Improving relevance in B2B research: Analysis and recommendations

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<u>Abstract</u>

Purpose - The purpose of the study is to identify and discuss critical aspects of the academic/practitioner gap and suggest how to make marketing research more relevant.

Design/methodology/approach – The study uses data from an earlier study of eight qualitative interviews conducted with B2B marketing practitioners and from an earlier quantitative study among 128 academics and 510 marketing research practitioners. The data are re-analyzed for this article.

Findings – Results show that academics and practitioners agree that academic research should be of more practical value. However, their priorities differ. For academics publishing in refereed journals is the first priority and influencing practice is of much lower priority, while practitioners are not interested in the methodological and theoretical advances of marketing research; their priority is to satisfy day-to-day practical needs. Hence, practitioners have no interest in academic journals. The academic reward system tends to reinforce this divide since academic career progression depends substantially on the production of refereed journal articles.

Research limitations/implications – Much prior consideration has been given to how academic journals can be made more relevant to practitioners, which is a desirable goal. However, a more fruitful approach for B2B academics would be to embrace new technologies such as blogging and social media in order to reach practitioners through their preferred channels. If greater relevance is to be achieved, then consideration needs to be given to the views of doctoral students, and to doctoral training processes in B2B marketing.

Practical implications –The study provides academics with guidance concerning how marketing research can have a greater effect on the practice of marketing.

Originality/value – The study contributes to the research base by identifying and discussing critical aspects of the academic/practitioner gap. The study also offers insights into how managerial relevance in marketing research can, practically, be improved.

Keywords: Business-to-business marketing, marketing research, managerial relevance

Paper Type: Viewpoint

Introduction

The issue of the relevance of marketing research has been debated for many years, for example Dawson (1971, p71) discussed relevance at the macro (societal) and micro (managerial) levels, and contended that there was a "critical anomaly" in marketing that caused researchers to neglect "the most critical issues in the field". Recent years have seen a widespread debate about the relevance of academic research to business practice in marketing, with particular attention paid to Dawson's micro level, that is, managerial relevance. Jaworski (2011) has proposed that managerial relevance can be defined as the degree to which a specific manager in an organization perceives academic knowledge to aid his or her job-related thoughts or actions in the pursuit of organizational goals. Many academics view managerial relevance as the primary aim of academic research (Piercy, 2000, 2002; Tapp, 2004). On the other hand, others argue for a more balanced view, suggesting that practitioners may not be the main stakeholder in academic research (Easton, 2000; Grey, 2001). Indeed, Jaworski (2011) suggests that marketing academics can be divided into two camps: those who believe that managerial relevance is a *sine qua non* of academic research, and those who believe that managerial relevance is entirely optional and that striving for relevance may impair the search for scientific truth. Nevertheless, there is a clear consensus that marketing as a field of study is allied to the practice of marketing and, as a consequence, relevance to practitioners should be of considerable concern to academics (Baines *et al.,* 2009; Jaworski 2011). However, as a considerable weight of recently published research attests, evidence suggests that the relevance of academic research to marketing practice seems to be quite low and, quite possibly, declining (Piercy 2002; Brennan & Ankers 2004; Tapp 2004; Reibstein *et al.,* 2009).

The topic of the managerial relevance of academic research has been discussed in academic literature for many years, and yet it still remains a recurring theme in academic journals. Booker et al (2012) make the important point that it is not enough to do good and useful research and then publish the results in academic journals, citing the case of the discovery of anesthetic gas by Humphrey Davy; Davy published his findings in a scientific paper in 1800, but the gas was not introduced widely into medical and dental practice for 47 years. Specifically in the field of marketing, concern has been

expressed that in the quest for ever greater levels of scientific rigor other desirable characteristics of research studies, such as relevance, communicability and simplicity, have been downplayed (Lehmann et al 2011). Similarly, Yadav (2010) examined different characteristics and different categories of academic articles, concluding that conceptual articles could make at least as great a contribution to marketing practice as empirical articles. On the other hand Lilien (2011) concentrates on only one category of academic article—those concerning marketing decision models—and finds that while a number of such research projects have had a dramatic effect on practice, a great many more models have been produced that have had negligible practical impact. Lilien (2011) considers that a barrier to the adoption of marketing decision models is created by the mental models of managers, which are difficult and slow to change. Both Lilien (2011) and Roberts et al (2013) present process models for the adoption of ideas from academic research by marketing practitioners. While these models differ in detail, in general terms the "marketing science value chain" of Roberts et al (2013) and the "journey from knowledge to belief" found in Lilien's (2011) work set out a series of steps by which original scientific ideas are gradually transformed into everyday marketing practice. Both of these models reiterate the point made by Booker at al. (2012) that the publication of one or more academic articles is just one in a series of steps from the creation of original knowledge to the application of that knowledge in practice. Much has to happen after this early stage if academic knowledge is to become known and used by practitioners.

Previous studies have sought to understand the characteristics of the academic-practitioner divide and the antecedents of it. Table 1 provides a summary of relevant literature, organized by date. However, there is limited consideration of how, practically, things can be improved. We believe that the lack of practical and easy-to-implement recommendations inhibits the efforts of marketing academics to bridge the theory/practice gap. It is insufficient to advise academics that their research should be more relevant to practitioners, without providing specific information on how this can be done. This suggests a gap that, we would suggest, requires further investigation.

PLACE TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

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The purpose of this article is to identify and discuss critical aspects of the academic/practitioner gap and offer suggestions on how to make marketing research more relevant. The empirical context of the study is business-to-business (B2B) marketing since the gap in this field appears to be especially significant (Brennan and Turnbull, 2002; Ankers and Brennan, 2002; Sheth and Sharma, 2006). The study contributes to the research base by providing insights into how managerial relevance can be improved. Understanding important factors behind the academic/practitioner gap can help marketing academics enhance managerial relevance through initiatives involving those factors.

Empirical findings

In this section we summarize the main findings from two earlier studies conducted by the authors and collaborators: one, of eight qualitative interviews, conducted with B2B marketing academics[1], and a quantitative study among 128 academics and 510 marketing and social research practitioners[2]. For additional details about the research methods employed in these prior studies the reader is referred to the prior publications. In this paper we present only a brief summary of the research methods used in those studies. The data from those studies were re-analyzed for purposes of this paper, but no new empirical data were collected.

Qualitative research into academic perceptions

Data were collected by means of in-depth interviews with a sample of eight B2B marketing researchers based in the UK. The sampling strategy was judgmental with the aim of obtaining a balanced view across UK universities (i.e. from research-oriented to teaching-oriented schools). The main selection criterion was that all of the interviewees had attended at least one conference of the Industrial Marketing & Purchasing Group (IMP), indicating that all participants had an interest in B2B marketing. Several key findings arose from this study. There was a consensus among the interviewees that the main objective of marketing research must be the creation of new knowledge.

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[1] A more detailed presentation of the qualitative study can be found in Ankers & Brennan (2004)

[2] A more detailed presentation of the quantitative study can be found in Baines et al (2009)

On the other hand, the role of the marketing academic was considered to be that of an 'intermediary' between the academic and marketing practitioner communities. More specifically, interviewees were of the opinion that marketing academics should not only create knowledge but should also translate this knowledge into suitable language and engage in processes designed to transfer this knowledge to practitioners. A number of barriers to effective communication between academics and practitioners were identified, of which the two most prominent were the academic reward system and pressure of work. The interviewees believed that to make progress in an academic career business school scholars must publish in refereed journals, in particular in journals rated highly according to the various rating schemes commonly available within the academic community (for a critical review of such schemes see Adler & Harzing 2009). However, managers are generally not interested in work published in such journals. Regarding pressure of work pressures on academics, interviewees observed that aspects of the academic's work other than research had become increasingly burdensome in recent years, as student/staff ratios had increased, funding per student had declined, while student fees had increased with the result that their expectations in terms of academic staff availability had risen. This left less time for research. However, it is important to note that even if they had more time to focus on applied research interviewees believed that there are relatively few publications that could serve as an outlet for practitioner-oriented studies. That is to say that, should they wish to publish managerial research, or summaries of their academic studies for a managerial audience, interviewees felt there were few suitable publications for this work.

Quantitative research into academic and practitioner perceptions

Data were collected by means of an email survey conducted among academics, and practitioners in the market research sector. The academic sample (1,484 people) was compiled using a list of members of the largest UK membership organization for marketing academics. The market research practitioner sample (2,167 people) was compiled from a membership list of UK market research professionals, that is, practitioners involved in designing and selling market research services to business, governmental and other organizations. A total of 128 usable replies were received from

academics and 510 usable responses from practitioners, providing an effective response rate of 9% and 24% respectively (for methodological details see Baines et al (2009)).

We turn first to the main findings from the study of *practitioners*. A large majority (71%) of the practitioners felt that there should be greater collaboration between the academic and practitioner communities in marketing. There is strong evidence that academic journals are not regarded as a useful source of information by this community of practitioners; 55% of practitioners said that they found academic journals 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful' as sources of information and even the level of awareness of academic journals was low among the practitioner respondents (for example, 54% said they had never heard of the *European Journal of Marketing*, and only 3% claimed they knew even 'a fair amount' about this journal). Furthermore, 81% of the practitioner sample agreed or strongly agreed that marketing managers do not read academic marketing journals.

The study of *academics* found that most respondents had some experience of marketing practice either in a prior career as a professional marketer, or through undertaking consultancy in their role as an academic; for example, 74% had been involved in marketing research consultancy projects. Although the majority of academic respondents (60%) believed that practitioners were not enthusiastic about adopting ideas from academic research, a larger majority (88%) believed that academic market research should be of practical value, and the same proportion (88%) believed that there should be greater collaboration between the marketing academic and practitioner communities.

Discussion

For those who believe that there should be closer collaboration between marketing academics and practitioners, the results reported above offer grounds for both pessimism and optimism. On the one hand, pessimistically, academic researchers see refereed journal articles as the primary metric determining their career progression, while marketing practitioners have little awareness of these journals and do not consider them a useful source of professional information. On the other hand, both groups believe, first, that there should be more collaboration between academics and practitioners and, second, that academic research should be of more practical value. However, the results also reveal

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that their priorities differ. For example, marketing academics have little to do with marketing practice, conduct research on a part-time basis and their research output appears in refereed academic journals. Conversely, market research practitioners seem not to care for the methodological minutiae beloved by academic researchers. Their priority is to satisfy the practical needs of their clients and, hence, they have no interest in academic journals which they are produced for different purpose and fail to suggest useful answers to practical marketing problems. This brings the discussion to the following question: why does academic marketing research have little to say of relevance to practical managerial needs?

Academics identify the reward system as a key barrier to effective communication between academics and practitioners. Specifically, academics believe that their career mainly depends on publications in highly-rated academic journals, but these journals do not normally publish applied work. Clearly there is an element of truth in this argument, but perhaps there is more to it than this. Suppose, for example, that marketing journals made a concerted effort to require from authors that their work should be of greater managerial relevance. Would practitioners automatically start reading marketing journals? We believe that this can happen only to a small extent. Practitioners do not read marketing journals. In fact, they are not aware of them, at least for the most part (McKenzie *et al.,* 2002). Even practitioner *awareness* levels of journals that marketing academics regard as the pinnacle of achievement, such as the *Journal of Marketing* and the *European Journal of Marketing,* are very low; of course, the proportion of practitioners who read and obtain useful information from these journals is even lower (Baines et al 2009). It is entirely possible that pursuing the goal of relevance through the medium of refereed academic journals is pointless. Therefore, perhaps the main issue is not how relevant the content of an academic journal is, since practitioners just do not care about them.

Academics also suggest that work pressure is another barrier for not having enough time for research. Indeed, academics are facing difficulties in keeping a balance between their research output and their teaching/administrative tasks and, obviously, this affects their research output. But what about research-oriented universities where the creation of research is the main priority? Do they manage to produce research that is considered by practitioners to be of greater managerial relevance?

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Empirical results from prior studies and a review of the pertinent literature provide no evidence that practitioners differentiate between 'useful' or 'non-useful' academic research. They appear, simply, to be detached, in general, from what they perceive as academic research. Another interesting comparison is that academics frequently engage in research-related initiatives such as conferences, workshops, and so on. Yet, few practitioners ever attend such events. Hence, while the academic reward system and work pressure clearly affect the academic/practitioner gap, we believe that the main reasons of the problem lie in the academics' attitude towards academic research. In the following section we provide a set of recommendations aiming to contribute to academic research having a greater impact on the practice of marketing and, eventually, bridging the academic/practitioner gap.

Recommendations

Our recommendations are aimed at stimulating debate within the marketing academic community regarding ways to bridge the academic/practitioner gap. We center our comments on how academics can have a greater impact on marketing practice without ignoring their principal role of advancing knowledge.

Nature of research

The prevailing paradigm of empirical studies in marketing is data-driven. That means that we begin with a data set, we analyze the data, and only then we ask where it might be applied. The resulting conclusions may be of some relevance to the academic community but it is doubtful if they offer useful and applied guidance to practitioners (Reibsten *et al.,* 2009). We believe that a better approach is to have a managerial problem (or problems) as a starting point and to design the methodology of the study based on this problem. The result would be applied research that addresses specific managerial issues even if no new advanced methodologies or theories are proposed. In doing so, academics should come to develop networks into the world of practitioners and expose themselves to practical managerial problems. This can be done through joint research projects, reading trade/non-

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specialized magazines, and attending trade conferences or similar events. Clearly, many academics already have some previous consulting/training experience. However, we believe that there is more that could (and should) be done in this direction, on a continuous basis, so that academics can actually obtain a good feel for the practitioner's perspective.

Academic publications

Currently, most promotion and salary decisions in academia largely depend on publications in highly-ranked refereed journals. Publishing in practice-based magazines (e.g. trade magazines or business publications focusing on specific sectors) is 'nice to have' but in all probability will not make a difference to an academic's career. We can argue about how appropriate this approach is, however the fact remains, and there is no evidence that things will change in the near future. We believe that academics should ask who is reading our publications: are practitioners part of our audience or are we just talking to ourselves, as some authors have argued (McKenzie *et al.,* 2002; Reibstein et al 2009)? What is of concern is how research published in refereed journals makes an impact on marketing practice. Multiple approaches are necessary. Certainly, we would support any straightforward steps that could make academic journals more accessible to marketing practitioners, such as including practitioners in the article reviewing process, and encouraging authors to use a more accessible writing style and avoid unnecessary academic jargon. However, such steps will never be anything other than minor advances in bringing academic research to the attention of practitioners.

The world has moved on irrevocably to digital media and 21st century modes of communication. No matter what may be done to make academic research more relevant and to bring it more widely to the attention of managers, nothing is going to persuade those managers to consume information in the form of a complex 8,000 word article containing both relevance (what was found out that makes a difference to practice) and irrelevance (such as the details of the research methods and the scholarly literature review). Some journals have already made advances in this direction; for example, the *Journal of Consumer Research* publicizes research through its RSS feed, and you can follow JCR on Twitter or on Facebook. The JCR website provides a wide range of links to popular and business media outlets, such as *The Huffington Post*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Daily Mail*, *Forbes*, and *TIME*

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Business that have published articles based on JCR research (see http://www.ejcr.org/inthenews.php). While publicizing research is no guarantee of relevance, it is an important step in the right direction. In essence, marketing academics need to understand the communication channels that practitioners use to obtain professional information, and then understand how to present the practical contribution of their work in an engaging and succinct manner. That will give them a fighting chance of gaining the attention of managers, which is a prerequisite for achieving relevance. Marketing academics wishing to promote their research to a wider audience, perhaps including practitioners, policy makers and the general public, should certainly consider blogging about their research, perhaps using 'Brandthroposophy', the blog of Robert Kozinets (York University, Canada) as a model (see http://kozinets.net/). For example, in the world of business-to-business marketing the B2B Marketing group on LinkedIn had over 30,000 members, mostly marketing practitioners, in July 2013. Many active discussions are live at any one time, often sparked by blog posts. This is an example of a cheap and quick medium which B2B researchers could use to publicize their work to the practitioner community.

PhD programs

While improving the communications channels that academics use to converse with practitioners is an essential step, ultimately it is necessary to make it seem entirely natural to the marketing academic that the consideration of practical issues is an integral part of the research process. In other words, while improving communication channels is certainly useful, it is arguably more fundamental to ensure that practical relevance is designed in at the start of the research project. The best place to start may well be the major socialization process undertaken by marketing academics, namely, the PhD program. Most PhD programs today aim to provide training in research methodology and theory. Looking at the methodological and theoretical advances in marketing over the past few years we can conclude that PhD programs are successful in achieving these objectives. However, a matter of concern is how relevant to practitioners the PhD theses are and, subsequently, the publications derived from them. Marketing PhD theses tend to be highly theoretical with limited managerial relevance (Lilien, 2011; Danneels and Lilien, 1998). The main reason for the limited

managerial relevance is that little, if any, time is spent in knowing and understanding day-to-day problems and strategic issues managers face (Reibstein *et al.,* 2009). Also, having more PhD students entering directly from full-time undergraduate and post-graduate programs with no previous experience in business may worsen the problem. Since marketing is an applied discipline it is important for PhD students to have some kind of exposure to managerial issues before and/or during their studies. There are various ways in which this could be encouraged. Already some business-to-business PhDs are undertaken in collaboration with businesses, so that the topic is agreed between the university and a specific company or professional body (for example, Brown 2006). Of course, it is also the case that most professional doctorates (such as the Doctor of Business Administration degree) address practical matters, but in this case the student is already a practitioner, usually in a senior role. Given the evidence that doctorates in B2B marketing *can* be awarded for research that is relevant to practitioners, and the desire to reduce the academic/practitioner divide in marketing, it would make sense to encourage more PhD students to pursue research that makes a practical as well as a theoretical contribution (this, in turn, has certain implications for doctoral examination criteria, which would need to reflect the equal consideration given to practical and theoretical contributions). Meanwhile, those schools that offer professional doctorates to experienced practitioners should make the best use of the direct contact that this provides with the practitioner world. This entails seeing the professional doctorate as a two-way street. Rather than striving simply to induct the professional student into the academic culture (so that they learn, for example, how to cite the work of other researchers properly, the minutiae of research design, and the academic obsession with matters epistemological), it requires recognition of the fact that senior practitioners have, in turn, something to offer in terms of identifying research topics of real, practical concern.

Conclusion and Implications

Our study comments on reasons for the academic/practitioner gap and proposes approaches to make marketing research more relevant. We believe that because marketing is an applied business discipline, marketing academics need to create knowledge that is useful for theory *and* practice. We

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have identified the nature of research, academic publishing and modes of communication, and PhD programs as some key areas where further improvement is needed so as to bridge the academic/practitioner gap. Obviously, addressing these issues also relates to institutional actions that are beyond individual academics' control, at least to some extent. Examples of this include some reconsideration of the criteria influencing career progression paths, and reconsideration of the criteria for awarding doctoral degrees to increase the weight given to contributions to practice. However, without pressure from individual academics such changes are unlikely to be considered. We are seeking to tread the line between Jaworski's (2011) two 'camps' within the marketing discipline: the camp that considers practitioner relevance to be a *sine qua non* and the camp that considers relevance to be at best a distraction from serious research and at worst a threat to the quality of academic research.

Implications

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Table 2 summarizes the main implications of this paper for four key stakeholder groups—researchers, practitioners (including professional bodies), policy-makers, and academic managers. Many of these implications are inter-linked. For example, practitioners can make greater efforts to seek out academic contributors to their conferences and journals, but simultaneously academics must be looking out for and welcoming such opportunities, while academic managers must provide academics wishing to take up such opportunities with training in effective methods of communicating with practitioners. In fact, these implications can be summarized into three categories: understanding the process of research dissemination; the capabilities and incentives of academic staff; and, enhanced communication. It is to the benefit of all parties to understand, from the work of scholars such as Lilien (2011), Booker et al. (2012) and Roberts et al. (2013) mentioned earlier, that the process of translating academic research into practical application takes time. Otherwise, researchers may erroneously believe that publication is enough to bring about application, and the practitioner may bemoan the fact the academic research is abstract and inapplicable. Several of the implications concern the capabilities and incentives of academic staff. It is not sufficient to complain that academic staff fail to write in manager-friendly language, prefer to publish a scientific paper in a research

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journal rather than to write for a practitioner website, and fail to engage with the practitioner community through social media. Communicating with a managerial audience requires a different set of capabilities from communicating with an academic audience; many academic researchers, though brilliantly academically qualified, are poorly equipped to communicate with managers.

We do not suggest that marketing research should focus on managerial impact to the neglect of scientific progress. That would be myopic. Advancing knowledge should remain a priority for academics. However, along with this should come a change in mind-set: marketing research can (and should) be relevant to practice as well.

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Table 1: Summary of key literature on the academic/practitioner gap in the field of marketing

Authors	Type	Main focus/key statement
Danneels &Lilien (1998)	Empirical	Investigates the practices in Marketing PhD programs, focusing specifically on B2B Marketing. Finds that the rigor/relevance challenge is greater for B2B Marketing scholars than for their colleagues who concentrate on the consumer market
O'Driscoll & Murray (1998)	Conceptual	Suggests that there is asynchrony between theory and practice and that this is bad for both theorist and practitioner. To restore greater synchrony with practice, marketing theory needs not just to deal with the new realities of marketing but also to develop its theories of markets, managing and organization
Calder & Tybout (1999)	Conceptual	Considers theoretical explanation serves as the basis for solving real-world problems and that should be the appropriate focus of business school education
Cunningham (1999)	Conceptual	Suggests that graduates are not meeting the expectations of their employers. Analyses what is perceived as a key attribute by marketing practitioners and suggests changes in the teaching methods
Dunne (1999)	Conceptual	Explores the relationship between knowledge and action. Identifies two types of knowledge, "technical rationality" and "practical judgment", and the kinds of activities encapsulated within each paradigm.
Piercy (1999)	Conceptual	Argues that the lack of relevance is because of the fundamental mistakes that have been made in the way in which business school professors have been managed in many schools
Sheth & Sisodia (1999)	Conceptual	Argue that argue that regularities pertaining to consumer behavior and marketing exchanges (i.e. "lawlike generalizations") are being affected by contextual discontinuities that is likely to challenge the relevance of these lawlike generalizations.
Piercy (2000)	Empirical	Finds that for business schools to devote their efforts and resources to improving their RAE scores is likely to be damaging and counter-productive.
Baker (2001)	Conceptual	Considers that the gap between the worlds of academia and practice is increasing and this is due to marketing academics not really being interested in its practice.
Ankers & Brennan (2002)	Empirical	Discusses the barriers that marketing academics will have to overcome if they are to make their research more relevant to practitioners
Brennan & Turnbull (2002)	Conceptual	Explores the current state of practical relevance in Industrial Marketing and Purchasing Group (IMP) research
Cornelissen (2002)	Conceptual	Explores the divergent orientations to the development and use of marketing theory by academics and practitioners
Gummesson (2002)	Conceptual	Argues that marketing management has become stereotyped on a derelict foundation in commodity-like textbooks. Offers guidelines on how research in marketing could reinvent itself to the benefit of both academics and practitioners.
McKenzie *et al.* (2002)	Empirical	Finds a very low level of awareness of academic journals among generally well-informed marketing practitioners.
Piercy (2002)	Conceptual	Suggests that much research in marketing appears trivial and

irrelevant to practitioners of marketing. Proposes the adoption of research and publishing strategies for impact with diverse audiences, taking research priorities from practice, and demanding the right to conduct research-led teaching in marketing.

Wensley (2002)	Conceptual	Suggests that marketing academe needs to be at least as concerned about its links both with the wider academic community and intermediary organizations
Varadarajan (2003)	Conceptual	Discusses issues relating to the relevance and rigor of scholarly research in marketing
Baker & Holt (2004)	Conceptual	Explores whether marketing educators have failed to deliver the theory and frameworks that could address this academic/practitioner gap
Brennan (2004)	Conceptual	Discusses the nature of the academic/practitioner divide in marketing, examines reasons for it and suggest ideas for improvement
Brennan & Ankers (2004),	Empirical	Reports on three related empirical studies of the relevance of academic research to the practice of marketing in the field of B2B marketing. Incorporates both academics and practitioners view.
Crosier (2004)	Empirical	Explores the extent to which marketing journals succeed in transferring useful knowledge from academics to practitioners
Katsikeas *et al.* (2004)	Empirical	Identifies a number of topics relevant to practising managers that worth future investigations from the marketing discipline
McCole (2004)	Conceptual	Considers that the marketing concept and the way we teach marketing needs to be refocused to reflect practice. Retro-marketing and experiential marketing emerge as two new developments that are ideal candidates for narrowing the gap between academia and practice.
Ottesen, & Grønhaug (2004)	Conceptual	Examines what types of knowledge marketing practitioners might perceive as useful and discusses a range of potential barriers to successful transfer of market orientation knowledge from academia to practitioners
Reed *et al.* (2004)	Empirical	Examines the areas that are considered important by business-to-business marketing practitioners. Also examines how these differ between the private and public sectors and identifies the tools and techniques felt to be most useful to practitioners.
Tapp (2004)	Conceptual	Develops a theoretical framework and applies it to a "template" for research design that will allow researchers to generate and communicate knowledge more effectively
Piercy (2006)	Conceptual	Argues that whilst market researchers can provide broad and accurate statistical information, they often place too much emphasis on technique and methodology. Suggests that a new creativity and strategies that help decision-makers is required to identify and exploit new business opportunities.
Sheth & Sharma (2006)	Empirical	Identifies areas of B2B marketing research that have received surplus attention, discusses their relevance and suggests areas that require additional attention
Keegan (2007)	Conceptual	Argues that while academics and practitioners sees the work of the other as exerting a limited influence on their own field, they should look to combine their efforts in order to improve both the theory behind and practical application of market research.

Baines *et al.* (2009)	Empirical	comments on the differences in perceptions that exist between academic and professional marketing researchers and explore how academics and practitioners can work together
Reibstein, Day, & Wind (2009)	Conceptual	Discusses the current state of relevance in marketing research and provides recommendations on how to have a greater impact on marketing practice
Lilien (2011)	Conceptual	Considers the relatively low level of practical use of marketing decision models. Then, suggests how changes in the incentive and reward system for academics, practitioners and intermediaries can be mutually beneficial
Jaworski (2011)	Conceptual	Defines the concept of managerial relevance, makes specific observations, and discusses research implications for each observation

Table 2: Key Implications for Principal Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder group	Implications
Researchers	• Understand that publication in an academic journal will not, in general, bring research to the attention of practitioners or influence practitioners. • Seek opportunities to disseminate research findings through practitioner media such as conferences and journals. • Identify relevant practitioner social media networks and seek to disseminate research findings through them. • Develop the capability to write for a practitioner audience.
Practitioners (including professional bodies)	• Understand that there is a diffusion process by which academic research influences practice, and that it can take a considerable amount of time for this process to function. • Seek opportunities to invite the dissemination of academic research through practitioner media such as conferences and journals. • Provide opportunities for industrial internships for academic staff that are highly academically qualified but inexperienced in marketing practice. • Seek opportunities to provide practical research problems to university departments for consideration as topics for research by students, doctoral candidates, and academic staff.
Policy makers	• Ensure that the incentives created for academic research do not only reward the achievement of short-term targets, but also incentivise longer-term applications research. • Encourage, through funding mechanisms, the exchange of personnel between university departments and businesses (e.g. industrial internships and visiting entrepreneur schemes). • Provide seed-corn research grants to encourage early-stage collaborative research between academic researchers and practitioners.
Academic managers	• Encourage industrial internships for academic staff that are highly qualified academically but inexperienced in marketing practice. • Provide training to academic staff and doctoral students in undertaking problem-driven research, in addition to conventional academic research. • Provide training to academic staff and doctoral students in how to write for a practitioner audience, both through conventional media and through Web 2.0 media.