
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Kevin Voges earned his PhD in Psychology at Massey University, New Zealand. He has taught research methods courses in psychology, education, business, and marketing for the past 25 years. His research interests include the application of concepts and techniques from computational intelligence to business. He has published in psychology, sport marketing, consumer behaviour, and computational intelligence, and has recently co-edited a book *Business Applications and Computational Intelligence*, which was published by Idea Group.

H.P. (Herb) de Vries is a Senior Lecturer in Management at the University of Canterbury. He has recently completed a PhD, reporting on an extensive study of immigrant entrepreneurship. His research interests include entrepreneurship, SMEs and family businesses. He has published in applied management, case study, and entrepreneurship and small business journals.

Marketing is often considered to be the exclusive domain of large corporations who can afford full time marketing directors or departments. However in most countries, Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) make up the bulk of the economy. For example, SMEs account for almost 97% of all business in New Zealand. SMEs are typically personally owned and managed, and the managers tend to be multiskilled rather than experts in any particular area. SMEs often do not lack drive, talent, ideas or products, but operate under time and money constraints, and are often challenged by the daunting task of marketing their company, products and services in an increasingly competitive market. Few if any, have specialist marketing staff or particular expertise in marketing.

With these considerations in mind, this special issue on marketing in SMEs is timely. The papers presented in this special issue reflect the variety of interest areas and issues, industries, countries, and research methodologies current in the ongoing study of the interface between marketing and business activities in SMEs.

Keith Perks and Paurav Shukla, both from the Brighton Business School, report on an exploratory study using grounded theory and multiple case methodologies. They examine perceptions of marketing and marketing practices in medium-sized firms in France, Germany and Italy, in both conventional and high-tech industries. They find that these entrepreneurial firms have an exceptional understanding of their markets, enabling them to adapt to changes in the environment. The firms are driven by the identification of opportunities that assist them to form strong relationships with their clients. The uniqueness of the study is that it examines cross-cultural and cross-industry comparisons, and suggests that managers in these types of firms would benefit from focusing on an industry rather than a country context.

Tobias Kollmann and Matthias Häsel, of the E-Business and E-Entrepreneurship Research Group at the University of Duisburg-Essen, present a conceptual overview of the integration of online and offline business models of both e-entrepreneurs and traditional SMEs. They argue that collaborative concepts represent an ideal way of meeting the requirements of the link between the physical and electronic economies. This cross-channel cooperation enables firms to integrate online and offline business models without extending themselves beyond their own means or competencies. They examine the rationale behind these collaborative strategies, propose a classification system, and discuss implications for both e-entrepreneurs and managers of traditional SMEs.

Christian Felzensztein, of the Universidad Austral de Chile, reports on an exploratory study using semi-structured interviews in small firms operating in the salmon farming industry in Scotland and Chile. He studies the factors that influence the development of marketing externalities among cluster-based small firms, and explores the development of joint marketing activities and alliances between the SMEs. The findings suggest that social networking has a greater influence than geographic proximity in facilitating interfirm cooperation in marketing activities. In addition, specific regional economies may have specific characteristics that affect cooperative behaviour and these may differ from those found within the country's general context.

Călin Gurău, of the Montpellier Business School, identifies and analyses strategic marketing options adopted by biopharmaceutical enterprises in the UK. The study and application of modern genetic engineering processes has led to biopharmaceutical firms comprising one of the most dynamic industry sectors developed over the last few decades. The complexity and the unpredictability of the competitive environment in this sector require firms to maintain flexibility in order to adapt to the dynamic evolution of the market. Using both secondary and primary data, Gurău synthesises research findings into a dynamic model for representing a firm's evolution in terms of strategic choice.

Jenny Poolton, Hossam Ismail, Iain Reid and Ivan Arokiam, from the Agility Centre at the University of Liverpool Management School demonstrate how an agile marketing approach can be used in SMEs. The agility strategic framework was developed specifically to assist SMEs to make the most of opportunities that occur in the marketplace at short notice. The framework provides an approach to operational and marketing vulnerabilities that promote both strategic and operational growth. One objective is to provide an approach whereby SMEs can make use of marketing tools and techniques that are normally only used by large firms. They demonstrate how this marketing agility approach can operate in practice through a case study analysis of a UK-based plastics manufacturer.

Kayhan Tajeddini and Myfanwy Trueman from Bradford University, School of Management, investigate the impact of customer orientation and innovativeness on the performance of small-sized service retailers. Data for this study were collected through personal interviews from 174 Swiss small-sized service retailers to examine the interrelation between innovativeness, customer orientation and service business performance dimensions (*i.e.*, profit goal achievement, sales goal achievement and ROI achievement).

Alkis Thrassou and Demetris Vrontis from the University of Nicosia focus on small firm construction consultants of Cyprus and their limitations and potentialities regarding internationalisation. Findings indicate a need for multiple marketing strategies using standardisation and adaptation in parallel, and depending on the country focus, the specific target segments, as well as the choice of potential 'vehicle' companies/organisations towards market penetration.

It is hoped that the papers in this special issue are of benefit and interest to both practitioners and academic researchers alike.