2011](#); [Sethna, 2013](#); [Sethna, Jones, & Harrigan, 2013](#); [O’Cass & Morrish, 2016](#); [Crick, 2018](#)). These special issues and publications ran different themes that highlight how widely EM has been adopted. It was also in 2009 that the Gerald E. Hills Award was first presented and it has continued every year.

As the interface enters its fourth decade, and EM enters a cross-disciplinary era, this special issue sets out challenges and opportunities for scholars. The special issue has been specially curated to cover a range of EM applications that we anticipate will become an extremely valuable resource for scholars and practitioner alike. In this compilation, scholars will find an exciting collection that covers many facets of business where entrepreneurial approaches enable us to understand the marketing complexities of the 21st century. We have curated the 14

papers into five key topics: *EM and Performance*, *Environmental Dynamics*, *Market and Customer Dynamics*, *Firm-Level Decisions and Effectuation* and *Into the Future*. The papers also use a wide selection of exciting methodologies that will cater to both quantitative, qualitative and mixed method scholars. The EM beast has truly been freed. It is no longer limited to SMEs. It is now a strategic approach that is used by corporations, institutions, governments and even clubs both at the micro and macro-levels not only to improve performance but also to explain and gain competitive advantage over those that adhere to traditional marketing.

### 2. Entrepreneurial marketing and performance

The issue of performance has always dominated the discourse in business publications. In this light, how does EM contribute to firm performance? [Morrish \(2011\)](#) proposed that EM is a strategy for the 21st century and a plethora of literature has linked strategy and performance at different levels. The lead article in this special issue synthesizes the literature on EM and organizational performance, hence confirming EM as a strategy. [Alqahtani and Uslay \(Entrepreneurial marketing and firm performance: Synthesis and conceptual development\)](#) establish EM as a key construct that positively influences performance and highlighting the moderating effect of network structure (i.e., size, diversity, and strength), environmental variables (i.e., market turbulence, technological turbulence, competitive intensity, supplier power, and market growth), and firm size. They offer propositions in support of these relationships.

As performance takes centre-stage, strategic posture ([Day, 1994](#); [Jaworski, Kohli, & Sahay, 2000](#)) dictates its strategic direction. Market driving is characterised by entrepreneurial approaches. [Eggers, Niemand, Kraus and Breier \(Developing a scale for entrepreneurial marketing: Revealing its inner frame and prediction of performance\)](#) investigate marketing programs that work under resource constraints, a condition where EM is often applied. In their large study, they develop an EM scale and report on its effect on performance, finding that three correlating EM dimensions: change-driving, bootstrapping and risk-taking are highlighted to have a positive effect on performance. Researchers will find this study useful as they dig deeper into how entrepreneurial market-driving and customer-focused marketing programs work under conditions of resource constraints.

### 3. Environmental dynamics

Both lead papers refer to the EM approach during turbulent conditions and environment. Nothing could be more turbulent than when an entrepreneur’s personal and business world is shaken to the core, such as during natural disasters. As the world is affected by more and more

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natural disasters, research has understandably focused more on communities and population well-being. Natural disasters are often unexpected and the damage they bring to business can range from minor to extreme. Disaster preparedness can go a long way towards quick recovery should natural disasters strike and that holds even more true for business. Our third article investigates how EM is enacted in post-disaster settings to facilitate speedy business recovery. Morrish and Jones (*Post-disaster business recovery: An entrepreneurial marketing perspective*) provide an EM Post-Disaster Business Recovery (EMPDBR) Framework that highlights opportunity-seeking, resource-organising, creating customer value and accepting risk (ORCAR) as concepts that are markedly different in the post-disaster context. They also offer a new EM definition in the light of their study.

While natural disasters are controllable and unpredictable, there are environmental elements that are uncontrollable but predictable such as population aging. This is the focus of Matsuno and Kohlbacher's paper (*Proactive marketing response to population aging: The roles of capabilities and commitment of firms*) that investigates firm strategic flexibility and explorative and exploitative capabilities as critical capabilities and as fundamental ingredients of entrepreneurial marketing in situations where firms have direct influence. They test a model that explains proactive marketing responses to population aging on a large sample from Japan finding that a company's strategic flexibility not only serves as a direct driver to both explorative and exploitative capabilities and proactive marketing response, but also imparts a far-reaching indirect effect on the marketing response. Further, they assert that organizational commitment to the population aging issue is a mediator between exploitative capability and marketing responses.

As we have established, the external environment such as natural disasters and population aging have a strong influence on entrepreneurial marketing. In the next paper, Peterson (*Modeling country entrepreneurial activity to inform entrepreneurial marketing research*) investigates EM as a strategic response to environmental change and turbulence applying two structural equation modeling approaches (e.g. component-based PLS-SEM and covariance-based CB-SEM). The paper takes a macro-level view using data from the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. In here we glean into the perceptions of potential entrepreneurs from 65 countries about entrepreneurship's positive influence on entrepreneurship activity. An interesting finding here is how entrepreneurship is not influenced by constructs of the entrepreneurial ecosystem representing institutions of society, and would therefore call for more insights into the effectiveness of government programs and policies.

While we contemplate on the above issue, Ali, Kelly and Levie's paper (*Market-driven entrepreneurship and institutions*) direct our attention to how particular conditions in the external environment are associated with market-driven entrepreneurship focussing on innovative start-up or early-stage business activity. They find that environmental conditions affect entrepreneurial activity not only in both opportunity-driven and innovative entrepreneurship, but also in existing organizations to include corporate entrepreneurship. This investigation into 44 economies show high rates of both innovative entrepreneurship and corporate entrepreneurship in economies that have basic institutional conditions and efficiently functioning markets. However, they note that external contexts that foster innovation are negatively linked to both opportunity-driven and innovative entrepreneurship, while exhibiting a positive association with corporate entrepreneurship.

#### 4. Market and customer dynamics

Customers are the staple in markets and they take centre stage in a few of our special issue papers. In their study of large manufacturing firms comprising of a combination of service, functional and general management, Morgan, Anokhin and Wincent (*New service development by manufacturing firms: Effects of customer participation under environmental contingencies*) explore how the effectiveness of new service

development strategies are enhanced by customer participation. They found this to hold particularly in environments where customer needs have low competitive intensity and high complexity. While largely consistent with the new product development research, their study highlights the importance of customer participation in the new service development and offers novel insights into the role of environmental contingencies in harnessing the input of customers.

The next paper confirms customer orientation as a major tenet of the entrepreneurial marketing concept, especially as the concept applies to small- and medium-sized minority businesses. In the context of enclave theory, Peterson and Crittenden (*Exploring customer orientation as a marketing strategy of Mexican-American entrepreneurs*) present exploratory research on the customer orientation of Mexican-American entrepreneurs, firm performance, and immigrant generation. While they found a discernible percentage of Mexican-American entrepreneurs, firms they surveyed followed a co-ethnic enclave customer orientation marketing strategy. The most common entrepreneurial marketing strategy observed was oriented toward a mixture of Hispanic and non-Hispanic customers. Their study highlighted the difference between first generation Mexican-American entrepreneurs from second- and later-generation Mexican-American entrepreneurs in terms of the extent to which they employed co-ethnic customer and employee strategies as well as their self-assessed business skills but not across customer orientation strategies, immigrant generation and other personal and firm characteristics.

One cannot talk about customers and markets in the contemporary era without any reference to new technological trends. Fink, Koller, Gartner, Floh and Harms (*Effective entrepreneurial marketing on Facebook – A longitudinal study*) report on their investigation into the long-term effects of EM on social media. The unique reach, frequency, and speed of social media communication offer opportunities for EM strategies that leverage the power of communities, especially when they are combined with traditional approaches such as celebrity endorsement. They employed structural equation modeling to test the long-term effect of Facebook-based celebrity endorsement on purchase intention of 234 Facebook fan community members and argue that this relationship is mediated by a sponsor's brand image and moderated by brand differentiation. This warns that the rapid rate of change may threaten the effects of social media investments in EM thus making them only short-lived.

#### 5. Firm-level decisions and effectuation

A comprehensive special issue on EM would not be complete if it did not include its impact at the firm-level. While entrepreneurial decisions are made at the individual level, their firms are significantly affected by these decisions. The next three papers have a common theme not only because they are firm-level but with their use of effectuation as a lens through which decisions are made.

One decision that comes to the fore is internationalisation. While many entrepreneurial growth strategies often involve incremental expansion into international markets, some firms are designed to rapidly internationalise. This strategy may not always work and the firm then decides to discontinue overseas sales and re-assess their strategies before resuming. Crick, Crick and Chaudry (*Entrepreneurial marketing decision-making in rapidly internationalising and de-internationalising start-up firms*) investigated 16 such rapidly internationalising UK start-up firms before planned re-internationalisation occurred. With reference to EM dimensions, they found that while the management teams were proactive, took risks, exploited innovation and engaged in opportunity-driven and resource leveraging behaviour, creating adequate 'customer value' did not occur. They propose that in particular contexts, certain facets of an effectuation approach outweigh others and the notion of 'affordable losses' is viewed in both financial and non-financial terms.

Shi and Miles (*Non-effectual, non-customer effectual, or customer-effectual: A conceptual exploration of the applicability of the effectuation logic*

in startup brand identity construction) observe that EM has enjoyed many milestones in its acceptance as an area of marketing and is now advancing towards theory construction. Their conceptual paper highlights the uniqueness of start-up brand identity construction, which therefore merits EM research attention. They explore the applicability of the effectuation logic and argue that the application of effectuation logic to start-ups' brand identity construction depends on the pre-existence of a market or a brand community.

The next paper by Renton and Richard (*Entrepreneurship in marketing: Socializing partners for brand governance in EM firms*) looks at brand governance and uses effectuation principles to explore the use of the relational norms within two established EM firm cases, considering these as mechanisms to socialise their partners. These firms actively build online and offline partnerships with a range of stakeholders. They examine how these firms vary their emphasis on trust, selection, solidarity and information exchange in line with the nature and importance of the partnership. Further they investigate how each construct contributes to opportunity exploration as well as how flexibility enables the exploitation of opportunities.

## 6. Into the future

A logical next step in the way a discipline is embraced by academia is how the concept is taught, preached, broadcast and spread to future scholars. Thus research finds its way into the academic curriculum. So what should EM education look like? In moving into the future, we share Gilmore, McAuley, Miles and Pattinson's views on EM education (*Four questions of entrepreneurial marketing education: Perspectives of university educators*). The authors observe a growing interest in EM from policymakers, educators, organizations, and individuals, in tandem with a desire to enhance growth potential within regional and national economies. Their review and reflection on the design and delivery of entrepreneurial marketing (EM) education in universities also include how activities and processes have been adopted by many entrepreneurial firms across industries as diverse as agriculture, tourism, and engineering. They highlight four key questions posed to an international forum of EM university educators: (1) what should be taught; (2) how it should be taught; (3) where it should be taught; and (4) who should teach EM. The responses were incorporated into a reflection of the nature of EM education and the implications for educators.

The final paper in this special issue takes us full circle and encourages scholars to reflect on the past as they look into the future. With reference to the original mission of the "Charleston Summit" – to create a research framework for the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface, Hansen, Deacon, Pascal and Sethna (*The future is in the past: A framework for the Marketing-Entrepreneurship Interface (MEI)*) develop an overdue unified framework by reviewing milestones in the 30 year history of conceptualizations of the MEI. They update the 4-perspectives view proposed by Hansen and Eggers (2010) particularly retaining the first perspective. Their conceptualization of the MEI creates a vast array of suggestions for future research that emerge from the framework established and emerging MEI scholars.

## 7. Conclusion

As the interface enters its fourth decade, and EM is embraced by a

post-disciplinary era, this special issue sets out challenges and opportunities for scholars in the discipline. Current and emerging themes from recent EM symposia, conferences, special sessions and books including papers in this special issue include:

- Further development of EM Scales to measure EM activities and performance
- Development of EM words, terminology and vocabulary
- Further development and operationalisation of Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO)
- Entrepreneurial/EM Ecosystems and Platforms
- EM, Innovation and Digital technologies including Big Data, Analytics and Martech
- EM in Macromarketing contexts
- EM and Social Implications and Issues, including Social Entrepreneurship
- Developing EM datasets and research project templates
- Theory advancement in EM and into Marketing

There are many avenues and pathways now available for exploring, developing and sharing knowledge, capabilities and skills around the Marketing and Entrepreneurship Interface. The special issue editors are proud to offer this collection of manuscripts in the advancement of the interface and encourage colleagues to continue disseminating their work and help us understand EM and its influence on the world we live in.

We hope you enjoy this special issue.

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