

SME in IMP research: a missing actor?

Roberta Bocconcelli

roberta.bocconcelli@uniurb.it

Alessandro Pagano

alessandro.pagano@uniurb.it

*Department of Economics, Society, Politics-DESP
University of Urbino - Italy*

Work in progress

Abstract

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are perceived as a core category in management and business literature. In terms of research agenda, the existing academic literature increasingly addresses themes - such as networks, networking, innovation, marketing, purchasing - which represent relevant topics in IMP tradition. This leads to a related question: which is currently the place of SMEs in IMP research? This paper aims to explore whether and how the category of SMEs has been analyzed in IMP research. To achieve this goal the paper provides a literature review of 183 papers published in the Annual IMP Conferences from 1999 to 2014. Preliminary results show that the majority of papers concern the SME category, while there is growing interest on new business (spin-off, new ventures, start-up), cluster firms and entrepreneurs. With respect to research themes, this review shows that the main emphasis has been placed on internationalization paths and on marketing activities, and that most of the papers specifically focus on SMEs' involvement in relationships and networks. Under a theoretical point of view a "distance" emerges between established IMP research and research streams in small business management and entrepreneurship. Even though many papers have been presented at the IMP conference, thus providing interesting empirical contributions, within an IMP perspective SMEs have yet to be fully unveiled. It is argued that IMP framework and concepts could be very useful for a more comprehensive understanding of SMEs processes, thus providing an effective contribution to the current management and policy debate.

Keywords: IMP Research, SMEs, Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) represent a pillar of modern economies and receive great attention in the management literature. Various leading academic journals are explicitly devoted to SMEs-related issues and many scholars published articles on this topic in various management journals (Gilmore et al., 2013; O'Donnell, 2011).

Therefore it could be argued that SME is perceived as a core category in management and business literature. In terms of research agenda, the existing academic literature increasingly addresses themes - such as networks, networking, innovation, marketing, purchasing (Gronum, Verreyne & Kastle, 2012; Ndubisi & Matanda, 2011; Hanna & Walsh, 2008; Bradley, Meyer & Gao, 2006) - which represent relevant topics in IMP tradition (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995; Håkansson et al., 2009).

At the same time recent IMP developments highlight the need to conduct research on SMEs as a new frontier. In the call for papers for *Symposium 2016, IMP - Making Sense of the Interactive Business World*, for the first time - at least in our knowledge - specific attention has been placed on SMEs as "particular business context".

This leads to a related question: which is currently the place of SMEs in IMP research? This paper thus aims to explore whether and how the category of SMEs has been analyzed in IMP research and to provide possible avenues of theoretical and empirical effort.

To achieve this goal the paper presents a literature review of 183 papers published in the Annual IMP Conferences from 1999 to 2014. Papers have been selected through IMP Group website using specific keywords within the available "search fields". The paper is structured as follows. In the second section a brief explanation of the methodology adopted is presented. Section 3 addresses the main results of the review with reference to SMEs typologies under investigation, main covered themes and adopted theoretical approaches. The final section outlines preliminary conclusions over the results of the literature review.

METHODOLOGY OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper is concerned exclusively with papers presented at the IMP conference whose access is possible through the dataset available in the IMP web-site. Therefore papers presented before the 1999 conference have not been taken into consideration. Reporting only on IMP conference papers is by no means a limitation. More structured and qualified contributions could be collected through the review of articles published on IMP Journal and leading marketing and purchasing journals. This is planned for the next research step. However, it could be argued that the analysis of IMP conference papers can provide interesting insights over how IMP research community has addressed SMEs as a research problem to be investigated. Thus collected papers could be perceived as preliminary evidence of the degree of attention by IMP scholars. Moreover, the analysis of IMP conference papers could also shed light over theoretical and empirical work of various nature that has been presented to the IMP community over time.

The database has been searched over titles and abstracts using specific key-words: "new venture", "start-up", "small", "SME", "spin-off", "entrepreneur". Selected papers have been checked – through their abstract and actual content – to have confirmation about their focus on SMEs-related topics. At the end of this phase 183 papers have been considered for review. It should be recognized that using these key-words we might have missed papers which investigated SMEs without considering them as the main focus.

Each paper has been coded according to a number of basic categories. The first one is concerned with the type of company: new venture, spin-off, start-up, SME, cluster SME, mid-size firm. The category of “entrepreneur” has been added to include papers whose main focus is on the entrepreneur within the small firms. As explained above, all papers have been controlled in order to verify that research – in almost all the cases based on empirical work – is conducted on small-medium size companies. Then all papers have been classified according to the main theme covered. This type of coding have been subject to a few rounds of assessment in order to develop a classification scheme useful for grouping contributions around a few main topics. Each work could have been coded with reference to more than one topic. In addition papers have been classified (yes/no) on whether they have a strong focus on SMEs as main research theme. In other words, papers using SMEs only as empirical base have been classified as “no”. Finally, all papers have been subject to evaluation on a theoretical level. Within this dimension papers have been coded according to four criteria: i) strong or weak focus on IMP perspective; ii) use of specific IMP concepts; iii) main SMEs-related theoretical framework and concepts; iv) main management-based theoretical frameworks and concepts. This type of classifications have been introduced to gain an understanding of the degree of adoption of the IMP approach as main conceptual base and of the use of other theoretical perspectives – in an exclusive or concurrent pattern – to explore SMEs’ behavior.

RESULTS

This paragraph discusses the preliminary results of the literature review based on IMP conference papers. The first section examines the relevance of different typologies of SMEs, while the next one discusses the main themes covered by selected papers. The last section is concerned with analyzing the theoretical background of papers and their conceptual linkages with IMP framework and concepts.

TPOLOGY OF COMPANIES

Table 1 provides a synthesis of collected articles classified by company typology: SME, cluster SME, mid-size firm, spin-off company, new venture, entrepreneur. A few papers addressed two categories with similar relevance (e.g. role of entrepreneurs in new ventures). Most of the papers collected are concerned with SMEs (121 papers). Within this category some studies distinguish explicitly the sectoral focus, on more general terms (manufacturing/services) or targeting a specific industry. A few studies (6 papers) aim to examine cluster SMEs, thus taking into consideration the “context”, such as the industrial district or the high-tech cluster, where firms operate. Therefore in these papers SMEs are analyzed in connection with their “networked” environment, that represents an interesting setting for developing IMP-based empirical research. The main goal is to explore changes in relationships inside and outside the local cluster, in the light of changing market context (Furlan & Grandinetti, 2008; Guercini & Runfola, 2008). This specific focus – cluster/district SMEs opening to new relationships patterns – is pursued also within the small business literature, whose empirical research is concerned with both SMEs in advanced and emerging/developing markets (Chiarvesio, Di Maria & Micelli, 2010; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2000). With regard to the small/medium dichotomy, selected papers do not distinguish explicitly the two typologies of firms. Most of the paper examine cases or a sample of SMEs. Only a few papers (4) examine specific categories –as mid-size firms – as subject of ad hoc

investigation (Tunisini & Bocconcelli, 2008; Barrett & Fletcher, 2000). Currently in the small business literature there is an increasing – even though still limited – emphasis on this type of firm, which represents in specific national/local contexts – a major component of economic and industrial systems (Coltorti et al., 2013; Simon, 2009).

A significant number of papers address the topic of new business formation/development (42 papers). These contributions examine new ventures, start-up firms and spin-off companies. Almost all papers adopt a processual perspective to examine the creation and further development of new firms, thus taking into account a distinctive feature – the dynamic nature - of this kind of small companies. With regard to spin-off firms, all 7 papers are concerned with University-born companies, which is a widely researched topic in the entrepreneurship and technology transfer literature (Djokovic & Soiutaris, 2008). Therefore it seems that thus far there has been lack of attention towards corporate spin-offs.

Table 1. Typology of researched companies

Typology	Number of papers
SME	121
Cluster/district SME	6
Mid-size firms	4
New venture	13
Start-up	22
Spin-off	7
Entrepreneur	16

A small group of papers (16) is focused on SMEs via the analysis of the behavior of entrepreneurs. While some contributions develop empirical analysis of entrepreneurs – in their business choices - as representatives of their SMEs, in a few papers authors recognize the specific features of entrepreneurial processes, thus conceiving firms under investigation as entrepreneurial firms. Thus the entrepreneur – as individual – is considered as a distinct entity shaping the behavior of companies (Jack & Mouzas, 2011; McGrath & O’Toole, 2014).

MAIN THEMES

Table 2 provides a synthesis of main results in terms of covered themes, in combination with typologies of SMEs. Collected papers address a wide variety of management topics. A first distinction could be made between themes within general management (GM) area and those focusing on market relations (MR) of various kind: 76 papers develop GM issues, while 107 papers address MR subjects. Therefore there is an emphasis on researching how SMEs behave within relationships with other actors. This is in line with IMP research focus.

With regard to main business processes, beside new firm creation, a part of collected papers concern internationalization (39 papers) and innovation management processes (16 papers). Internationalization processes by SMEs received a great attention, in line with existing and wide literature on this subject (Ruzzier, Hisrich & Antoncic, 2006). Various papers (21) are

concerned with the role of relationships and networks in shaping the expansion of SMEs in foreign markets. A strong focus is on relationships as bridgeheads towards increasing involvement abroad: SMEs suffer from limited resources and thus use existing relationships to acquire foreign market knowledge and establish cooperative relationships with new customers (Angdal & Axelsson, 2002; Elo & Tornroos, 2005). Various papers examine in more depth specific steps in the development of international relationships: partner selection, relationship development, change/ending of relationships. A few contributions attempt to highlight emerging typologies of networks, thus attempting to provide a more structured analysis. Various papers point out relevant variables shaping international relationship development: competences, culture, new technologies. While most of the studies aims to provide a full account of international expansion paths, only a few papers focus on specific functional processes and activities, notably on branding, sales and sourcing.

Table 2. Selected themes and type of companies

	Main themes	SME	Cluster SME	Mid-size	New vent.	Start-up	Spin-off	Entr.	Total
Main processes	Internationalisation	31	1	1	3	1	--	2	39
	Innovation	7	-	1	3	2	2	1	16
Functional processes	Marketing	25	1	-	1	3	2	-	32
	Purchasing/sourcing	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Key topics	Network	52	5	3	7	6	4	13	90
	Relationship	27	-	1	-	7	1	-	36
	Resource	2	-	-	5	4	-	1	12
	Cognition	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	3

Surprisingly a limited number of studies (16 papers) explicitly concern innovation management activities in SMEs (Adams, Alexander, & Oberg, 2014; Partanen et al., 2007). Some contributions address under different perspectives product innovation in SMEs, while other studies examine innovative processes within start-up and spin-off companies. Therefore relevant issues such as creativity and management of R&D in small firms thus far have not been among the main subjects of papers presented at the IMP conference.

With regard to functional processes, a number of papers focus on marketing and purchasing/sourcing. This is in line with IMP tradition, which historically placed attention on these two research areas. However, more internally oriented functions/processes in SMEs - such as HR, accounting, production and R&D – thus far have not been examined.

Papers on marketing issues (32) have addressed various specific topics. A group of contributions have been concerned with exploring the nature of marketing behavior in SMEs: some examined market orientation in SMEs, while other papers focused on how SMEs implement marketing via relationships, thus developing networking activities and cooperation with other SMEs to compete in markets (Buchanan-Oliver & Young, 2003; Guercini & Runfola, 2008). Another group of papers aimed instead to analyze specific marketing activities by SMEs, such as branding, market segmentation, market information acquisition, web marketing and sales organization. The variety – and also fragmentation - of marketing-related aspects examined in IMP conference papers is reflected in the recent literature on the role of marketing in SMEs (O'Donnell, 2011).

Much less attention has been placed on purchasing/sourcing (8). A small number of contributions explored purchasing behavior by SMEs, while a few papers examined SMEs characteristics as users/customer of complex products and services. This paucity of contributions is in line with the overall limited research on the role of purchasing in SMEs.

Beside the analysis of main and functional processes, the role of networks and relationships emerges as a major research issue, as could be expected. According to our dataset, almost two-thirds of all collected papers address networks/relationships as main topic, adopting a variety of perspectives. A few studies aim to examine SMEs' positioning in networks, attempting to understand change patterns. The position in networks depends also on networking activities, which have been analyzed in various papers (29). Networking is perceived as the way SMEs strategize, in order to pursue business goals and key resources within innovation and internationalization processes (Aaboen, Dubois, & Lind, 2012; Bocconcelli & Pagano, 2013). In some contributions this orientation is analyzed also with regard to collective action and multilateral cooperation, which are useful options for SMEs to overcome their lack of resources (Andersen & Lundberg, 2009; Ayvari & Moller, 2000). The networking effort by SMEs has led a few authors to attempt to understand more in depth the specific required abilities. A few papers develop the concept of network capability (O'Toole, McGrath, 2013), while other contributions discuss the interaction capability construct (Johnsen & Tseng, 2010).

Some of the contributions focus their attention on specific networks/relationships, such as key-relationships/strategic networks and local networks. Key relationships (Baraldi et al., 2014) and strategic networks (Hallén & Lundberg, 2004) emerge from business exchanges with a variety of actors: customers, suppliers, universities, financial intermediaries. A few papers concern relationships between SMEs and large firms, which often act as main customers (Ford & Johnsen, 2001). Such interactions are shaped by key variables such as power, which is often considered as a distinctive feature of large-small firms relationships (Ouken & Van Raesfeld, 2014). Some studies focus on large suppliers of key-resources, such as IT and business/financial services. In fact, in a few studies the focus of the analysis is also on SMEs as customers/users of specific or adapted product/service solutions, which are introduced for organizational and technological upgrading (Ekman & Erixon, 2009).

Given the specific feature of SMEs, a number of papers undertake the analysis at the individual level. Thus the main focus is placed on personal relationships and their role in internationalization and new business formation (Angdal & Axelsson, 2002; Canning & Leek, 2011). This is in line with the small business and entrepreneurship literature.

Another explored theme is resource access and development by SMEs. Surprisingly only a few papers (12) address this topic as a main research issue. Some papers on new

ventures/start-up companies analyze how firms gain access and develop key resources needed for launching new businesses and entering new markets (Waluszewski & Wedin, 2003, Aaboen & Lind, 2013). Only two papers on SMEs explicitly focus on resource acquisition (Luokkanen-Rabetino & Norrgrann, 2013; Torvatn, Holmen, & Pedersen, 2000). Thus it seems that thus far research on resource development by established SMEs has not received attention, notwithstanding the market challenges that this type of firms has been facing also recently.

Cognition is the last theme emerging from collected papers. It is still marginal (3 papers), notwithstanding the wide interest displayed in the small business and entrepreneurship literature. In IMP conference papers emphasis is placed on the cognitive abilities of the main individual actors within the company - such as the entrepreneur or managers – in terms of opportunity recognition and changes in business mind-set (Andresen & Lundberg, 2009; Keating, 2008; Brown, Nasarwanji, & Catulli, 2010).

The various themes have been examined adopting mainly qualitative research methodologies. Only a few contributions are based on quantitative approaches using large sample surveys. This is not surprising given the strong orientation of IMP research towards empirical analysis through case studies. Various papers are based on in-depth single case studies, while many other contributions adopt a multi-case study methodology.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES

By theoretical approaches we mean the relevant literature and approaches used by authors when investigating the SMEs context. We coded the 183 papers along two main theoretical dimension: those adopting a strong IMP perspective (i.e. the use of IMP approaches, models, concepts) and those having a theoretical focus rooted in SMEs literature. Table 3 provides a picture of papers crossing the two theoretical dimensions.

Table 3. Theoretical dimensions

	SMEs Strong	SMEs Weak	Total
IMP Strong	52	32	84
IMP Weak	70	29	99
Total	123	60	183

A first important observation is related to the number of papers that are not actually focused on IMP approaches or tradition: 99 papers over 183 are not rooted in IMP tradition, while 84 papers use IMP concepts and models.

In relation to the 99 papers that are not strictly focused on IMP perspective, a relevant number of contributions (70) show a strong emphasis on SMEs nature and literature. 29 papers present a weakness also in relation to the SMEs characteristics and literature. This last group of papers generally deals with very specific aspects of marketing and purchasing activities and SMEs represent only the empirical setting within the studies have been conducted.

It is thus more interesting to observe in detail the group of papers that - even if not focused on IMP concepts - present a stronger emphasis on SMEs' nature and characteristics. Over the 70 papers, 14 papers adopt a narrow perspective on specific issues such as brand management in

small companies or small retailers actions in the supply chain. In these papers SMEs literature is taken into account only to justify the urgency to address specific practices in relation to the specific characteristics of small business. 52 papers have been coded as dealing with network, relationships, cooperation, collaboration, interaction. Within this group of papers it is apparent the research interest towards a deeper understanding of the nature of SMEs with particular reference to the scarcity of the resources and the urgency to exploit inter-organizational relationships and networks to overcome it. Internationalization development of SMEs through networks and relationships is one of the most investigated issues (21 papers). The theoretical perspective adopted in these papers is mostly referred to the literature on international network of SMEs with limited reference to IMP approaches. Another issue under investigation is the general "networking" ability development by SMEs, which is mostly referred to the social and personal networking ability of entrepreneurs. Again these papers refer in very general terms to IMP concepts, which are not discussed or compared with other relevant SMEs' literature on networks and/or networking. We can argue that the issue of networks and networking is considered relevant, but the IMP perspective is generally misunderstood or not actually considered as giving a substantial contribution on SMEs' context.

Considering the group of papers (84) that show a greater focus on IMP tradition of studies, we can observe a partially opposite situation where 32 papers seem not have a strong focus on SMEs as a category *per se*, and only 52 papers showing a major effort to "combine" both IMP concepts and approaches with SMEs' nature, characteristics and literature.

With regard to the first group of studies it is very interesting to observe that a relevant number of papers (17 over 32) are concerned with the issue of "new business development" with start-up and spin-of as core categories under investigation. In this respect we can argue that size in relation to the nature of these "evolving firms" is not actually considered as a key issue. Most of the papers deal with the problem of network development of new ventures, with a special focus on key and initial business relationships adopting an "actor perspective" in this process as the key category to understand strategizing and network evolution (Aaboen, Dubois, & Lind, 2012; Baraldi & Perna, 2014; Baraldi et al., 2014). The remaining 15 papers - in this group of IMP focused/SMEs not focused papers - are mostly concerned with the issue that we can call "network development and change" especially within innovation processes with the use of basic IMP model, notably ARA model, relationships development, business network. SMEs constitute here the prevalent empirical setting, especially in relation to entrepreneurial ventures, but SMEs literature, nature and characteristics are marginally touched. For example Waluszewski (2004), in relation to the context of biotech clusters in Sweden, says "... *At first glance it can be regarded as a paradox that the interpretation of networks made in the IMP tradition recognises both of these views of networks -i.e. networks as fundamental economic drivers and networks as constraining structures- Thus, networks in the IMP tradition are regarded as structural Janus faces. On one hand all these networks that emerge as a consequence of interaction over time have the appearance of a heavy colossus. Regardless of how great the awareness of their negative effects, they cannot change rapidly. On the other hand these networks are full of resources whose features are still waiting to be handled...*".

The group of studies (52) that present both a strong focus on IMP concepts and on SMEs "category" actually represents the more interesting one, in connection with the main objective of this paper. We can highlight in this group a relevant number of papers dealing with entrepreneurship (19). Many interesting papers discuss the literature on entrepreneurship in the light of IMP insights and concepts. Jack and Mouzas (2007, 2011) attempt to investigate the network perspective on entrepreneurship arguing that this approach moves beyond single entrepreneurs to one that examines whole networks of interrelated relationships as the unit of

analysis. It is argued that the network approach allows to catch developments over time as it assumes that entrepreneurs transform resources to carry out exchanges linked by strong or weak ties. Moreover, the cumulative effect of these exchanges influences both the position of the entrepreneur and the existing network structure in which the entrepreneur is located. In the same line, many researches emphasize the relevant role of IMP approaches in the actual understanding of "networking" and "networking ability" concepts in the context of entrepreneurial firms (Ayvari & Jyrama, 2007; Ayvari & Moller, 2000; McGrath & O'Toole, 2012, 2013, 2014). In particular, Mc Grath and O'Toole (2012) observe that a critical gap exists *"... as while the entrepreneurship literature recognizes that firms are becoming increasingly dependent on external resources and capabilities, little research exists within the IMP group regarding the factors that may enable or inhibit network participation"*.

Another interesting group of papers (8) deals with internationalization (Ford & Johnsen, 2000; Agndal & Axelsson, 2002; Elo, 2003; Freeman, 2002). These papers actually give a contribution by exploiting IMP concepts in the field of internationalization in two ways: firstly, they move beyond the traditional model of international networks for SMEs (i.e. Coviello & Munro, 1995; Coviello, 2006) or the U-model (i.e. Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, 2009), with the latter often considered as being part of IMP school of thought; secondly, they use the actual IMP perspective more based on the role of relationships in internationalization development and adopting a micro perspective on these processes.

The remaining papers (25) in the group of IMP & SME-focused studies offer interesting contributions on different issues in marketing and purchasing, but again in this group of papers it is easy to point out a growing attention to the networking and interaction capability of SMEs. Scholars seem to cope with the fragmented literature on SMEs on these themes within the framework offered by IMP tradition (Bocconcelli & Pagano, 2013; Johnsen & Tseng, 2010).

Summarizing it can be argued that from one side IMP focused studies, especially those conducted by "IMPers" rarely assume SMEs literature as a point of reference to question, use or compare, as well as size as a key element of variety worthy to be investigated within business networks studies; from the other side SMEs focused researches show an awareness of the importance of the concepts of relationships and networks within the context of small businesses development, however they vaguely interpret these "keywords" within the IMP tradition, often misunderstanding the actual positioning of IMP research within business marketing and management literature.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

This paper aims at exploring whether and how SMEs have been investigated in IMP research. The preliminary assessment is based on IMP Conference papers presented after the 1999 conference and available in the IMP Group web-site database. The collection of papers resulted in 183 contributions, thus showing that SMEs received significant attention within the IMP community.

We conducted this literature review along three main dimensions: typologies of investigated firms, main research themes, theoretical background.

With regard to typologies of firms, a vast majority of papers concern the SME category. However, there is evidence of growing interest on three different typologies: new business (spin-off, new ventures, start-up), cluster firms and entrepreneurs. The former is increasingly researched in recent years, in the light of the role of relationships and networks in the evolving development process. The second typology, even though thus far received limited

attention, is perceived by some authors as a key category due to its highly networked nature. The category of “entrepreneur” and entrepreneurial firms seem to receive increasing attention, thus placing emphasis on the individual dimension. It could be argued that in all three cases further IMP-related research could shed more light on emerging patterns and factors.

With respect to research themes, this review shows that in terms of processes the main emphasis has been placed on internationalization paths and on marketing activities, while relevant topics such as innovation management and purchasing thus far have not received significant attention. With regard to specific topics, as expected most of the papers focus on SMEs’ involvement in relationships and networks. However, quite surprisingly two distinctive features of SMEs – lack of resources and cognitive limitations – have not been addressed in depth, notwithstanding the IMP community has developed research on both topics.

Lastly, under a theoretical point of view we register a “distance” between established IMP research and research streams in small business management and entrepreneurship. IMP conferences have been undoubtedly useful for starting a dialogue. While IMP authors overall still do not perceive size as a distinctive dimension to be explicitly addressed, scholars with small business/entrepreneurship background often do not adopt in an appropriate manner IMP concepts. However, it should be recognized that various contributions recognize the need and usefulness to compare and integrate these theoretical approaches.

Therefore, is the SME a missing actor? On the one hand, it could be answered “no” because many papers have been presented at the IMP conference, providing interesting empirical contributions. On the other hand, it could be answered “yes” because within an IMP perspective SMEs have yet to be fully unveiled. This review has shown that specific settings – such as asymmetrical relationships, new business formation, SMEs’ networking – might be stimulating avenues for further research. We argue that IMP framework and concepts could be very useful for a more comprehensive understanding of SMEs processes, thus providing an effective contribution to current management and policy debate around these “actors”, which play a central role in many economic and industrial systems.

REFERENCES

- Aaboen, L., Dubois, A., & Lind, F. (2012). Strategizing as networking for a new venture. Paper presented at the *2012 IMP Conference*.
- Adams, R., Alexander, A. & Oberg, C. (2014). Innovation management capabilities for start-ups and spin-offs: a literature review. Paper presented at the *IMP 2014 Conference*.
- Agndal, H. & Axelsson, B. (2002). First contact: the influence of serendipity, planning and antecedent relations in the internationalisation of SMEs. Paper presented at the *IMP 2002 Conference*.
- Andresen, E. & Lundberg, H. (2009). The process of collective entrepreneurial action. Paper presented at the *IMP 2009 Conference*.
- Ayvari, A. & Moller, K. (2000). Entrepreneurial networking and marketing-dealing with people. Paper presented at the *IMP 2000 Conference*.
- Ayvari, A. & Jyrama, A. (2007). The networking abilities of craft entrepreneurs. Paper presented at the *IMP 2007 Conference*.

- Baraldi, E. & Perna, A. (2014). When do Start-Ups stop being Start-Ups? A business network perspective on four cases of university spin-offs. Paper presented at the *2014 IMP Conference*.
- Baraldi, E., Fraticelli, F., Perna A., & Gregori, G. (2014). The impact of key business relationships on the development of university spin-offs: the case of Nautes. Paper presented at the *2014 IMP-Conference*.
- Barrett, N. & Fletcher, R. (2000). The international evolution of a medium-sized manufacturing firm: a network perspective. Paper presented at the *IMP 2012 Conference*.
- Bocconcelli, R. & Pagano, A. (2013), Networking in an organized network: a case study of a small professional firm. Paper presented at the *IMP 2013 Conference*.
- Bradley, F., Meyer, R., & Gao, Y. (2006). Use of supplier-customer relationships by SMEs to enter foreign markets. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 35, 652-665.
- Brown, C., Nasarwanji, A. & Catulli, M. (2010). Conflict over entrepreneurial, intrapreneurial sensemaking of business model change initiatives. Paper presented at the *IMP 2010 Conference*.
- Buchanan-Oliver, M. & Young, A. (2003). Strategic alliances or co-branded relationships on the internet – an examination of a partnership between two companies, unequal in size. Paper presented at the *IMP 2003 Conference*.
- Canning, L. & Leek, S. (2011). The role of networking and social capital in the initiation of relationships in passion based service networks. Paper presented at the *IMP 2011 Conference*.
- Chiarvesio M., Di Maria E., Micelli S. (2010), Global Value Chains and Open Networks: The Case of Italian Industrial Districts, *European Planning Studies*, 18, 3, March: 333-350.
- Coltorti F., Resciniti R., Tunisini A., Varaldo R. (Eds.) (2013). *Mid-sized Manufacturing Companies: The New Driver of Italian Competitiveness*. Milano: Springer-Verlag.
- Coviello, N. & Munro, H. (1995). Growing the entrepreneurial firm. Networking for international market development. *European Journal of Marketing*, 29(7): 49–61.
- Coviello, N. (2006). The network dynamics of international new ventures. *Journal of International Business Studies*. 37: 713-731.
- Djokovic, D. & Souitaris, V. (2008). Spinouts form academic institutions. A literature review with suggestions for further research. *Journal of Technology Transfer*, 33(3): 225-247.
- Ekman, P. & Erixon, C. (2009). The interconnectedness of ‘best practices’ – how small and midsize companies can gain from selecting the large companies’ IT. Paper presented at the *IMP 2009 Conference*.
- Elo, M. & Tornross, J. (2005). Relationships and networks – events enabling and inhibiting corporate internationalisation. Paper presented at the *IMP 2005 Conference*.
- Elo, M. (2003). The impact of network structure in internationalisation process of small and medium sized enterprises. Paper presented at the *IMP 2003 Conference*.

- Ford, D. & Johnsen, R. (2000). Asymmetrical and symmetrical customer-supplier relationships: contrasts, evolution and strategy. Paper presented at the *IMP 2000 Conference*.
- Freeman, S. (2002). A comprehensive model of the process of small firm internationalisation: a network perspective. Paper presented at the *IMP 2000 Conference*.
- Furlan, A. & Grandinetti, R. (2008). Business networks and the internationalization of local cluster suppliers. Paper presented at the *IMP 2008 Conference*.
- Gilmore, A., McAuley, A., Gallagher, D., Massiera, P., & Gamble J. (2013). Researching SME/entrepreneurial research: A study of Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship (JRME) 2000-2011. *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship*, 15, 87-100.
- Gronum, S., Verreyne, M-L., & Kastle, T. (2012). The Role of Networks in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise Innovation and Firm Performance, *Journal of Small Business Management*, 50, 257-282.
- Guercini, S. & Runfola, A. (2008). Innovative forms of marketing integration in local networks. Paper presented at the *IMP 2008 Conference*.
- Håkansson, H., & Snehota, I. (1995). *Developing relationships in business networks*. London: Routledge.
- Håkansson, H., Ford, D.I., Gadde, L-E., Snehota, I., & Waluszewski, A. (2009). *Business in networks*. Great Britain: Wiley and Sons.
- Hallen, L. & Lundberg, H. (2004). New horizons and positions: structural effects of strategic networks. Paper presented at the *IMP 2004 Conference*.
- Hanna, V., & Walsh, K. (2008). Interfirm Cooperation among Small Manufacturing Firms. *International Small Business Journal*, 26, 299-321.
- Humphrey, J. & Schmitz, H. (2000). Governance and Upgrading: Linking Industrial Cluster and Value Chain Research. *IDS Working Paper* 120.
- Jack, S. & Mouzas, S. (2011). Entrepreneurs with ties. Paper presented at the *IMP 2011 Conference*.
- Jack, S. & Mouzas, S. (2007). Entrepreneurship as renegotiated exchange in networks. Paper presented at the *IMP 2007 Conference*.
- Johanson, J. & Vahlne, J-E. (1977). The internationalization process of the firm: A model of knowledge development and increased market commitment. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 8(1): 23-32.
- Johanson, J. & Vahlne, J-E. (2009). The Uppsala internationalization model revisited – From liability of foreignness to liability of outsidership. *Journal of International Business Studies* 40(9): 1411–1431.
- Johnsen, R. & Tseng, K. (2010). Interaction capability development in UK manufacturing SMEs. Paper presented at the *IMP 2010 Conference*.
- Keating, A. (2008). Perspectives on the origin, development and growth of new ventures: context, connectivity and the entrepreneurial process. Paper presented at the *IMP 2008 Conference*.

- Luokkanen-Rubertino, K. & Norrgrann, A. (2013). Exploring and exploiting through horizontal co-operation – a longitudinal study of small and medium sized furniture manufacturers. Paper presented at the *IMP 2013 Conference*.
- McGrath, H. & O’Toole, T. (2012). Network capability enablers and inhibitors in entrepreneurial firms: the case of the Irish micro-brewery industry. Paper presented at the *IMP 2012 Conference*.
- McGrath, H. & O’Toole, T. (2013). A cross-cultural comparison of the network capability development of entrepreneurial firms. Paper presented at the *IMP 2013 Conference*.
- McGrath, H. & O’Toole, T. (2014). Delimiting the network context of the entrepreneurial firm – the reliance on local nets. Paper presented at the *IMP 2014 Conference*.
- Ndubisi, N.O., & Matanda, M.J. (2011). Industrial Marketing Strategy and B2B Management by SMEs. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40, 334-335.
- O’Donnell, A. (2011). Small firm marketing: synthesising and supporting received wisdom. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 18, 781-805.
- O’Toole, T. & McGrath, H. (2013). Evolving network capability in the entrepreneurial firm. Paper presented at the *IMP 2013 Conference*.
- Oukes, T. & Von Raesfeld, A. (2014). Resource interaction in relation to power how startups strategize to cope with the challenges of mobilizing and leveraging resources in asymmetrical power relationships. Paper presented at the *IMP 2014 Conference*.
- Partanen, J., Moller, K., Westerlund, M. & Rajala R. (2007). Fostering innovations in the SMEs context: a network perspective. Paper presented at the *IMP 2007 Conference*.
- Ruzzier, M., Hisrich, R. D., & Antoncic, B. (2006). SME internationalization research: past, present, and future. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 13(4), 476-497.
- Simon, H. (2009). *Hidden Champions of the Twenty-First Century: The Success Strategies of Unknown World Market Leaders*. London: Springer-Verlag.
- Torvatn, T., Pedersen, A. & Holmen, E. (2000). Fitting resources into a context – how to deal with governmental support. Paper presented at the *IMP 2000 Conference*.
- Tunisini, A. & Bocconcelli, R. (2008). Supply network strategies an inquiry into the changes in the Italian mid-sized company and its supplier relationships. Paper presented at the *IMP 2008 Conference*.
- Waluszewski, A. (2004). If you try to control networks, they die. Paper presented at the *IMP 2004 Conference*.
- Wasluzweski, A. & Wedin, T. (2003). Is it really speed we need? The role of venture capital in biotech start-ups. Paper presented at the *IMP 2003 Conference*.