

# Guest editorial: Industrial marketing in healthcare

Various external conditions are making the health-care (HC) industry very complex in the third millennium. Some of these conditions are, for instance, the rapid aging of the world population and the difficult access to medical care for some social groups because of more stringent budget-driven constraints. Despite such issues, institutional and private players must ensure to citizens' security, dignity and full participation in societal benefits. Health organizations must redefine their strategies and even their practices to face effectively the new opportunities about managing the access, value and sustainability of care (Elton and O'Riordan, 2016). The research literature on industrial marketing in all its different forms presently still occupies a crucial role in the works among academic scholars.

In the last ten years, literature largely reports how pharmaceutical companies had to deeply change their business models and their business relationships to survive (Pilon and Hadjielias, 2017; Spurrell *et al.*, 2019). Another evidence is the recent incoming and diffusion of market access approach has created a new opportunity for international firms involved in the HC context (Schivone and Simoni, 2019). Disruptive innovation in HC is an important way to face these issues and other industry problems and challenges (e.g. regulations) (Hwang and Christensen, 2008). For these reasons, industrial relations in these contexts could involve a series of special activities such as pricing, products, services and information sharing that allow a business to plan prolific long-term relationships with strategically important customers (Lancioni, 2005; Sakari Makkonen *et al.*, 2014; Pilon and Hadjielias, 2017). However, industrial marketers of HC actors (hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, research and development (R&D) centers, institutional agencies and so on) can play an important role in this game (Pilon and Hadjielias, 2017; Schivone and Simoni, 2019).

This special issue of the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* is specifically focused on the debate about the main criticalities of industrial marketing in HC systems and organizations. All the selected papers have explored new knowledge about the main industrial opportunities, issues and challenges (e.g. negotiations, pricing and reimbursement, supply-chain management) that lead health organizations and systems have to face to create (or destroy) value.

The article by João J. Ferreira, Pedro M. Veiga, Cristina I. Fernandes, Sascha Kraus ("B2B marketing strategies in healthcare management: intellectual structure and research trends") shows an intellectual mapping of the scientific literature on marketing strategies in the context of business-

to-business (B2B) in the HC sector. Based on bibliometric techniques of cocitation and cluster analysis, it was possible to identify and systematize the main contributions of this area of knowledge in four approaches: decision-making strategies, relational marketing, cocreation and new challenges. Furthermore, a future research agenda for each of these areas was suggested.

The article by Madanaguli, A. T., Dhir, A., Talwar, S., Singh, G., & Escobar, O. ("Business to business (B2B) alliances in the healthcare industry: a review of research trends and pertinent issues") presents one of the first domain level reviews of B2B relationships in the HC industry. The review aims to understand the prominent research themes with the intention of advancing future research questions and an integrated framework of the HC ecosystem. To this end, using a rigorous systematic review process, the authors identify 57 studies addressing issues of B2B relationships in HC. Through a manual qualitative content analysis, the review puts forward a bibliometric pattern analysis and a qualitative thematic analysis. The review recognizes the dominant role of journals like *Journal of Business and Industrial Management* and *Strategic Management Journal* in advancing this domain and notes an increasing trend of publications in the domain in the past decade. Following this, the authors embark on a qualitative thematic analysis that is focused on explicating the types of B2B relationships, their role in the HC value chain and issues associated with maintaining a B2B relationship in HC. Particularly, the authors delve into issues of trust and knowledge spillover in B2B relationships. The authors also highlight prominent research gaps and potential research questions arising from the gaps for each of the subthemes. The review concludes with a framework that explicates the complex nature of B2B relationships in the HC industry. Each individual relationships add up to become an ecosystem of interconnected HC and non-HC actors with each playing a unique role in the system.

The article by Olga Kokshagina, Joonas Keränen ("Institutionalizing value-based healthcare in a service system: a policy and document analysis over three decades") examines the evolution and institutionalization of value-based HC over a three-decade period in a specific HC system. Furthermore, through a longitudinal analysis, the study highlights the key phases, activities and goals involved in this transition, as well as the emerging opportunities and challenges for industrial marketers and sellers (and HC buyers).

The article by Judith Partouche-Sebban, Saeedeh Rezaee Vessal, Fabian Bernhard ("When co-creation pays off: the effect of co-creation on well-being, work performance and team resilience") provides an overview of the HC industry that is facing several changes (such as aging process, pandemic recovery, technological innovations and cybersecurity, changes in government regulations, new patient expectations and needs and higher considerations toward the patient experience) that imply new challenges for medical organizations (Acosta *et al.*, 2015). Because of their impact on society's well-being, it is fundamental to understand how these organizations and their members overcome crises and adversities from an individual (member) and a collective (organizational) perspective (Salanova *et al.*, 2012). In this context, this study conducted in the oncology sector shows the main positive effects of value cocreation among HC professionals on members' well-being, work performance and team resilience and also highlights its dark

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Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing  
37/8 (2022) 1577–1579  
© Emerald Publishing Limited [ISSN 0885-8624]  
[DOI 10.1108/JBIM-06-2022-566]

side. Results emphasize the importance of the cooperative value of care as a way to enhance strategic advantages for HC organizations and their members (Jack and Phillips, 1993).

The article by Md Kamal Hossain, Vikas Thakur, Sachin K. Mangla (“Modeling the emergency health-care supply chains: responding to the COVID-19 pandemic”) offers insights on the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic that has caused increased HC supply chain (HCSC) uncertainties and disruptions. The disruptions in the HCSC have posed themselves as a major challenge to HC facilities, affecting the adequate delivery of HC services. The paper has focused on modeling the enablers of an emergency HCSC during the COVID-19 outbreak and highlighting the interrelationships in conformance to the existing HC market. The enablers of HCSC operating in emergency health crises have been unearthed through literature support and experts’ opinion and were analyzed using the total interpretive structural modeling and cross-impact matrix-multiplication (MICMAC) methodology. The results of the study have found a hierarchical model consisting of seven levels depending on the driving and dependence power of the enablers and upon further analysis using the MICMAC have categorized them into dependent, independent, autonomous and linkage groups. The findings suggest immediate intervention by the government and law guarantee as the most vital and fundamental enablers to bring an end to the chaotic situations to ensure effective and efficient functioning of HCSC. The study would facilitate HC professionals and academic researchers to execute the model developed in the study to enhance as well as promote the resiliency of the HCSC during the COVID-19 crisis.

The article by Song Ying, Daniele Leone, Antonella Francesca Cicchiello, Antonella Francesca Cicchiello, Amirreza Kazemikhasragh (“Industrial dynamics and economic growth in health-care context. Evidence from selected OECD countries”) provides interesting evidence from selected OECD countries about the industrial dynamics in the HC sector and their impact on economic growth and health status. Based on panel regressions, the paper measures the impact of the HC industry in terms of health status, health expenditure, sales on pharmaceutical products, the number of persons working in HC and the coverage by private health insurance. Finally, the article offers various implications, in particular for health policymakers who address all the social and individual determinants of health.

The article by Giuseppe Festa, Ashustosh Kolte, Maria Rosaria Carli, and Matteo Rossi (“Envisioning the challenges of the pharmaceutical sector in the Indian health-care industry: a scenario analysis”) focuses on the analysis of the state of the art and most of all, the prospective trajectories of development of the Indian pharmaceutical industry, which is one of the most relevant at global level. Moving from an overall examination of the characteristics of the sector, adopting descriptive and inferential investigations, the research has developed a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis, focusing on the profiles of major interest in the industrial marketing perspective. Traditional focus on generic drugs (realizing large economies of scale), requirement to respect the drug price control order about price ceilings, consequent major openness to patents (with

related investments in R&D) and interest from the international competition for the vast Indian population have emerged as the most critical aspects. In this respect, appropriate industrial marketing strategies are required to govern and manage the evolution of the Indian pharmaceutical scenario.

The article by Asuncion Hernandez-Fernandez, Ines Kuster-Boluda, Natalia Vila-Lopez (“Nutritional information labels and health claims to promote healthy consumption”) furnishes insights on specific individual psychological characteristics in the marketing field. Based on a mixed methodological approach (qualitative and quantitative), the paper explores if both elements (attitudes toward nutritional labels and credibility from health claims) improve (or not) food product attitudes and then its purchase intention.

The article by Francesco Paolone, Nicola Cucari, Jintao Wu, Riccardo Tiscini (“How do ESG pillars impact firms’ marketing performance? a configurational analysis in the pharmaceutical sector”) explores the implementation of CSR strategies which is important for HC-based industries, and this is especially true in the pharmaceutical sectors, where wide-ranging forms of CSR actions can go as far as to suggest modifications to the very business model. In addition, an investigation of the individual influences of environmental, social and governance pillars on the performance of the firms is needed, considering that the impact on each pillar of ESG depends on the sensitivity of an industry. For this reason, using a configurational approach, Paolone *et al.* provide new evidence for the link between firms’ marketing performance and CSR practices. They offer support for testing the relevance of ESG pillars by identifying two causal paths that lead to higher marketing performance. Doing this, the study contributes to the thinking by identifying how ESG pillars can affect performance, presenting new results that help to clarify not only the individual role of single pillars but also how their interrelationships predict marketing performance. Specifically, results support the need for strong and effective corporate governance in the pharmaceutical sector. Promoting good governance in the pharmaceutical sector is needed, and it necessitates a long-term strategy and a transparency.

The article by Sylvaine Castellano, Insaf Khelladi, Chiraz Aouina Mejri (“Communicating customer value proposition in the French pharmaceutical industry. The case of OTC drugs”) explores how pharmacies disseminate their customer value proposition (CVP) in a multistakeholder ecosystem. The authors analyzed the pharmacists’ perspective and focuses on the communication gap among different stakeholders (i.e. business-to-consumer and B2B) of the CVP.

The article by Unai Arzubia, Talal Ali Mohamad, Francesco Schiavone and Junsong Chen (“Exploring success factors of marketing in private HC organizations: Evidence from Lebanon”) explores the marketing success factors of private HC companies and examines how these factors evolve depending on different business phases. Building on the case of an international private HC company operating in Lebanon, the authors offer novel insights about how to evolve from more traditional business models to disruptive yet very attractive personalized services with high-quality standards. In particular, this study sheds light about how to successfully deal with different phases such as founding a company and positioning the brand; selecting branding strategies for

customer attraction and loyalty; matching customers and products; reinforcing the brand status; and designing and executing an internationalization process.

The article by Emanuele Lettieri, Laura Marone, Nicola Spezia, Ilenia Gheno, Cinzia Mambretti, Giuseppe Andreoni (“The market access of innovation in health care: insights from EC-funded research”) offers new insight to further the debate on market access of innovations in the HC by investing the case of EU-funded research projects. Innovations that stem out of these pan-European consortia of public and private organizations often fail the product–market fit and get no access to the HC market. The authors theorize a new framework – namely, the Exploitation/Dissemination Canvas – to enable these consortia exploiting the most promising emerging innovations by aligning exploitation, dissemination and communication activities. The engagement of the most critical stakeholders can help improving the market–product fit. This framework might be generalized to markets such as HC that are regulated, professionally championed and knowledge intensive.

The different topics under investigation show how big the impact of industrial dynamics in the HC industry is and how complex the investigation of its various challenges has become.

This special issue welcomed new research issues and business problems faced by the HC players. We collected papers that were able to propose new B2B practices and models implementable by HC systems, institutions and organizations. This issue plays an important role for future search for new industrial marketing tools, practices and models for managing the complexity of the HC system and services to support value cocreation.

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## Further reading

- Sakari Makkonen, H. and Johnston, W.J. (2014), “Innovation adoption and diffusion in business-to-business marketing”, *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 324–331.

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