IMP as Fashion Revisited: A text selfie within the IMP community

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is to join the ongoing conversation regarding a recurring question asked at IMP conferences; 'what is IMP?' It is inspired by current reflections on how and in what ways the research community maintains momentum (Cova and Salle, 2008; Cova, Ford, and Salle, 2009; Cova, Pardo, Salle, and Spencer, 2014, 2015), and in light of the activities around the 2016 Symposium (Håkansson, Snehota and Waluszewski). It also builds on and revisits the basic premise of an earlier paper, Harrison (2004), *IMP as Fashion: Past, Present and Future*. I stress that the wish is to capture a snapshot of variety, and not to smooth out some standardised version of what IMP is.

The paper centres upon an IMP community research 'selfie'. That is, the findings of a survey of IMP researchers as to the simultaneous variety and core of IMP. The simple question here is 'what is IMP'. More specifically, the survey has progressed in two phases. First, using an email survey, I asked 100 researchers to reflect on five issues. These were; key assumptions, important concepts, main research areas, current trends or hot topics, and recent challenges respectively. I also asked participants to reflect on the question of 'what makes IMP unique?' The outcome is a 'research selfie', or an informal snapshot of our research approach; essentially, an empirically derived 'theory of market' (Harrison and Kjellberg, 2014).

Key words: what is IMP?

1.0 Introduction

Back in IMP 2004 Copenhagen, as part of a conference presentation, I asked 20 researchers across Norway, Sweden, the UK, Ireland and Switzerland "*what are the first 3 things that come into your head when thinking about IMP*?" As we can read from Table 1, we have a top three, 'networks', 'fun/social', and 'conference'. There is an interesting blending of concepts and the social dimension of the community reflected in these answers.

Table 1: Free word association spring 2004

RANK	THEME	NUMBER
1	Networks	11
1	Fun/social	11
3	Conference	8
4	Empirical	7
5	Theoretical	5
6	Relationships	5
7	Logo or label	4
7	International	4
9	European	3
10	Interaction	2
11	Dynamics	1

It is timely to revisit a survey of the community, but this time on a bigger scale. This is in terms of the numbers of researchers involved and in asking for responses to more reflective questions. The motivation for doing so is several fold. First, to join the conversation regarding a question often heard at IMP conferences; 'what is IMP?' For example, this has been discussed at length in several recent conference papers around theories of markets (e.g. Araujo & Easton, 1996; Møller, 2013; Harrison and Kjellberg, 2014; Gerbert-Persson, Mattsson and Øberg, 2014). It is also partly inspired by current reflections on how and in what ways the research community maintains momentum (Cova, Ford, and Salle, 2009; Cova, Pardo, Salle, and Spencer, 2014, 2015). However, other inspirations come from the activities around the 2016 Symposium (Håkansson, Snehota and Waluszewski), along with the obvious generational shift that the community is facing as several of our founding fathers retire. It also builds on and revisits the basic premise of my Copenhagen paper[1]. In this paper a number of issues

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[1] Harrison, D. (2004). *IMP as Fashion: Past, Present and Future*, Proceedings of the 20th IMP conference, Copenhagen, Denmark.

were raised, e.g. governance, connecting to other research communities, exporting ideas, which remain relevant.

The paper centres upon an IMP community research 'selfie'. That is, the findings of a survey of IMP researchers as to the simultaneous variety and core of IMP. The first phase of the survey is reported in the paper here. Using an email survey, I asked 100 researchers to reflect on five issues. These were; key assumptions, important concepts, main research areas, current trends or hot topics, and recent challenges respectively. I also asked participants to reflect on the question of 'what makes IMP unique?' The aim was to obtain a snapshot understanding of the ongoing understandings and conversation within the community, at least the 100 members of the community connected to it for some time. Before the conference, I plan to conduct phase two, by holding a series of focus groups over Skype, both by generation and inter-generation, to discuss the responses in greater depth. Thus the outcome is a 'research selfie', or an informal snapshot of our research approach, essentially, an empirically derived 'theory of market'.

2.0. Method

2.1. Phase 1: "What is IMP" – a community selfie survey

I asked one hundred researchers on the permanent IMP conference reviewer list to reflect on six issues. The researchers represent various countries and are an inter-generational mix. I asked the researchers the following. First, a warm up question, to mirror the question asked for the Copenhagen conference, 'please list the first three words that come into your head when I ask, "What is IMP"'. Afterwards, researchers reflected on the following six questions: (i) what are the key assumptions, (ii) what are the important concepts, (iii) what are the main research areas, (iv) what are the current/recent trends or hot topics, (v) what are the current/recent challenges, and (vi) what makes IMP unique? I also asked participants 'how many of the main IMP conferences have you attended in the past 5 years?', and to indicate their age bracket (25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65-74, 75-).

3.0. Findings: A community selfie

This section outlines and briefly discusses the collated results from the first 35 responses I have

received[2]. More responses are being returned to me, but a version of the paper had to be written in order to meet the conference deadline! The final version of the paper will contain the complete data set.

3.1. Warm up: "what is IMP"'

To recap, the top three responses in the 2004 mini-survey were (i) networks, (ii) fun/social, and (iii) conference respectively. The responses for this paper ranged from the highly prosaic ('Industrial Marketing and Purchasing') to three sentences and even up to three paragraphs! Table 2 illustrates a lengthy listing of the various responses. 'Networks' is again placed in the top spot, with a draw between 'interaction' and 'relationships', and 'conference' coming in fourth place. In other words, three central concepts (see the next section) are ranked first, closely followed by the meeting device of the conference and the existence of the research community around this. Are we surprised by this? I would say probably not.

We also see more specific comments about the community ranked later in Table 2. These are listed separately because they illustrate both the variety of the responses, but more importantly, a fault line in how the community is seen in depth. On the one hand, it is viewed as friendly, including, supportive, and "at its best a fresh community, an active and successful community". On the other hand, it is perceived as "closed, old" and with "not enough fresh ideas". I pass no judgement on this, other than to restate that these views are held simultaneously by the respondents as a group. We return to this later in the paper.

Table 2: Free word association spring 2016

RANK	THEME	NO
1	(Business) Networks	35
2	Interaction / interacting	15
2	Complex relationships / relationships	15
4	Conference	11
5	Research community / social network	10
6	Håkan	7
7	ARA	6
8	B2B research	5
9	Industrial marketing and purchasing	5
10	Supportive / friendly / including	5
	Community of good friends: "a great place to belong"	4
	Not enough fresh ideas / a group of researchers with very set ideas on the way B2B marketing should be / at its worst, close to a religious sect hindering free thinking with an extreme hierarchy / A group that is not	4

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[2] Many thanks to all!

	necessarily well prepared to perpetuate its endeavours for a long time	
	Fun	3
	International	3
	Researchers / informal network	3
	Reality /real world /holistic	3
	Old / history / old fashioned	3
	European	2
	Scandinavia / Uppsala	2
	My 'theoretical upbringing' / roots	2
	Old men	2
	Case studies	2
	Ideas / At its best, a fresh research community, challenging existing views on marketing	2
	Work	1
	Colleagues	1
	Academic community with a good vibe	1
	Closed community	1
	Introverted male-dominated party	1
	Quirkiness	1
	Old men still in the lead	1
	Resources	1
	David	1
	Geoff	1
	Interesting practice relevant research	1
	Lifelong journey	1
	A distinct way of looking at the world	1
	Serious business	1
	An active and successful research community	1
	Theoretical purity	1
	Interdependence	1
	Introspective	1
	Descriptive research	1
	Economic effects	1
	Professiona1	1
	A group of scholars that share some basic beliefs	1

2.2. Some brief comments about the method

The table immediately above is a straight forward collation of responses. However, what follows, reporting on the key assumptions, important concepts, main research areas, recent trends or hot topics, current challenges, and what makes IMP unique, requires me to take on a more precise role. What was crucial for me was not to fall into the easy trap of trying to 'find' and then present/represent one 'smoothed out' version of 'What is IMP'.

Instead, as the title of the paper suggests, what follows is a 'selfie' of the IMP

community. As Murray (2015)[3] discusses, selfies are variously a reflection of the ultimate millennial-narcissism or a way to self-construct and produce images, often to subvert or protest against some 'norm' (at least when a mass of selfies are shown together). In the world of fashion and body politics, the norm is some (historical) 'perfect' body shape or fashion norm which in particular young women and girls are expected to conform to or at least be judged against. Clearly then, selfies are typically images, curated in some way by the individual.

This paper aims to discuss a community selfie from the IMP community 'taken' in 2016. All participants have been asked for text, and not images. This gives the author a nice duality to move between collating data and curating the responses. That is, between "*collecting and combining texts, information, or data*" (collating) and "*selecting, organizing and presenting suitable content*" (curating). The curating role is a nice play on the 'IMP as fashion' title of the paper: curators "*select items from among a large number of possibilities for other people to consume and enjoy; applied to many areas including…**fashion**, and especially digital media…The Daily Beast sifts, sorts and curates…*".

Therefore, at least in theory what follows below is a curated statement as to how the community wants to self-represent, just as a woman or girl constructs her own image as to how she wants to be, not how she should be according to some fashion norm (Murray, 2015).

3.3.   What are the key assumptions: close to core?

The quick-and-dirty answer to this question is in fact rather clear: "*everything is interactions and networks*". What is interesting when in the curator role is the messiness of the responses when compared to the question about 'concepts', which are addressed in the following section (below). Although the assumptions are not as easily or clearly articulated as we might imagine (after all, '*interaction*' and '*interdependence*' are discussed on the IMP website as the two headline words), both assumptions are obviously reflected in the two general and interrelated thrusts in the responses here.

First, by setting together several quotes from different respondents, we can consider the assumption of interaction. This is broadly speaking: "*interactions, relationships and networks are creating the business world and the reality of business...business occurs in and through interconnected relationships…relationships are developed through interaction processes over time…companies are dependent on each other's resources and activities (no*

islands)…relationships connect actors and their activities and resources…relationships are interconnected - markets as networks". In essence, "*business happens, and markets are coordinated through, interaction between firms*".

The survey respondents expressed the assumption of 'interdependency' in a messier way. Simply put, "*actors interact with each other in a network and form interdependencies over time*". Many responses emphasized the 'what' of interdependency, or 'how' actors are interdependent. For example, "*resources are heterogeneous and interdependent, actors are boundedly rational and interdependent, business activities are interdependent*". In other words, all three ARA dimensions are present in that "*actors are interdependent on each other through resource ties, actor bonds and activity links that evolve over time*". Other responses linked interdependences very cleanly with activities only. Placing emphasis on the bases of interdependencies highlights the "*material dimensions of business relationships*". In this regard, "resource heterogeneity" was also a common response, almost as a working third general assumption.

Others focused on the realities or consequences of the ARA 'material dimensions'. For example, when relationships are "*embedded*" or "*interconnected*" into a network of direct and indirect relationships, it "*blurs the boundaries between organizations*". In other words, "*interdependence matters for actor behaviour…firms have to think about the jointness in their decision making…when acting in a network context*". The 'no business is an island' title of a certain well-known paper of the same name was also a commonly mentioned shorthand assumption.

3.4.   What are the important concepts - converging around a clearly articulated core?

> *"The market is seen as a network of interconnected relationships which encompass actors, resources and activities (ARA model). These networks/ relationships are characterized by interdependence and resource heterogeneity…"* (Anonymized response)

In terms of responses to the "what are the key concepts" question, perhaps not surprisingly, there was high convergence around a core set of models, concepts and themes. This was in other words much easier to curate than the answers to the 'key assumptions' question. Some emphasized models, others focused purely on interactions-relationships-networks as axiomatic, whilst others reflected on a broader listing of concepts. The three models mentioned by those

who discussed models were those of (i) interaction model, (ii) ARA model and (iii) 4R model respectively.

The most commonly raised concepts were those of 'interactions', 'relationships' and 'networks', but also 'resources', 'actors and 'activities' (often together), along with 'interdependency' and 'heterogeneity'. Less often, but still reported by many, were concepts such as trust, commitment, network context, adaptation, embeddedness, co-evolution, processes, resource interfaces, network paradoxes, network theories, network positions and roles, 'the Cs', stability v change / network change, network pictures.

3.5. What are the main research areas: variety and core?

My working expectation was for at least some level of convergence in the responses in sections 3.4 and 3.5, but after that, for a greater extent of divergence. This is partly due to the sentiment expressed in the following quote:

"This varies by individual – there are groups within the group. For me, it is mainly about…" (Anonymized response)

As we all know, as individual researchers we have both strong and weak ties within the IMP community. There are many people we are delighted to see at the annual conference, but do not talk with until the next one. By contrast, we have stronger ties to often multiple sub-networks, with paper projects, research visits and case comparisons or even common fieldwork. However, table 3 (below) does suggest two interesting points: (i) a broadening of the application areas, and (ii) a focus on network level themes.

Taking each in turn, the 35 participants in the survey highlighted 9 application areas. These range from the origins of 'industrial marketing and purchasing' to science and technology studies. As the early works argued that industrial marketing and purchasing were two sides of the same coin (e.g. Håkansson 1982), this application area should come as no surprise. The extension to other areas, e.g. logistics and strategy, indicates growth and variety in the contexts in which the basic ideas are applied.

Second, the focus on network level themes. It is relatively easy to think that IMP researchers talk about networks but in (all to) many instances have a real focus on the focal actor or an individual dyad. The concentration and depth of the network level themes reported from the survey here is either a function of who was asked (always possible) or a manifestation

of a focus on the outer columns of the ARA model; i.e. the layers of substance at the network level. Either way, a continued fascination with the cognitive side of networks / sensemaking, value creation and management in networks, along with processes of organising and collaborating in networks, how interdependence emerges and what it leads to as underpinning network dynamics, to mention just a few of the themes, appears likely.

Table 3: Main research areas

LEVELS	THEMES
Interactions	• Analysing interaction episodes • How interactions occur and what they lead to
Relationships	• Buyer-supplier relationships • Relationship management • Relationship dynamics (stability and change) • Learning / knowledge development
Networks	• Network pictures /mental maps • Complexity of business networks • Roles of actors • Value creation in networks • Management in networks • Distribution channels • Market entry processes / internationalization • Strategizing in networks / network strategy • Technological change / development • Organising and collaborating in networks • Processes in networks • How interdependence emerges and what it leads to • Network dynamics (stability and change) • Learning / knowledge development
Application areas	• Innovation • Industrial marketing and purchasing • Logistics /SCM • Strategy • Economic analysis and governance • Accounting / management control • Science and technology studies • Project marketing • Policy

Several issues now arise, and here I make no apologies for asking more questions than I will answer. Table 3 illustrates a growth in application areas, which is excellent in terms of exporting the IMP message about how business markets 'work'. But what about growth in the core ideas, core models or core theory? Should we focus more attention here?

Also, we have the point (above) that all of us as researchers a part of various overlapping research nets within the IMP community. But how aware are we of what others are doing? Or how broad is our network horizon (cf. Holmen and Pedersen 2003). Can at least some of us agree on an international data set and conduct some joint activity? This has been discussed previously, but perhaps it is time we made another attempt? Might we have more regular meeting points, or more frequent focused workshops, as we have had during 2015-2016 as a part of the IMP Symposium meetings? Our group of so-called "old men" are either retiring or are moving in this direction. This is an issue we need to discuss as a community!

3.6. What are the current/recent trends or hot topics: divergence with some core?

The quote used to introduce section 3.5 above, i.e. "this varies by individual..." is of course also relevant for the next issue of 'current/recent trends or hot topics'. As we can read from table 4 (below), there is overlap with this previous section (especially in terms of the weighting of the network category), but new aspects too, both empirically (e.g. sustainability) and theoretically (e.g. monetary dimension) and at least a wish for methodological innovation.

Table 4: Recent trends or hot topics

LEVELS	THEMES
Interactions	• Understanding interactions as opposed to relationships
Relationships	• Cognition / sensemaking in relationships • Economic aspects of relationships
Networks	• Sensemaking / network pictures / cognition • Role of policy actors • Policy implications • Time, process, dynamics, evolution • Sustainability / ethics / CSR • Coopetition • Deals / financial implications / monetary dimension • Innovation • Business models

	- Multi-level interactions (manager, company, dyad, network) - Start-ups / new business formation - Network management - University-industry interactions - Social media - Network coordination - Strategizing - International aspects
And...	- Methods (e.g. modelling business networks) - Functions of economies - Services - Demand chain integration - SDL in networks (networks vs. ecosystems) - I don't know / I am not certain that I am aware of any - I do not follow hot topics

There is a partly a scientific circle-type effect here; if enough of us talk about and / or work with a trend, then it is constructed into a 'hot topic' if we manage to convince others. I noted from the responses that researchers from different locations have differing opinions, but more data is needed here before any firmer points can be made. Perhaps the final point to be made here can be neatly encompassed in the following anonymised quote, in which a respondent points to the tension between hot topics and IMP's roots:

"Here it is stretching out to other research fields but also going back to the roots. The previous conference had topics related to capabilities and coopetition. We also see influences of ecosystems research, institutional theories, service logic, but also those that go back to the roots of the IMP tradition"

3.7.   What are the current/recent challenges: thematic variety?

In this section of the paper, a selection of quotes from the responses will be provided as a way to highlight the sheer variety of thoughts. I have made an initial, untidy attempt to group the quotes into four main themes, theoretical, methodological, managerial and policy implications, and community (see Table 5 below). This is basically for presentation purposes and not to 'smooth out' differences.

Table 5: Challenges

THEMES	EXAMPLE QUOTES
Theoretical	- Complexity and dynamics of networks - What is next with the IMP? How to position IMP versus strategic relationship management approach (more widely acknowledged in some countries, in many journals as well). - To get new research into the community - Continuing to develop a deeper understanding (and conceptualization) of business interactions - Dealing with networks while mainly studying dyads or one-sided information. - To keep IMP theory alive and relevant by renovating it so that it communicates with recent changes in business life (digitalization, born globals/start-ups, pressure of CSR, etc.) - Consolidating core concepts (especially the newer ones: resource interfaces, "heaviness & variety", business deals),
Methodological	- In general, I think that a challenge for IMP and other research groups is selecting topics that are of *both* academic *and* managerial interest - goes very much for the IMP research that at least for the most part has been focused on the former. - Increasing the managerial and policy relevance of IMP - Establishing a coherent theoretical framework
Managerial & policy implications	- The next big thing is already with us! That is a radical development in methodological approaches, which allows us to understand relationships, interactions and networks much better. The first of those was probably nVivo all those years ago…Now it is probably fsQCA and Social Network Analysis tools such as ucinet – these are where the new insights will come from. - IMP methodologically not rigorous; not enough high level publications following IMP thinking - How to go from descriptive to normative - More quants - Further conceptualization and formalization: moving from descriptions to theoretical models - A lot of descriptive cases that add little.
Community	- To give voice to young IMPers; more openness for new concepts while maintaining identity - Setting the identity of IMP, allowing for breadth while sustaining an identity, surviving generation change

	• To gain respect and recognition within the broader global B2B community; To maintain a foothold in key B2B journals for IMP research in the future (IMM, JBIM); to gain access to general management/marketing journals (SMJ, JMS, JAMS, etc); • To develop the community by embracing more scholars • Renewal of an ageing group of leading scholars • How to develop through the next generation of researchers and still maintain some kind of 'core' • Finding a viable vision that is strong enough to keep established researchers "on board" and integrate "new blood". • Remaining open enough for outside concepts that are not rooted in classical IMP thinking. • After the BIG innovations have been made (first wave around 1980-1982; the BIG thing 1992-2002) how to – besides doing 'normal science' achieve other break through theoretical innovations'; the existence of some degree of smugness + clubman ship (inward orientation) is not very helpful for renewal. • Too many old men who monopolise power…where and what is the next IMP? IMP has become too insular its thinking and self-citing these days. In the past part of its strength was the diversity of literatures it brought to bear on the central topics. • How to engage more with the USA – is it possible/desirable. • To upgrade IMP Journal (well on the way)

Table 5 in many ways speaks for itself and does not need a curator. Clearly the majority of the survey responses are referring to aspects of the IMP community. They are covering identity in the broadest sense. That is, in maintaining a clear identity and in promoting this as something to be sustained by generational change. There is a point around maintaining a 'core' and growing simultaneously. Many comments refer to the need for renewal (both in terms of the community and in how we are organized). We will end this section not with an 'answer', but in broadening the debate further via the use of four additional, perceptive remarks:

"Development of IMP seems 'stale' and not innovative conceptually and methodologically"

Surviving. There are so many new theories promoted as new but that resemble the research done within the IMP tradition for so long"

"The theory does not fit everything we want to study. It is difficult to mix it with other theories and to interact with other literature streams"

"A challenge may be that it is large community now a days and that researchers tend to specialize and only read within their somewhat narrow area – the overall concepts within IMP may become somewhat blurred or not develop so much in the future"

3.8. What makes IMP unique?

In many ways, a quick look at Table 6 (below) gives a quick impression into the two central ways in which answers to this question this question has been answered. I suspect that regular conference attendees will not be surprised either!

Table 6: Uniqueness

LEVELS	Comments
Community	- Personally, it is about friendship - The people - IMP is a great academic home: supportive atmosphere - Tight European research community - People and the atmosphere they create. And the way they see the business world. - Friendly fellow researchers that makes research meetings/collaborations/workshops a rewarding experience. - The IMP conferences have an open and including atmosphere - The welcoming culture. The major B2B Conference. - A seemingly carefree 'governance', which, however, is there (resilient + relatively strong, although not having the outlook of formal governance mechanisms)
Research	- The assumptions - To get together the economic, social and technologic dimensions of the business - The *persistent focus* on the specific subset of market relationships: buyer-seller relationships (and interactions) between businesses and other organizations - Academically, the focus on relationships, interaction and networks and away from the North American more transactional viewpoint. Challenge the American view on marketing and interorganizational research or the traditional dogma - Takes interaction as the starting point, and in doing so, complies with the empirical reality we observe - Clear focus on the 'in between ness'; openness to in-depth understanding - The IMP research has its roots that are rigid, with a clear focus on the network *approach* and still it allows for new influences. - Providing an alternative to microeconomics view on B2Bmarkets. - Communicating to and being close to business managers' experience of the business world. Closeness to the empirical world/empirical grounding. An engaging and open dialogue and an interest for conceptualization of the business reality as it is and "not how you might want it to be". - IMP's ability to examine business markets as contingent, context dependent and continuously changing systems. - The joint interest in industrial structures and processes in open/borderless systems

	• Acceptance of complementary bodies of knowledge from different disciplines (sociology, STS, etc.), questioning established ideas, the IMP Journal. • The view of firms as interconnected in the way that the internal organization is directly linked to the external environment is quite unique. This changes the view of the role of business relationships and their function.

From a quick glance at Table 6, we can say that a unique feature of IMP is the community of researchers. This is something to treasure, but also to renew. As we can read from the table, the various responses include: "*The IMP conferences have an open and including atmosphere*", "*IMP is a great academic home*", and even "*personally, it's about friendship*". The conference is a meeting place, a gathering device and an important representation of what the community is all about. To paraphrase what we might sometimes say to one another, 'if you are working with relationships and networks, it helps if you can do relationships and networks every day".

Of course, there is a flip side to everything, and this also applies to communities with a strong sense of identity, as noted by one anonymised respondent:

> "*At its best: a community for stimulating scholarly discussions that embraces complexity and does not shy away from addressing dynamics. At its worst: a dogmatic community frequently guided by 'Not invented here' "*

Other responses commented on the "*lack of transparent structure and processes*" and "*there are no hierarchies such as those that exist in other communities, such as EIBA etc*". In other words, a 'lack of hierarchy' is also a good thing to some of the researchers, and one feature that makes IMP unique. But hidden under this tension is a governance issue, and one which is becoming increasing pressing - retirements! My role here is as a curator and not a judge; I would not dream of saying what is 'right' and 'wrong' or somehow smoothing out the tensions here. However, the curator role is at least to put both perspectives forward, not least because the governance issue is not new.

Governance and transparency are issues for the community. The next part is to consider what makes IMP unique from a research point of view. The survey asked each individual participant to reflect over 'how is IMP unique'. At the aggregated level of responses, we can ask both if a sense of uniqueness is widely shared, and the negativity (realism?) in considering that IMP is not unique. Table 6 provides comments regarding the assumptions, empirical

grounding, 'in between ness', and challenge to 'traditional dogma'.

Along with the clear ideas about how and why IMP is unique, we can juxtapose the following words, for example:

"Not really sure that anything makes IMP unique?"
"Well, is it that unique?
"Others have taken the concepts and packaged these better"

It is not surprising that there are both positive and negative comments regarding the uniqueness of the research agenda. But it is an open challenge for all of us to embrace. One key here might be in how good a job we do in communicating IMP uniqueness in journals/conference formats. Part of a lack of confidence, therefore, in "*is it that unique*" is perhaps messages we receive in other B2B/other settings. Is there a perception that the IMP research agenda is somehow 'complete', replicating at the level of empirical contexts? Or are others better at "packaging" concepts? Of course these questions are debated within our community, and at least some conclusions are there is 'much more to do' (ref xxxx 2006; Håkan and Alex 2013) as a part of the 'normal science' of IMP (Cova et al xxxx). In other words, the point is to be unique and not new per se. If IMP is "the major B2B conference", then the community as a whole has a role in exporting state of the art IMP ideas and in renewing the uniqueness of IMP from within.

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