

ARTICLES

Submitted 12.05.2018. Approved 06.04.2019

Evaluated through a double-blind review process. Invited Scientific Editor: Maribel Suarez

Translated version

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0034-759020190404>

BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS MARKETING: BRAZILIAN SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION FROM 2008 TO 2018

Marketing business-to-business: Análise da produção científica brasileira de 2008 a 2018

Marketing business-to-business: Análisis de la producción científica brasileña desde 2008 hasta 2018

ABSTRACT

This study presents a literature review on Brazilian business-to-business (B2B) marketing from 2008 to 2018. The methods used included review topic selection, literature search, data collection and reading, and analysis of scientific periodical publications of a level greater than or equal to B2. Theoretically, B2B marketing has been associated with six themes: innovation, customer journey and relationship value, data analytics, harnessing technology, marketing/finance interface & revenue growth, and industry context/ecosystem. In terms of methodology, quantitative research, survey utilization, cross-sections cuts, non-probability sampling, and use of questionnaire scales for data gathering have prevailed in this field. It was found that empirical research has mainly focused on customer journey and relationship value. This study contributes to existing literature by providing several future research possibilities; in addition, it draws a parallel between Brazilian and international scientific production on the topic to suggest an overview of future B2B marketing research.

KEYWORDS | Business-to-business, business-to-business marketing, customer relationship management, literature review, Brazilian production.

RESUMO

Este estudo apresenta uma revisão da literatura brasileira sobre o marketing business-to-business (B2B) de 2008 a 2018. O método utilizado envolveu seleção do tópico de revisão, pesquisa na literatura, coleta e análise das publicações científicas de periódicos de nível maior ou igual a B2. Teoricamente, o B2B associou-se a seis temas: inovação, jornada do cliente e valor do relacionamento, análise de dados, aproveitamento de tecnologia, integração entre Marketing e Finanças e ecossistemas de mercados. No aspecto metodológico, predominaram pesquisas quantitativas, utilização de survey, cortes temporais transversais, uso de amostras não probabilísticas e coleta de dados via questionários/escalas. Empíricamente, as pesquisas se concentraram na jornada do cliente e valor do relacionamento. O estudo contribui ao evidenciar possibilidades de pesquisa e ao realizar um paralelo entre a produção brasileira e a internacional, a fim de traçar um panorama futuro para o estudo do marketing B2B.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE | Business-to-business, marketing business-to-business, marketing de relacionamento, revisão de literatura, produção nacional.

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta una revisión de la literatura brasileña sobre el marketing business-to-business (B2B) de 2008 hasta 2018. La revisión abarcó selección del tema, investigación en la literatura, recopilación, lectura y análisis de las publicaciones científicas de periódicos de nivel superior o igual a B2. Teóricamente, el B2B se asoció a seis temas: innovación, jornada del cliente y valor de la relación, análisis de datos, aprovechamiento de tecnología, integración entre Marketing y Finanzas, y ecosistemas de mercados. Metodológicamente, predominaron las investigaciones cuantitativas, surveys, estudios transversales, muestras no probabilísticas y recopilación de datos a través de cuestionarios y escalas. Empíricamente las investigaciones se concentraron en la jornada del cliente y el valor de la relación. El estudio contribuye por evidenciar posibilidades de investigación, así como por realizar un paralelo entre la producción brasileña y la internacional, a fin de trazar un panorama futuro para el estudio del marketing B2B.

PALABRAS CLAVE | Business-to-business, marketing business-to-business, marketing relacional, revisión de literatura, producción científica brasileña.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of marketing relations between companies is not a recent occurrence. [Wanamaker \(1899\)](#) introduced the first perspective in this area, in discussing the integration of roles between suppliers, retailers, and clients. This contribution occurred even right before the initial conception of marketing ([Cortez & Johnston, 2017](#); [Hadjikhani & LaPlaca, 2013](#)). Almost a century later, there was a paradigm shift in the marketing field, where the discrete transaction approach gave rise to the relational approach ([Grönroos, 1994](#)), which made possible the emergence of relationship marketing ([Rocha & Luce, 2006](#)), an approach centered on the construction of value through relationships ([Baker, 2010](#)).

Relationship marketing was built under two main sub-areas: one involving partnerships between organizations and end customers – business-to-customer (B2C) – and another that refers to lasting relationships between dyads of organizations – business-to-business (B2B) ([Rocha & Luce, 2006](#)). However, due to the theoretical multiplicity among marketing approaches ([Hunt, 2002](#); [Hutt & Speh, 2010](#)), a more solid conceptual definition of B2B became necessary ([Cortez & Johnston, 2017](#); [Möller & Halinen-Kaila, 1998](#)).

In Brazil, only one mapping of specific literature related to B2B marketing has been registered. It comprised the relevant scientific knowledge production from 1998 to 2007 ([Lacerda & Mendonça, 2010](#)). In this mapping, publications from 4 national journals and scientific articles from 31 editions of the Encontro da Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração (Meeting of the National Association of Post-Graduation and Research in Management [EnANPAD]) were collected. On this occasion, only 11 publications from EnANPADs and 9 publications from journals were found. More recently, three literature reviews ([Almeida, Lopes, & Pereira, 2006](#); [Demo, Fogaça, Ponte, Fernandes, & Cardoso, 2015](#); [Faria, Giuliani, Pizzinatto, & Spers, 2014](#)) have completely focused on relationship marketing and found that B2B was the second most researched theme, after B2C.

Based on the presented content, this study investigates how it is possible to characterize national literature on B2B marketing in theories, methods, and empirical findings by conducting a literature review of B2B marketing from 2008 to 2018. As data sources, this study utilizes publications in national journals from levels A2, B1, and B2, considering the fields of Public Administration and Business, Accounting Sciences, and Tourism. The methodology adopted is the literature review proposal by [Cronin, Ryan, and Coughlan \(2008\)](#).

There are two main contributions from this review. First, there is a possibility to assess if the increase in research about B2B, observed between 2003 and 2007, has been continuous in this last decade, contrasting with the incipience scenario of studies pointed out in the first mapping. Second, when exploring a bigger sample of journals, this study aims to portray the current overview of the Brazilian research on B2B more accurately, with the following groupings, as proposed by [Cronin et al. \(2008\)](#) for a review of this nature: (a) consensus or dissensus related to the theoretical literature, (b) critical analysis of the methodology used throughout the theoretical-empirical studies, and (c) empirical findings and how they can be related to previous literature.

The following section presents the fundamental concepts of relationship marketing and the B2B relationship. The third section describes the research method, and in the fourth section, the analysis of results and related discussions are reported over thematic blocks. Finally, in light of the study's results, the final remarks propose possibilities for additional research on the subject and draw a parallel between Brazilian and international knowledge production, seeking to develop a future construct for B2B study.

B2B MARKETING

Relationship marketing represents a paradigm change from the classical concepts of transactional marketing to an approach based on the 'conquest and enchantment' of customers ([Grönroos, 1994](#); [Sharma & Sheth, 1997](#)). The studies on relationship marketing can be framed as B2C relationships or among organizational dyads (B2B) ([Demo et al., 2015](#)). In the latter, relationships among companies belonging to distribution channels and other types of relationships among companies that involve buying decisions are included ([Rocha & Luce, 2006](#)). While B2C develops in a shorter term and with less intensity, in B2B, the relationship is more intense and longer lasting ([Iacobucci & Ostrom, 1996](#)).

An alternative way to distinguish between B2B and B2C is to observe the demand origin. If the demand comes from subsequent customers, it is B2B. On the other hand, if demand is driven by choices, emotions, and client taste, it is a B2C relationship ([Lilien, 2016](#)). Another established distinction focuses on the relationship between buyer and seller, which is more predominant in B2B than in B2C ([Håkansson & Snehota, 1995](#)). The market is seen as the most rational and complex mechanism and the reason why the buying process can involve the decision(s) of one or many people. In general terms, both B2B and B2C customers differ in their behaviors because within each company, there are rules and processes for the purchasing process ([Webster &](#)

Wind, 1972). In addition, through the lens of organization type, the B2B relationship is classified under institutions, government, or commercial companies (Campos, Silva, & Postali, 2017).

B2B marketing has been impacted by theoretical influences such as the transaction cost approach and social exchange theory. Consequently, three major chains have emerged: studies dealing with the buyer-seller relationship under the distribution channel approach; explaining these partnerships through the networks formed by interactions among companies; and linkages to the contributions from the concept of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) (Rocha & Luce, 2006).

However, a recent international incursion into B2B marketing literature from 1890 to 2016 (Cortez & Johnston, 2017) demonstrated that the research on the topic has favored a more integrative view, as well as suggested that these studies should focus on six themes: Innovation (development of new means of supply, business, and market models); Customer Journey and Relationship Value (influencers and client experience); Data Analytics (optimizers for the data analysis process); Harnessing Technology (internet influence and digital media evolution), Marketing/Finance Interface and Revenue Growth (business orientation); and Industry Context/Ecosystem (business networks, regulations and ethics, global networks and supply, and security systems).

METHOD

This literature review was based on the protocol suggested by Cronin et al. (2008). This methodology consists of a series of pre-established procedures, in which searches are made in databases, establishing parameters for article selection and producing a field synthesis at the end (Creswell, 2010). The following subsections present a step-by-step overview of the research process.

Review topic selection

The present study is based on the following question: How is it possible to characterize national literature on B2B marketing in theories, methods, and empirical findings? Before reaching such issue, the first step was to consider that the B2B concept appears to be associated with different theoretical fundamentals within marketing (e.g. CRM, service marketing, organizational buying decisions). Therefore, the scope of the review was limited to B2B marketing. This decision was made based on what Cronin et al. (2008) postulated: "It is better to start with a narrow and focused topic, and if necessary, broaden the scope of the review as you progress" (p. 39). This review aims to adhere to the terminology

used by both the last mapping (Lacerda & Mendonça, 2010), and the international literature review (Cortez & Johnston, 2017).

Literature research

The bibliographic search was conducted via the national platform Scientific Periodicals Electronic Library (SPELL). This database was chosen because it is a national indexing system dedicated to the provision of scientific production in the fields of Public Administration and Business, Accounting, and Tourism. Thus, other national and more comprehensive databases were disregarded in the search.

On the SPELL platform, only B2B descriptors were adopted in the search field, since the purpose was to collect the specific knowledge produced on B2B marketing, thus mitigating possible problems of dispersion of results (Cronin et al., 2008). In these searches, 'title' and 'abstract' were used as the filters. The search was limited from 2008 to May 2018. This option was connected to the intention of filling a possible gap since the last mapping, which covered 1998 until 2007 (Lacerda & Mendonça, 2010). Beyond that, the decision on the referred temporal delimitation was also based on not creating overlapping findings.

Literature collection, reading, and analysis

The realized searches returned 34 publications. From this result, successive exclusion criteria were adopted to reach the final corpus (Cronin et al., 2008). First, scientific articles published in national journals of strata B3, B4, B5, and C of the Qualis-Capes system were discarded because the scopes of the publications were widely dispersed in relation to the central theme. This process was done by the validation of all the journals from the Sucupira platform (2018), resulting in 13 excluded articles. After this first exclusion, 21 scientific articles published in A2, B1, and B2 journals remained, which were preliminarily collected.

In the second stage of the selection process, the content of the chosen scientific articles was analyzed, with the purpose of excluding those studies that did not correspond to the proposal for this review. Three articles were excluded: (1) Lacerda and Mendonça (2010), because it is also a literature mapping; (2) Almeida, Andrade, and Farina (2010), for being a study on the professional perception of and about marketing by area of activity; and (3) Santos (2015), due to its technical nature. In the end, 18 scientific papers were left for analysis.

The information from the selected articles was tabulated according to categories and their predefined classifications

(Exhibit 1). These categories are part of three blocks of analysis (theoretical, methodological, and empirical), which correspond to the contribution of this study. In relation to articles of a theoretical nature, only Objectives and Conceptual Framework were analyzed. As for the theoretical-empirical articles, the analysis considered the whole set of categories listed.

Exhibit 1. Categories and blocks of analysis

Block	Categories	Subcategories	Analysis Technique
Theoretical	Objectives	-	Similarity
	Conceptual Framework	B2B associated themes	Thematic Analysis
	Nature	Theoretical or Theoretical-empirical	Count
Methodological	Approach	Quantitative or Qualitative or Both	Count
	Temporal Delimitation	Cross-sectional or Longitudinal	Count
	Research Method	Survey or Case Study or Quasi-Experiment	Count
	Sample	If quantitative approach: or Probabilistic or No Probabilistic. If qualitative approach: or Rigid or Flexible	Count
	Data Collection Techniques	Questionnaires and/or Interview and/or Focus Group and/or Observation and/or Field Diary and/or Reports	Count
	Analysis Techniques	Descriptive Statistics and/or Inferential Statistics and/or Content Analysis	Count
Empirical	Results and Conclusions	B2B associated themes	Thematic Analysis

Thus, the data and information tabulated in each category were treated according to three different analysis techniques:

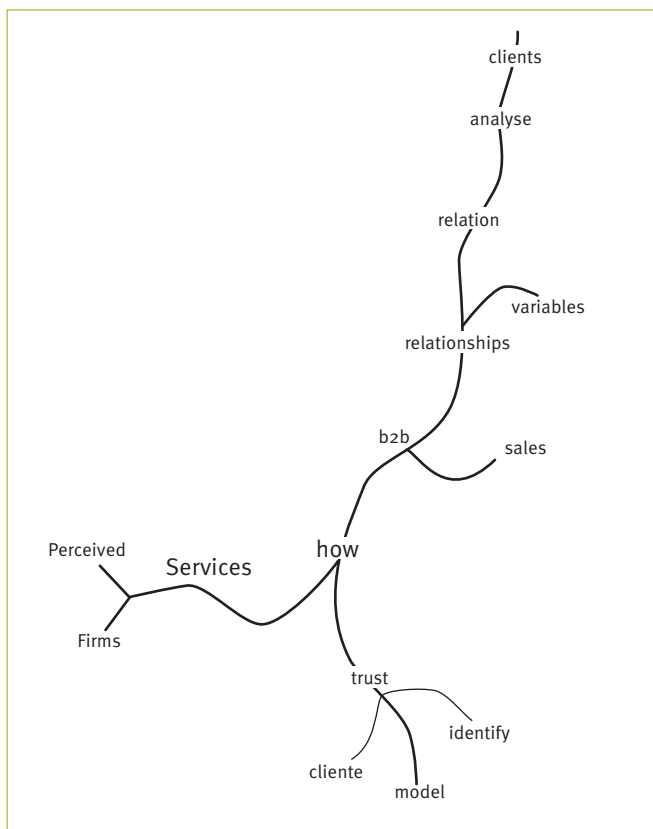
- a. Similarity analysis: Used only for the Objectives category, this type of analysis allowed us to determine the co-occurrences of words between workers' objectives, highlighting possible connections between them. This technique is recommended to help identify the structure of a text according to Camargo and Justo (2013). Here, the text consisted of the objectives taken from scientific articles that allowed for the identification of the degree of variation between the research intentions about B2B. This process was conducted using Iramuteq version 0.7 alpha 2,
 - b. Thematical analysis: This technique was used for the Conceptual Framework categories and Results and Conclusions, in which the subcategories followed the thematic proposal of the literature review of Cortez and Johnston (2017): Innovation, Customer Journey and Relationship Value, Data Analytics, Harnessing Technology, Marketing/Finance Interface and Revenue Growth, and Industry context/ecosystems.
 - c. Count: Utilized for the categories not approached in previous techniques, this analysis technique identified the quantities in each subcategory, mainly in the methodological block. The analysis was also based on the following conditions: (1) one category group was analyzed on the basis of mutually exclusive classifications (Nature, Approach, Temporal Delimitation, Research Method, and Sample); and (2) another group of categories was analyzed considering possible intersections between classifications (Data Collection Techniques and Analysis Techniques).
- In addition, a fourth subsection, Publication Overview, was also added to the research at the opening of the Results section, involving the list of articles by journal, the course of publications along the 10 years, and the word cloud containing a summary of the key constructs of articles. The following are the results and discussion of the 18 scientific articles that dealt with B2B marketing between 2008 and May 2018.

The word cloud, as shown in Figure 1, highlights the research concern of trust relationships and the perceived value of the performance of B2B partnerships. As will be shown ahead, the cloud corroborates the proximity of the number of quantitative and qualitative studies. It also emphasizes quality and satisfaction, two variables that have been studied in relation to the client's journey, the focus of national knowledge production on the subject.

Theoretical block

In relation to the nature of the articles, 15 out of the 18 are theoretical-empirical, since most of them aim to apply theoretical models to a certain segment of the economy (e.g. Brambilla & Dalmarco, 2014; Soares, Bortoluzzo, & Barros, 2012) or B2B events (Silva, Moriguchi, & Lopes, 2016). The three other articles are exclusively theoretical nature in order to fit already existing theoretical models (Fleury & Marques, 2014; Troccoli, 2010) and present new models for B2B relationships (Silva, Araujo, & Primo, 2015). A similarity analysis was used for the proposed objectives (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Similarity analysis of publication objectives



In Figure 2, the strongest relationship in the similarity analysis of the Objectives category focuses on the way the B2B relationship is driven by the term 'how'. From this, it is linked to the root trust-analyzer-relationship. Trust consists of the search to identify models of relationships with suppliers (Silva et al., 2016; Soares et al., 2012). Analyzer is connected to clients, the basis of the B2B relationship. Relationship connects with the variables at work in certain contexts that impacted the level of service as perceived by clients (Spalenza, Ronchi, & Pelissari, 2017; Vieira, Pires, & Galeano, 2013). Finally, B2B, in its essence, to analyze sales metrics such as satisfaction and performance (Frederico & Ferreira, 2018; Silva et al., 2016). Exhibit 2 contains the list of theoretical frameworks used by the respective authors of the articles.

According to the categories proposed by Cortez and Johnston (2017), it was possible to identify how the articles fit the six proposed themes. The only study that approached the Innovation category was Almeida, Porto, Isidro-Filho, and Coelho (2014). Most of the studies were related to Client Journey and Relationship Value (Battaglia et al., 2015; Borges & Botelho, 2008; Eberle, Milan, & Toni, 2017; Fleury & Marques, 2014; Frederico & Ferreira, 2018; Silva & Araújo, 2016; Silva et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2016; Silva, Paula, Moriguchi, & Paula, 2016; Silva, Moriguchi, & Lopes, 2018; Soares et al., 2012; Spalenza et al., 2017). In Data Analytics, we can highlight the study of Brambilla and Dalmarco (2014). In Marketing/ Finance Interface, only Vieira et al. (2013) had more proximity. Regarding the theme of Harnessing Technology, it was only possible to classify the study of Amaral, Junior, Pizzinatto and Pitombo (2015). Finally, those who covered Industry Context/ Ecosystems were Cozer, Toledo, and Szafir-Goldstein (2008), and Troccoli (2010).

Methodological block

For the methodological block analysis, we evaluated the 15 articles that presented the theoretical-empirical approach. For this analysis, the following classifications were established: Temporal Delimitation, Approach, Research Method, Sampling, Technique or Instrument of Collection, and Technique for Data Analysis (Table 2). In the case of Data Collection and Data Analysis, the results are higher than 15 publications due to the possibility of the studies using various collection instruments, as well as combining analysis techniques.

Exhibit 2. Theoretical framework of studies published between 2008 and 2018

Authors	Conceptual Framework	Authors	Conceptual Framework
Borges and Botelho (2008)	Buying organization decisions; virtual organization definitions	Silva, Araújo and Primo (2015)	Trust, commitment, change costs, and perceived value
Cozer, Toledo and Szafr-Goldstein (2008)	Competitive positioning and strategic marketing; Delta model of network competitive positioning	Battaglia et al. (2015)	Analysis, value creation and delivery, value perception, and relationship
Troccoli (2010)	Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) and Value Co-creation.	Silva, Paula, Moriguchi and Paula (2016)	Spontaneous and induced consumer memory, and sponsor-event association
Soares, Bortoluzzo and Barros (2012)	Buyer relational attribute: loyalty; provider relational attributes: trust and importance; dyadic attributes: intimacy and exchange cost	Silva, Moriguchi and Lopes (2016)	Perceived value, satisfaction, trust, commitment, service quality, price, repurchase intention, reputation, alternatives search and word of mouth
Vieira, Pires and Galeano (2013)	Needs understanding, sales direction, salesman <i>locomotion</i> profile, pressure or boss support, training and co-creation	Silva and Araújo (2016)	Trust, provider dependency, fault severity, and calculative commitment
Almeida, Porto, Isidro-Filho and Coelho (2014)	Dynamics between product and service: Service Provision Increase (ASO), Services Innovation (IS), Service-Dominant Logic (SDL)	Eberle, Milan and Toni (2017)	Trust and perceived value
Fleury and Marques (2014)	Trust between parties, commitment, bilateral communication, investment capacity, and objectives similarities	Spalenza, Ronchi and Pelissari (2017)	Importance-performance matrix
Brambilla and Dalmarco (2014)	Data mining and salesforce automation facilities	Silva, Moriguchi and Lopes (2018)	Perceived value, quality, sacrifices, experience, satisfaction, and repurchase intention
Amaral, Junior, Pizzinatto and Pitombo (2015)	Differentiation, post-sale, and e-commerce.	Frederico and Ferreira (2018)	Trust, competence, honesty, and benevolence

Regarding qualitative articles, there was a predominance of the use of case studies to conduct the research, as well as cross-sectional studies. The flexible sample remained hegemonic in all articles analyzed, and interview scripts and inferential descriptive analysis served as the instrument and analysis technique, respectively. The analysis of content was shown as a relevant technique used in articles to evaluate the value added to the products (Battaglia et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2016b), influencers on the process of post-sale engagement (Amaral et al., 2015), and determinants of long-term relationships in the pursuit of competitive advantage (Brambilla & Dalmarco, 2014; Cozer et al., 2008).

Regarding articles of a quantitative nature, there was also a predominance of cross-sectional research, except for Almeida et al. (2014), whose research proposed a quasi-experiment,

executed according to monthly data collections. In terms of sampling, we highlight Eberle et al. (2017), the only ones to adopt a probabilistic sample by means of a random draw. Among the data collection techniques, there was a predominance of the use of questionnaires and scales, however Spalenza et al. (2017) conducted a focus group. In general terms, for the data analysis, authors prioritized the use of inferential techniques.

As for the mixed approach, Frederico and Ferreira (2018), initially conducted a bibliographic analysis and exploratory research to build a model questionnaire that identified crucial factors of the perpetuity intent of the relationship, in which the level of trust built played the central role. After this stage, researchers could begin the quantitative phase, which culminated in the elaboration, refinement, and application of a questionnaire to test the proposed model.

Silva et al. (2016b) also considered their research to be of a mixed nature, because the questionnaire proposed contemplates open and closed questions. Content analysis and inferential analysis were used as analysis techniques for the respective types of questions. Borges and Botelho (2008) proposed analyzing attributes considered as determinants by consumers. Initially they conducted in-depth interviews with two partner-owners to clarify factors of customer behavior. For the quantitative phase, a questionnaire was used with visual stimulation and use of the five-point Likert scale for the respondents to demonstrate their intention to purchase.

Table 2. Methodological Typification

Categories	Subcategories	Amount
Approach	Qualitative	4
	Quantitative	8
	Both	3
Temporal Delimitation	Cross-sectional	14
	Longitudinal	1
Method	Survey	9
	Case Study	5
	Quasi-experiment	1
Quantitative Sample	Probabilistic	1
	Non-probabilistic	10
Qualitative Sample	Rigid	0
	Flexible	4
Data Collection Techniques	Questionnaires and Scales	10
	Interview Script	7
	Self-registration	1
	Observation	1
	Focus Group Script	1
Data Analysis Techniques	Descriptive Statistics	9
	Inferential Statistics	8
	Content Analysis	6
Total # of articles	-	15

Empirical block

In this subsection, the themes proposed by Cortez and Johnston (2017) are revisited. However, this time, we describe the most relevant results within each theme. Regarding the Innovation theme, which involves the development of new offerings, business models, or markets, Almeida et al. (2014) measured “the impact of the extension and interaction between retail services over the B2B sales” (p. 125) and identified that the principle of extensive service contributed to the increase in financial performance. The investigation focused on fuel services involving the relationship between supplier and distributor and had its conceptual framework anchored in the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

As for the findings of Customer Journey and Relationship Value, which advocates for studies on influencing attributes and the customer experience perspective, most of the studies focused on B2B consumers. Borges and Botelho (2008) studied the attributes most valued by clients from companies carrying image banks, and their conceptual framework considered the premises of organizational buying decisions (Webster & Wind, 1972). Battaglia et al. (2015) conducted an analysis of the value added to the perception of purchasing companies in the metal-mechanic, food, and furniture industries and identified that efficient purchasing channels are the main element affecting the purchasing decisions for all of them. Soares et al. (2012) studied the determinants of the choice of a particular marketing channel for organizational clients of technology-leveraging companies from different branches and identified that direct sales had a greater advantage over channel sales. Silva et al. (2016a) also researched organizational clients of technology-leveraging companies to identify whether trust and dependence on the supplier could be compromised according to the severity of a service failure, and the results pointed out that trust played a significant role in this regard. Eberle et al. (2017) also dealt with the perceived value of trust in a study with several health insurance companies and validated a theoretical model of explanation for customer retention. Spalenza et al. (2017) performed an analysis on perception of value for consumers of health insurance but considering another group, the medical providers. The authors identified, from the importance-performance matrix, that the performance was below expected. Silva et al. (2018) proposed a model of perceived value measurement, investigating the relationship between logistics providers and small businesses as clients and concluded that logistics services customers valued reputation, recognition, trust, repurchase intent, and word of mouth. Frederico and Ferreira (2018) established the determinants of the continuity of retailers’ relationship with companies supplying

hydraulic materials, also pointing to trust as a mediating variable for the continuity of the relationship.

Regarding the Data Analytics theme, which provides mechanisms at the interface between market research and decision making, only the study of [Brambilla and Dalmarco \(2014\)](#) approached such a topic. In this study, the processes of data mining and sales automation were studied, and it was concluded that it is not only the technological structure that favors CRM, but also the data collection and analysis tools, as well as interactive sales. It is widely understood that CRM is a marketing relationship approach strictly linked to B2B ([Demo et al., 2015](#), [Möller & Halinen-Kaila, 1998](#), [Sheth, 1976](#)).

As for the Marketing/Finance Interface and [Revenue Growth](#), only [Vieira et al. \(2013\)](#) were selected. The central concern was to understand the variables related to the sales teams that could imply a certain degree of performance, adopting the concept of cross-selling in retail. This study, conducted at the intersection between several industrial and retail sectors, concluded that the level of training and an understanding of customer needs positively impact performance and cross-selling ability, respectively.

For Harnessing Technology, which covers human-machine, machine-human, and machine-machine interaction, and also considers the influences of the internet, only [Amaral et al. \(2015\)](#) were selected. This study investigated how the after-sales service process could be influenced by e-commerce using the relationship between a capital goods company that engages in e-commerce activities and its various organizational clients at a national level. The case study concluded that the lack of success of the tool was due to the lack of customization of the technology for the service and post-sales processes.

At last, the authors that worked under the Industry Ecosystem theme were [Cozer et al. \(2008\)](#). This theme covers business networks, regulations, ethics, global networks and supplies, and security systems. Based on the Delta model and under the context of inter-organizational networks, the theoretical-empirical study analyzed the competitive positioning structure existing between a communications company, public relations, and fast-food restaurants. The main conclusion was the existence of significant support for the link between the companies, reflecting in another connection, which refers to a connection between the clients of the clients.

DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH AGENDA

The main studies on B2B marketing from the analysis of theories, methods, and empirical findings were presented together with an

overview of scientific publications on the subject, which included the temporal evolution, the main keywords adopted, and the frequency of publication in the main Brazilian journals.

However, before presenting gaps and possible questions for future research, it is worth highlighting some results and considerations that may stimulate reflections for the advancement of the field. First, research on B2B marketing has become more expressive in the last decade (2008-2018) compared to the previous period (1998-2007). When one considers that the first Brazilian mapping ([Lacerda & Mendonça, 2010](#)) favored only four national journals – disregarding the material collected from the EnANPADs – resulting in only nine articles, it can be noted that interest in the subject has practically doubled (18 studies) in the present decade (mainly since 2013) with at least two publications per year. This suggests a booming research theme.

On the other hand, such expansion has been based on the uneven distribution among the main periodicals related to the area. This result indicates a predominance of the scientific publications on B2B marketing in only one periodical with a strictly marketing scope, whereas in the other management journals with a broader scope, the number of publications reaches the mark of two articles per year. It can be understood that, in general, for the area of business, B2B marketing still presents a challenge.

With regards to the theoretical framework of the studies, the analysis of similarity of the objectives, in parallel with the theoretical-empirical analysis based on the six themes proposed by [Cortez and Johnson \(2017\)](#), proved that the researchers' concerns are centered on the study of Customer Journey and Relationship Value in the analysis of the trust established between B2B partners and the impact generated by the services offered to the clients. In addition, it was possible to attest that the analysis of the theoretical-empirical aspects was adjusted with the main keywords found in the articles, and the recurrent terms were trust, perceived value, and relationship, after excluding generic words such as B2B, clients, and companies.

This trend confirms what has already been happening in the context of the most generic national surveys about relationship marketing since the first publication ([Almeida et al., 2006](#)): the subject of trust as a form of relationship continues as a master line of investigation with massive representation even a decade later (e.g. [Demo et al., 2015](#); [Faria, Giuliani, Pizzinatto, & Spers, 2014](#)).

In relation to the adopted methodological procedures, cross-sectional quantitative studies were predominant, with the use of non-probabilistic samples, questionnaires, and

scales. However, it was also noticed that, in qualitative research, only flexible samples were used. In general terms, researchers measure efforts to link collection instruments and data processing procedures to theoretical constructs, choosing to define samples based on convenience. This reveals that the studies are independent of each other and of weak generalization, which possibly hinders the theoretical and empirical evolution of B2B in Brazil. The scarcity of theoretical essays also recalls previous research findings in the context of relationship marketing (e.g. Almeida et al., 2006).

In addition, the result of the methodological block corroborates the previous concern regarding the conceptual multiplicity in terms of marketing as a whole (e.g. Hunt, 2002; Hutt & Speh, 2010; Lilien, 2016), as well as the last literature review on relationship marketing (Demo et al., 2015).

Thus, when drawing a parallel with international production, it is possible to perceive similarities and discrepancies. Cortez and Johnston (2017) found that the presence of B2B in leading marketing journals is also scarce. Another survey found that only 6.7% of all articles published between 1936 and 2006 dealt with the theme (LaPlaca & Katrichis, 2009). The same could be noted in the review made by Demo et al. (2015), in which only 13% of the publications between 2001 and 2013 dealt with B2B. All three studies showed that the publications are more concentrated in solving management problems than encouraging theoretical advancement concerning the subject. From the point of view of Brazilian production, only 21% of the review made by Demo et al. (2015) and two articles of the review made by the present study were theoretical rehearsals, validating such a point. In short, the subject provides research opportunities for both Brazilian researchers, and those from other countries.

However, it is necessary to consider that international production has reached a more advanced stage in that it promotes academic production and development of new theories of B2B marketing. In the light of their own work, Cortez and Johnston (2017) suggested filling this gap through consulting firms, which could play the role of connecting academic research to the practical implementation needs of managers. The authors understand that there must be an interaction between the actors involved in B2B marketing, such as collaborative production networks, so that this field of study can advance. In their “Delphi” method, the authors propose a network option for knowledge construction.

This opportunity does not currently apply to Brazilian production. The overlapping periods of the last reviews on the subject (Almeida et al., 2006; Demo et al., 2015; Faria et al., 2014; Lacerda & Mendonça, 2010) support the understanding that

there is a lack of reflection on synergy and interaction. Research groups still operate in an isolated way (Demo et al., 2015). The Indian School of Business Management and Administration (ISBM), for example, organizes two annual membership meetings where all B2B marketing professionals analyze challenges, research, and best practices (Cortez & Johnston, 2017). Nevertheless, Brazilian production lacks a theoretical lens beyond CRM in its publications, and collaborative networks for knowledge construction may be an option for breaking through this barrier.

Thus, in light of the results and considerations brought in and inspired by what was internationally highlighted in Cortez and Johnston (2017) and Lilien (2016), the proposed research agenda is actually put in the form of questions that will allow for a deeper understanding of B2B marketing in line with the possibility of, to some extent, reducing the gap between academia and professional challenges:

- Once the results have disproportionately focused on a single theme (Customer Journey and Relationship Value), why not research other B2B marketing topics?
- Why not count on research that intersects with more than just one of the themes highlighted in Cortez and Johnston (2017), such as the use of technology and the Internet of Things (IoT) as a form of residual or disruptive innovation of business/markets?
- Could decision-making methodologies based on large amounts of data (Big Data) affect the opportunities for growth and returns in relationships between companies in a B2B context?
- Given that B2B marketing can be studied from the focus of the target customer (Campos et al., 2017), could the research investigate other types of non-commercial organizations (e.g. government agencies, public companies, non-governmental institutions)?
- Why not encourage research with field experts, testing the key concepts presented in this study that have influenced B2B marketing since its inception or the emerging thematic framework in Cortez and Johnston (2017)?
- How can we value the use of qualitative research strategies that allow greater depth with respect

to variables that directly affect B2B decisions (i.e. variables intrinsic to the individuals that influence the organizational purchases processed by these same individuals)?

FINAL REMARKS

The present study contributes to the existing research by taking a first step towards understanding how B2B marketing has been developing. Taking the study of Cortez and Johnston (2017) as a starting point, it provides new thematic lines at the national level since the authors have listened to a large number of experts in the Western context. For more regionalized studies that focus on how well the practical problems of B2B marketing professionals are aligned with what academic research, one suggestion would be to replicate such a study in the Brazilian context, or even at a regional (i.e. Latin American) level.

Thus, in order to exceed the limitations of the present literature review, a systematized analysis using the Delphi method is suggested, which can not only gather the literature through bibliographic search, but also integrate the knowledge that is disseminated on B2B marketing from the academic sphere to the field of marketing professionals (decision makers and consultants).

NOTE

A preliminary version of this article was presented at the XXI Seminários em Administração (Seminar on Administration [SemeAd]), held in São Paulo from November 7 to 9, 2018.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to thank the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Coordination of Superior Level Staff Improvement [CAPES]) for funding a Master's degree to the second author (CAPES Grant: 001).

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