

## **Review and Prospect of Relationship Marketing: A Citation Analysis**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the issue of relationship marketing (RM) in SSCI. Using citation analysis from the Web of Science, the study shows that 170 articles related to RM were published in the leading peer-review academic journals between 1999 and 2005. Our findings support Grönroos' (1999) view that RM research has a competitive advantage in the new era. Our citation analysis finds evidence that published RM-related papers increased in 2005 as compared to 1999, and most articles were published in influential social science journals, with a higher impact factor. We also provide several implications in the discussion section.

Keywords: Relationship Marketing, Citation Analysis

### **INTRODUCTION**

Relationship marketing (RM) is meriting an increasing amount of attention in marketing research, and has already become a key enterprise marketing activity in recent decades (see Grönroos, 1994; 1999). Since Leonard Berry first pointed out RM in 1983 (Berry, 1983), there has been a steady increase in RM-related articles (e.g., Ford, 1980; Grönroos, 1990, 1991; Kolter, 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1999; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999) published in important and high-ranking journals (e.g., Journal of Marketing, European

Journal of Marketing, Industrial Marketing Management, Journal of Business Research, and so on).

In particular, some RM literature is leading academic marketing thought towards a new paradigm (Sharma & Sheth, 1997; Sheth, 2000). Kuhn (1962) defined and proposed the concept of a “paradigm shift” (p. 10). In marketing, a paradigm shift involves movement from one of the traditional perspectives of marketing – transaction (TM), to relationship marketing (RM). This also involves a marketing mix which transfers from the 4Ps model to the 6Rs model (Christopher, Payne, & Ballantyne, 1991), or the 30Rs model in terms of relationships (Gummesson, 1999). Further, it seems reasonable to determine why RM has taken up a place of prominence in mainstream marketing, and what influence RM could have in both marketing theory and practice.

After years of research, RM-related articles clearly broaden the domain in ways not restricted to the marketing area, but also in interpreting phenomenon in other areas (e.g., international business, networking, inter-organizational aspects, etc.). However, a major question remains: what do we know about RM that is “most important” or “most influential” to help us determine the future of relationship marketing (see Sheth, 2002)? Cummings and Frost (1985) suggested changes in a different component of the knowledge exchange process, and the need for more cross-disciplinary symposia at professional meetings. Hence, this seems an appropriate time to integrate the dispersion of all varieties of RM articles, in order to review its present state and discover future directions and research paths.

Our aim in this paper is to analyze the articles published in leading academic journals. Unlike the approach of other studies, we conduct a citation analysis, whereby we review articles published in journals cited by JCR-SSCI (the Journal Citation Report on the Social Sciences Citation Index). The JCR-SSCI coverage extends to over 1,700 of the world's leading scholarly social sciences journals, varying across more than 50 disciplines<sup>1</sup>. Although citation analysis has become much more popular in assessing the influence of individual authors, articles, books, and journals (e.g., Wilgus, Adcock, & Takashima, 2005; Costanza et. al., 2004; Hoaas & Madigan, 1999), Blackburn (1990) pointed out that citation analysis has a rich trove in the natural and physical sciences, but one less rich in the social sciences. This lack led us to adopt this method in this study to shed light on the relevant contributions.

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<sup>1</sup> ISI Thomson (<http://scientific.thomson.com/products/ssci>)

We are particularly interested in the topic of RM related articles that have had the most influence on marketing research, through an examination of citations and their contents. The primary intention of the review is to provide knowledge regarding the general issues or topics that have been studied; the authors who have made contributions to the body of knowledge, and the journals that have published important work in this area, as well as to suggest some important areas for future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The definition of relationship marketing**

The main purpose of this study is not to discuss the definition of relationship marketing. However, as different authors have offered various views about what should and should not be at the core of what constitutes “relationship marketing” (Harker, 1999), we feel an overview of the differences may be pertinent. Berry (1983) first proposed the concept of relationship marketing in the service context, and defined it as “attracting, maintaining, and enhancing customer relationships” (p. 25). However, the RM literature reveals a great many more definitions of RM. Harker (1999) conducted a content analysis that produced 26 definitions from the RM literature, and classified seven fundamental “concept categories”: (1) birth; (2) development; (3) maintenance; (4) temporality; (5) interaction; (6) outputs; (7) emotional content. He indicated, for example, that Berry emphasizes the “beginnings” of marketing relationships, focusing on the importance of RM’s “customer keeping” orientation (Christopher et al., 1991).

Moreover, Grönroos (1991) defined the term of relationship marketing as “establishing relationships with customers and other parties at a profit, by mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises”. Gummesson (1994a) stated that RM emphasizes a long-term interactive relationship between the provider and the customer, as well as long-term profitability. Morgan and Hunt (1994) studied internal marketing and proposed the following: “Relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges” (p. 22). Buttle (1996) proposed that RM is concerned with the development and maintenance of mutually beneficial relationships with strategically significant markets. However, according Harker, the “best” in terms of the underlying conceptualizations of relationship marketing is Grönroos (1994), if the validity of the research methodology is accepted.

Relationship marketing is to identify and establish, maintain and enhance and when

necessary also to terminate relationships with customers and other stakeholders, at a profit, so that the objectives of all parties are met, and that this is done by a mutual exchange and fulfillment of promises. (Grönroos, in Harker, 1999, p.16).

### **A new paradigm of relationship marketing**

After the 1980s, relationship marketing emerged as a popular new paradigm in marketing (see Sheth, 2000, 2002). As a paradigm, relationship marketing is a recent phenomenon (Palmer, Lindgreen, & Vanhamme, 2005). It has been proposed as the "newest" mainstream school of thought in marketing, beyond the twelve commonly accepted schools: commodity, functional, regional, institutional, functionalist, managerial, buyer behavior, activist, macromarketing, organizational dynamics, systems, and social exchange (see Sheth, Gardner, & Garrett, 1988).

Kotler (1992) pointed out that companies must move from short-term transaction-oriented goals to long-term relationship-building goals. Relationship marketing, however, just offers firms the opportunities to archive this goal and to build long term relationships with their stakeholders (e.g., customers, suppliers). These relationships are also regarded as a key marketing asset (Hunt, 1997). Both academics and practitioners indicated that RM is obviously good for business and yields improved business performance (e.g. Berry, 1983; Fuhrman, 1991; Gummesson, 1994a; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Izquierdo, Cillán, & Gutiérrez, 2005).

### **A classification of relationship marketing**

Traditional relationship marketing studies focus on primarily dyadic relationships, such as supplier-customer relationship (e.g., Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987; Sheth & Sharma, 1997). Gummesson (1999) argued that the domain of RM should extend its boundaries to all marketing activities (e.g., internal customers, networks, partnerships), instead of the limited dyad model. Firms should build up long-term relationships with stakeholders in order to enhance their core competitiveness (Hunt, 1997). Morgan and Hunt (1994) classified a focal firm with its relational exchanges via four categories: supplier, lateral, buyer, and internal partnerships. They further identified ten forms of relationships. Gummesson, however, proposed 30 kinds of relationships and three kinds of partnerships (see 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1996, and 1999). In order to simplify the classification, this study embraces the four categories used by Morgan and Hunt (1994) for content analysis.

Thus, the process development of RM is debated over a range of topics, from its definition and paradigm shift to its classification. This combination provides us with more information to help us understand a review of RM. The following section will use citation analysis as evidence regarding the prospects for RM.

## METHODOLOGY

We begin with the selection of academic journals that deal with the topic of RM in our literature survey. We considered three key factors in selecting the source journals. Firstly, we wanted to include only that top tier of high quality journals that make up SSCI. Secondly, we wanted to include discipline journals from management, marketing and business research that have made contributions to our understanding. Finally, the survey focused primarily on academic journals published in the last six years.

We used the key words “Relationship Marketing” while searching for the topic, and relied on the SSCI database for our literature search. We studied the articles published in these journals over the 1999–2005 periods. In Table 1, a total of 170 articles are identified, all of which were published in the 59 top academic journals that met the criteria for inclusion (see Appendix).

## RESULTS

### Numbers of Articles and Journals

Table 1 displays the number of articles and journals containing information pertaining to developments in relationship marketing as they were classified throughout the six years. The 18 journals selected from the leading academic journals listed in the SSCI (for instance, the Journal of Marketing(JM), the Industrial Marketing Management(IMM), and the Journal of Business Research(JBR)), as well as one Finnish-based journal (Ekonomiska Samfundets Tidskrift) (Table 1) all contained at least two articles related to RM, and most articles studied were in the field of management or business. These journals are mostly published in North America and represent primary outlets for high quality research.

Table one also contains a list of their distribution in the leading SSCI journals from 1999 to 2005. There are two observations of note. First, in the recent past, especially in 2005, an increasing number of these articles have appeared in mainstream journals such as the IMM, JBR, International Journal of Service Industry Management (IJSIM), and

JM. This indicates an increasing interest in RM issues in the marketing context among scholars and journal editors. This also suggests that the trend is likely to continue, and that more high-quality research related to relationship marketing will appear in leading marketing journals in the future.

Second, among RM articles published in various outlets, 28 articles appeared in the IMM. The origin of the concept of relationship marketing emerged from the field of industrial marketing (Grönroos, 1994). However, Table 1 also shows that the number of articles with RM as a topic increased in 2005 compared with previous years, and have constituted popular outlets for this research, as well as those of journals have high impact effected on this issue.

The impact factor<sup>2</sup> of journals is a measure of the frequency with which the "average article" in a journal has been cited in a particular year. The impact factor will help us evaluate a journal's relative importance, especially when it is compared to other articles in the same field. Overall, the highest score in terms of impact factor is the JM, with a score of 3.1 in 2004.

### **Most Cited Articles Related to RM in SSCI**

One of articles most cited by scholars is that of Garbarino and Johnson (1999), which has been cited 112 times. The second highest one, Reinartz & Kumar (2000), has been cited 51 times. Both articles were published in the JM. However, Table 2 shows only articles cited at least two times. We, however, accumulated the most cited articles on related RM research from Table 2 and Table 3. It shows there are 8 articles published in the JM (e.g., Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Reinartz & Kumar, 2000; Gruen, Summers, & Acito, 2000; De Wulf et al., 2001; Verhoef, 2003; Homburg et al., 2002; Jayachandran et al., 2005; Arnett et al., 2003) that are listed in the 59 most cited articles, and that the total number of times that these 8 articles are cited totals 231. The IMM, however, also has 8 articles appearing in the 59 most cited articles, but they only received a combined total of 50 citations. Two points arise from this finding: first, the JM has the greatest influence and impact factor in terms of marketing journals. Researchers like to cite the articles published in the top journal; for example, scholars primarily cite business subject categories in: Academy of Management Review (AMR), Academy of Management Journal (AMJ), Administrative Science Quarterly (ASQ), Journal of Consumer Research

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<sup>2</sup> Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) announce and specially compare to others in the same field of journal. (JCR, <http://portal.isiknowledge.com>)

(JCR), JM.

Second, most articles with higher rates of citation increased in this period. The articles published more recently have far fewer citations. This indicates that an article with a powerful influence requires time to reach the goal of being cited .

Table 1 The Distribution in Leading SSCI Journals

Journal name	Subtotal	Publish Year						
		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<i>Industrial Marketing Management (IMM)</i>	28	4	1	0	3	5	4	11
<i>Journal of Business Research (JBR)</i>	25	10	0	0	0	2	3	10
<i>International Journal of Service Industry Management (IJSIM)</i>	12	1	1	3	2	0	2	3
<i>Journal of Marketing (JM)</i>	10	1	2	1	1	2	0	3
<i>Journal of The Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS)</i>	9	2	1	0	0	1	3	2
<i>Service Industries Journal (SIJ)</i>	8	0	2	2	1	1	1	1
<i>Journal of Business Ethics (JBE)</i>	7	1	0	0	4	1	0	1
<i>International Marketing Review (IMR)</i>	6	2	1	0	0	1	1	1
<i>International Journal of Research In Marketing (IJRM)</i>	5	2	0	0	0	2	0	1
<i>Journal of Retailing (JR)</i>	5	1	0	0	0	2	1	1
<i>Total Quality Management (TQM)</i>	4	1	0	1	2	0	0	0
<i>British Journal of Management (BJM)</i>	3	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
<i>Long Range Planning (LRP)</i>	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
<i>California Management Review (CMR)</i>	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
<i>Ekonomiska Samfundets Tidskrift (EST)</i>	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
<i>Harvard Business Review (HBR)</i>	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

Table 1 The Distribution in Leading SSCI Journals (Continued)

Journal name	Subtotal	Publish Year						
		1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<i>MIT Sloan Management Review (MSMR)</i>	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
<i>Tourism Management (TM)</i>	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Other journal (less than one article)*	35	6	4	5	2	3	4	11
Total	170	35	13	14	17	23	19	49

\*Other journal only has one article, including *Advances in Consumer Research*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *Canadian Journal of Administrative, Sciences-Revue Canadienne Des Sciences De L Administration*, *Clinical Research And Regulatory Affairs*, *E-Commerce And Web Technologies*, *Economic And Industrial Democracy*, *Ekonomicky Casopis*, *Higher Education*, *Information & Management*, *International Journal of Information Management*, *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, *International Small Business Journal*, *Internet Research-Electronic Networking Applications And Policy*, *Journal For The Theory of Social Behaviour*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, *Journal of Economic Psychology*, *Journal of Information Technology*, *Journal of International Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *Journal of Service Research*, *Journal of The Operational Research Society*, *Local Government Studies*, *Omega-International Journal of Management Science*, *Organization Science*, *Political Studies*, *Public Management Review*, *Sloan Management Review*, *Supply Chain Management-An International Journal*, *Technovation*, *Total Quality Management & Business Excellence*, *Transportation Journal*, *Transportation Research Part E-Logistics And Transportation Review*.

Table 2 Total Times Cited

Rank <sup>a</sup>	Author(s)	Journal	Times cited <sup>b</sup>	Rank <sup>a</sup>	Author(s)	Journal	Times cited <sup>b</sup>
1	Garbarino and Johnson (1999)	<i>JM</i>	112	31	Jap et al. (1999)	<i>JBR</i>	6
2	Reinartz & Kumar (2000)	<i>JM</i>	51	32	Sharma et al. (1999)	<i>IMM</i>	6
3	Peppers et al. (1999)	<i>HBR</i>	28	33	Coviello et al. (2000)	<i>JBV</i>	5
4	Weitz & Bradford (1999)	<i>JAMS</i>	26	34	Hartley (1999)	<i>BJSE</i>	5
5	Gruen et al. (2000)	<i>JM</i>	25	35	Nijssen et al. (2003)	<i>JAMS</i>	4
6	Grayson & Ambler (1999)	<i>JMR</i>	25	36	Homburg et al. (2002)	<i>JM</i>	4
7	Schneider & Bowen (1999)	<i>SMR</i>	24	37	Hsieh et al. (2002)	<i>IJIM</i>	4
8	De Wulf et al. (2001)	<i>JM</i>	21	38	Kothandaraman & Wilson (2000)	<i>IMM</i>	4



Table 2 Total Times Cited (Continued)

Rank <sup>a</sup>	Author(s)	Journal	Times cited <sup>b</sup>	Rank <sup>a</sup>	Author(s)	Journal	Times cited <sup>b</sup>
9	Winer (2001)	<i>CMR</i>	19	39	Alajoutsijarvi et al. (2000)	<i>IM</i>	4
10	Ambler et al. (1999)	<i>IJRM</i>	16	40	Jayachandran et al. (2005)	<i>JM</i>	3
11	Baker et al. (1999)	<i>JAMS</i>	16	41	Eriksson & Mattsson (2002)	<i>IMM</i>	3
12	Verhoef (2003)	<i>JM</i>	14	42	Edvardsson & Roos (2001)	<i>IJSIM</i>	3
13	Morgan & Hunt (1999)	<i>JBR</i>	12	43	Payne & Holt (2001)	<i>BJM</i>	3
14	Helfer & Vith (1999)	<i>IMM</i>	12	44	Gremler et al. (2001)	<i>IJSIM</i>	3
15	Wong & Chan (1999)	<i>JBE</i>	9	45	Kim (1999)	<i>IJRM</i>	3
16	Brennan & Turnbull (1999)	<i>IMM</i>	9	46	Ping (1999)	<i>JR</i>	3
17	Bolton et al. (2004)	<i>JAMS</i>	8	47	Chenet et al. (1999)	<i>JBR</i>	3
18	Papadopoulou et al. (2001)	<i>IREN</i>	8	48	Foxall (1999)	<i>JEP</i>	3
19	Dibb & Meadows (2001)	<i>SIJ</i>	8	49	Li & Dant (1999)	<i>IMM</i>	3
20	Davis et al. (1999)	<i>JIT</i>	8	50	Lin et al. (2003)	<i>SIJ</i>	2
21	Gronroos (1999)	<i>JBR</i>	8	51	Arnett et al. (2003)	<i>JM</i>	2
22	Kamakura et al. (2003)	<i>IJRM</i>	7	52	Chan et al. (2002)	<i>JBE</i>	2
23	Bauer et al. (2002)	<i>IMM</i>	7	53	Parente et al. (2002)	<i>IJOPM</i>	2
24	Sharma & Patterson (2000)	<i>IJSIM</i>	7	54	Sirgy (2002)	<i>JBE</i>	2
25	Ricard & Perrien (1999)	<i>JBR</i>	7	55	Chaston (2000)	<i>SIJ</i>	2
26	Dowling (2002)	<i>CMR</i>	6	56	Voss et al. (2000)	<i>OS</i>	2

Table 2 Total Times Cited (Continued)

Rank <sup>a</sup>	Author(s)	Journal	Times cited <sup>b</sup>	Rank <sup>a</sup>	Author(s)	Journal	Times cited <sup>b</sup>
27	Luo (2002)	<i>IMM</i>	6	57	Paulin et al. (1999)	<i>IJSIM</i>	2
28	Berger & Bechwati (2001)	<i>OIJMS</i>	6	58	Merrilees & Miller (1999)	<i>JBR</i>	2
29	Colgate & Danaher (2000)	<i>JAMS</i>	6	59	Carrigan (1999)	<i>LRP</i>	2
30	Naidu et al. (1999)	<i>JBR</i>	6				

<sup>a</sup> Rank is based on all 170 articles <sup>b</sup> Citation counts up to December 31, 2005. *Source:* Social Science Citation Index, 1999-2005

Table 3 Academic Journals for The 59 Most Cited Articles on Related RM Research

Name of Journal	Number of top 59 articles	
	Total	Total of times cited
1. <i>Journal of Marketing (JM)</i>	8	231
2. <i>Industrial Marketing Management (IMM)</i>	8	50
3. <i>Journal of Business Research (JBR)</i>	7	44
4. <i>Journal of The Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS)</i>	5	60

*Source:* Social Science Citation Index, 1999-2005

Table 4 Authors Appeared in 170 Articles Ranked by The Number Of Records Displayed

Rank	Author	The Number of Records Displayed
1	Ambler, T	4
2	De Wulf, K	4
3	Hsieh, YC	4
4	Chiu, HC	3
5	de Ruyter, K	3
6	Odekerken-Schroder, G	3
7	Sheth, JN	3
8	Styles, C	3

*Source:* Social Science Citation Index, 1999-2005

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results show the importance of the more recent RM articles, which were an outgrowth of marketing research, and especially so in 2005. The glory years of RM started in 1999. There were 35 articles published in academic journals listed in the SSCI.

However, this analysis does not include other articles collected in other databases (e.g., ABI/INFORM or EBSCO). After 1999, many RM articles were published in other journals, however, to the IMM, JBR, and other journals of relevant areas.

Citations analyses have termed the total number of citations as the “most important” or “most influential”. This measure reflects the journal's impact on future research without regard to the amount published, in terms of number of articles and/or length of the articles. However, citation analysis is an imperfect tool, but one which can still prove useful, with some caveats, for arriving at reasonable conclusions of different levels of validity and acceptability (Arunachalam, 1998). The value of citation analysis has primarily been as a method for better understanding the development of scientific communication both within and across disciplines. Determining the most important articles and journals has increased cross-disciplinary research in relationship marketing.

The rankings determined in this study are based on a six-year analysis of citations from 170 articles, from 59 journals, previously perceived to be of high importance to RM research and most often cited in relationship marketing by scholars according to Garbarino and Johnson (1999). The number of different journals is representative of the breadth of the RM field and the diversity of the journals used in RM research. Based on the results of this citation analysis, IMM has published 28 articles from 1999 to 2005, compared to only 10 articles printed in the JM, with prime importance to research in the RM field. Review of RM research history has clearly confirmed that RM should expect fruitful prospects in the future.

### **LIMITATIONS**

There are a couple of limitations of the methodology taken in this study, for example, ranking journals by their relative importance to RM research. The first is using the term “Relationship Marketing” as the topic of research. Only 170 articles were included in this study. However, changing the topic (TS=Relationship marketing) to the title (TI=Relationship marketing) in the same database finds only 45 articles. Second, the limitation of the database was only covering the time-span from 1999 to 2005. Third, the database is limited to SSCI, not including Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-EXPANDED). SCI collected many articles with no management areas.

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#### **APPENDIX**

170 most cited research articles on topic of relationship marketing related as published in SSCI journals during 1999–2005 (contact with author).