

# HOW SUCCESSFUL IS THE FACTORY APPROACH MODEL: QUANTITY VERSUS QUALITY IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETING PUBLICATIONS?

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the phenomenon that new authors, as compared to established authors in the academic area, follow the factory approach in their international marketing publications. The study uses a convenience sample of 51 authors in international marketing from 12 countries who publish ten papers or more per year in Scopus outlets. The findings reveal that academics who publish these papers in Scopus produce a considerable number of self-citations per year, meaning that their publications are boosted numerically by themselves, and therefore their contributions may not be so significant. This study contributes to international marketing because some authors, who are called “factory authors”, use other authors to get published in high-level Scopus journals and publish as many as ten or more papers per year and accumulate good papers and citations. The study discusses the implications and limitations of the study and future research.*

**Keywords:** Factory Author, Factory Approach Model, International Marketing Field, Scopus Database.

**JEL Classification:** M16, M31

## INTRODUCTION

Many authors are currently contributing to the area of international marketing. However, according to a recent paper by Katsikeas (2019), publishing papers in international marketing in top-ranking journals over the last 30 years has become more challenging. Furthermore, in recent years, the motivation of new authors contributing to international marketing has been different from earlier authors. For example, new authors want to increase their impact factor, their citations, and the number of papers published. The present study is different from previous ones in not being based on content analysis (Coudounaris et al., 2009; Leonidou et al., 2010), a mixed-method approach (Hatzithomas et al., 2016), the comments of reviewers (Coudounaris, 2019), a systematic literature review (Coudounaris & Arvidsson, 2021), content analyses (Leonidou et al., 2010; Coudounaris et al., 2009), meta-analyses (Coudounaris 2017 & 2018a), empirical studies (Coudounaris, 2011; 2012a; 2012b; 2018b; 2018c & 2021), case studies (Arvidsson & Coudounaris, 2020), qualitative studies (Arvidsson, Coudounaris & Arvidsson, 2020) or papers published at SSRN (Coudounaris, 1984; Coudounaris & Arvidsson, 2019). Instead, it is based on an analysis of researchers specialising in the international marketing field who have publications in the Scopus database.

During the last two decades, there have been different methods of evaluating authors based on the total number of citations, the average number of citations, the h-index (Hirsch, 2005), a differential citation analysis of whether the paper did or did not have a positive cognitive impact on subsequent research (Ricker, 2017), or a more complicated method using the

Bayesian approach (Kaur et al., 2005). In a recent publication Lindgreen et al. (2020) discuss important issues in how to get quality research cited. In particular, they mention various strategies that can be used to ensure that specific research will be read by the targeted academics and practitioners.

The research question of this paper is the following: What are the implications for factory authors and journal outlets when publishing papers by authors who have targeted these journals based on the objective of multiplying their publications and citations? Among the objectives of this study is to make chief editors, for example, avoid providing special issues for group authors who use the factory approach in their publications to secure the reputation of such influential and high impact factor journals. For example, the editor in chief for several years of the Journal of Marketing (JM), Professor David W. Stewart, discusses JM's standard practices. However, he does not mention (Stewart, 2002) how to protect the excellent reputation of JM due to a non-common attitude by some authors of using the platform of JM for increasing the number of their papers and citations through the factory approach model. Nowadays, authors are more innovative in utilising new opportunities to expand their publications into higher journal outlets including using the factory approach model. The factory approach model has the advantage for committed authors of providing the opportunity to publish as many papers as possible with the assistance of other leading authors and to contribute minimally themselves. LaPlaca et al. (2018a), the editor of another seminal journal, Industrial Marketing Management (IMM), discusses the critical points for publishing in IMM. In his analysis he mentions the factory approach model that perspective authors may employ in their publication strategy. LaPlaca et al. (2018b) discuss how to effectively revise a paper for it to be accepted.

The present paper contributes to international marketing publishing because some authors apparently want to take advantage the skills of other authors to get published in high level Scopus journals with ten or more papers per year and accumulate a high number of papers and citations. This behaviour is problematic for other authors who want to get promotion or secure a position at a university. It is also an unethical strategy, and Scopus should take measures to avoid this phenomenon, and chief editors consider such possible behaviours by limited groups of authors.

This paper continues with a brief discussion of the theoretical background, the development of hypotheses, discussion of the methodology used in this study, the findings, conclusions, managerial implications, and limitations of the study, and future research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### The Theory of Opportunism and Hypotheses Building

Based on Williamson (1975) opportunism “*refers to a lack of candor or honesty in transactions, to include self-interest seeking with guile*”. Furthermore, according to Wikipedia (2020), “*opportunism is the practice of taking advantage of circumstances – with little regard for principles or with what the consequences are for others. Opportunist actions are practical actions guided primarily by self-interested motives. The term can be applied to individual humans and living organisms, groups, organizations, styles, behaviours, and trends*”. Seminal papers on the theory of opportunism and its applications have been published by Williamson (1975, 1985 & 1995).

In another study, Hill (1990) linked cooperation and trust and acting opportunistically with the prisoner's dilemma (Friedman, 1986; Luce & Raiffa, 1957), and he found that there are

four outcomes (Hill, 1990) If both players cooperate and trust each other, both of them achieve the highest payoff; b) If one player cooperates and the other acts opportunistically, the opportunistic player receives a lot and the cooperating player who is the victim of opportunism receives zero; c) If both players act opportunistically, both receive very little due to the punishment for lack of trust; and d) if you have a choice between cooperating, which would make you a sucker and give you a payoff of zero, or acting opportunistically, which would give you a payoff of very little. Therefore, it is beneficial for you to act opportunistically if you think the other player will also act opportunistically. Also, it is better to act opportunistically if you think the other player will cooperate. So, no matter what the other player does, it pays you to act opportunistically.

A recent study by Jia et al. (2020), based on a primary dataset (206 Chinese exporters) and secondary dataset, suggested that cultural distance increases opportunism by inhibiting contract application. The study also reveals that cultural distance decreases opportunism by enhancing detailed contract design. Additionally, it was found that both indirect effects of cultural distance on opportunism through contract governance strategies depend on the surrounding institutional environment in cross-cultural supply chains.

In another publication by Wathne & Heide (2000), opportunism was linked to interfirm relationships. Skarmas et al. (2002) investigated various relationships of opportunism and related constructs: for example, exporters' opportunism on importers' commitment (-), exporters' cultural sensitivity on exporters' opportunism (-), and environmental volatility on exporters' opportunism (+). In addition, Katsikeas et al. (2009) investigated other relationships between opportunism and related constructs such as the four antecedent factors of transaction specific assets (-), internal uncertainty (+), external uncertainty (+), and interfirm psychic distance (+) on opportunism, and the relationship of opportunism on trust (-).

Based on the literature above the following two hypotheses are developed below: initially, the study is based on Williamson's opportunism, which refers to a lack of candour or honesty in transactions, including self-interest seeking with guile (Williamson, 1975), and secondly based on the prisoners' dilemma (Friedman, 1986; Luce & Raiffa, 1957). Bearing in mind Hill's (1990) first outcome that both researchers cooperate and trust each other, then both researchers could achieve the highest benefit. Therefore, I hypothesise that:

*H<sub>1</sub> The higher the level of opportunism there is among researchers, the greater will be the benefit, for example, the number of published papers produced with many co-authors.*

Additionally, if the study is produced by a large number of co-authors (for instance, four co-authors and more), then the number of citations will be at least quadrupled due to the fact of the co-authorship of four papers. Therefore, I hypothesise that:

*H<sub>2</sub> The higher the number of published papers with four or more authors there are, the greater will be the number of citations received by the co-authors.*

## METHODOLOGY

A convenience sample of 51 researchers with ten or more published papers in a year was found at Scopus. The names of leading authors were found through the authorship and editorship of eight leading journals in international marketing such as International Marketing Review, International Business Review, Industrial Marketing Management, Management International

Review, Journal of International Marketing, Journal of Business Research, Journal of World Business and Journal of International Business Studies. In addition, factory authors as defined below were found through investigation of the above-mentioned leading journals, and the authors had to have published 10 or more papers per year regularly. I define a factory author as a researcher who publishes 10 or more papers per year and is a member of a team of researchers and this threshold is called a factory approach in the publication system.

## RESULTS

Table 1 below shows the 51 researchers who published at least ten or more papers in a year in Scopus. The 51 researchers have different origins, namely the UK, USA, Italy, Spain, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Austria, the Russian Federation, United Arab Emirates and Australia.

The authors are divided into six categories. The first category includes nine established authors (1992-1998) who did not want to systematically exploit other researchers' studies and managed to publish ten or more papers in one year (Number of Case Study is 1-9). These authors have zero papers or only a few papers (less than 50%) with four or more co-authors per year. The second category comprises sixteen authors who have published their papers in relatively recent years after 2010 and wanted to collaborate with other researchers and publish as many papers as possible (Number of Case Study is 10-25). The third group includes nine established researchers (1998-2014), who during recent years (2015-2020) have increased the number of their papers through the factory approach (Number of Case Study is 26-34). The fourth group includes two established researchers (1992-1997) who have regularly published ten or more papers, a few of which have been with four or more co-authors (Number of Case Study is 35-36). This category is different from the first group as the two authors of the fourth group are established authors, but have intentionally managed to have for many years more than 10 papers per year. The fifth category includes five established researchers (2000-2008) who have published many papers in different journals, but fewer than 50% of their published papers have been with four or more co-authors (Number of Case Study is 37-41). This group of authors are established, but with less experience than the first group. Finally, the sixth category includes ten established researchers, who, since their initial publications (1992-2006), have for many years exploited as many researchers as possible to increase their aggregate scores in publications and citations (Number of Case Study is 42-51). These researchers have published papers with four or more co-authors. Finally, some of the researchers in Table 1 have published together, revealing that they know each other in different publishing factories. Additionally, at least five researchers in Table 1 belong to the same factory. Finally, columns 3, 5 and 6 of Table 1 reveal that both hypotheses H1 and H2 are supported for the second, third, fifth and sixth groups. Neither of the hypotheses is supported for the first group. In addition, H1 is supported for the fourth group, and both hypotheses H1 and H2 are non-supported for the first group.

Additionally, in some distinct groups of researchers, it was found that a whole special journal issue was produced by the same group, with only the order of the co-authors being different, with some additional names being used. In this way, the same individuals comprising the co-authors' network had the opportunity of producing papers with multiple citations of their previous work.

**Table 1**  
**51 AUTHORS IN INTERNATIONAL MARKETING WITH TEN PAPERS OR MORE PUBLISHED PER YEAR\***

Number of Case Study	Number of papers in 2020	Number of papers published at Scopus up to 2020	Number of years with more 10 or more papers per year and citations of that year	H index Google Scholar	Publications since 19xx, citations and co-authors	Papers with 4 or more co-authors during one year with 10 or more papers
	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6
1	2	63	1:2006 (10, 7)	10	1996, 280, 22	0
2	1	67	1:2014 (11, 26)	12	1996, 478, 41	0
3	4	78	1:2016 (11, 79)	15	1995, 1129, 64	0
4	6	62	1:2017 (10, 212)	21	1998, 2083, 37	0
5	5	105	1:2011 (17, 64)	22	1992, 1353, 58	2
6	7	137	2:2012 (15, 252)	30	1992, 3637, 129	2, 3
			2015 (15, 295)			
7	4	150	1: 2003 (11,254)	46	1992, 11127, 82	0
8	8	180	2:2004 (10, 116)	51	1992, 12768, 176	2, 5
			2006 (18, 259)			
9	6	142	1:2008 (10, 353)	52	1992, 13624, 105	0
10	11	19	1:2020 (11, 63)	4	2017, 82, 26	7
11	10	28	1:2020 (10, 177)	9	2016, 305, 32	9
12	10	29	1:2020(10, 91)	8	2012, 258, 34	6
13	9	33	1:2019 (13, 75)	10	2013, 352, 49	8
14	15	35	1:2020 (15, 164)	10	2013, 285, 48	11
15	14	36	1:2020 (14, 182)	11	2015, 315, 43	8
16	14	41	1:2020 (14, 162)	11	2011, 338, 48	9
17	12	33	1:2020 (12, 207)	12	2014, 346, 37	9
18	16	41	1:2020 (16, 203)	12	2014, 340, 37	6
19	13	53	2:2019 (12, 117)	13	2012, 487, 54	5, 10
			2020 (13, 246)			
20	5	37	1:2015 (10, 69)	16	2010, 1079, 30	5
21	13	39	2:2018 (10, 115)	16	2016, 1083, 55	6, 10
			2020 (13, 577)			
22	7	47	1:2018 (10, 167)	18	2008, 1041, 34	8
23	7	48	1:2019 (16, 305)	18	2012, 1283, 39	9
24	19	80	3:2018 (14, 121)	18	2014, 941, 96	4, 14, 15
			2019 (22, 223)			
			2020 (19, 473)			
25	17	52	2:2019 (12, 323)	21	2014, 1113, 69	10, 12
			2020 (17, 538)			
26	11	36	1:2020 (11, 133)	11	2008, 340, 42	10

27	28	80	3: 2016 (10, 18)	11	2012, 435, 94	0,5, 19
			2018 (16, 61)			
			2020 (28, 186)			
28	11	53	1:2020 (11, 128)	12	2009, 397, 56	7
29	16	73	2:2019 (12, 193)	18	2008, 868, 107	11, 14
			2020 (16, 287)			
30	20	81	3:2018(14,121)	18	2014, 955,96	5, 14, 16
			2019(22, 224)			
			2020(20,482)			
31	22	102	5:2015 (10, 48)	18	2010, 1196, 78	0, 0, 2, 11, 12
			2016 (12, 57)			
			2018 (16, 184)			
			2019 (21, 276)			
			2020 (22, 481)			
32	21	113	2:2019 (19, 204)	18	1998, 1120, 202	11, 15
			2020 (21, 299)			
33	19	85	1:2020 (19, 492)	25	2006, 1572, 79	15
34	18	96	4:2017 (11, 297)	26	2006, 2587, 140	8, 6, 9, 18
			2018 (10, 283)			
			2019 (10, 522)			
			2020 (18, 746)			
35	0	399	17:1993 (12, 23)	25	1992, 2232, 74	0, 1, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0, 1, 1, 1, 0, 1, 0, 0, 1, 1
			1996 (16, 30)			
			1997 (11, 32)			
			1999 (10, 36)			
			2001 (14, 32)			
			2002 (11, 44)			
			2003 (22, 45)			
			2004 (20, 42)			
			2005 (17, 44)			
			2006 (19, 48)			
			2007 (17, 63)			
			2008 (19, 75)			
			2009 (21, 97)			
			2010 (19, 105)			
			2011 (15, 111)			
2012 (13, 105)						
2013(10, 117)						
36	14	156	7:2008 (12, 13)	30	1997, 2701, 108	1, 0, 0, 2, 1,1,4
			2010 (14, 40)			
			2011 (24, 95)			

			2012 (16, 81)			
			2015 (12, 130)			
			2016 (14, 308)			
			2020 (14, 31)			
37	6	51	1:2016 (13, 22)	15	2008, 5314, 163	5
38	15	76	2:2018 (11, 305)	23	2004, 1709, 70	5, 7
			2020 (15, 532)			
39	12	79	2:2015 (13, 250)	23	2008, 2516, 124	1, 5
			2020 (12, 478)			
40	1	72	1:2011 (12, 113)	24	2002, 1931, 66	4
41	6	100	1:2010 (12, 103)	28	2000, 2935, 89	5
42	11	95	4:2016 (12, 197)	25	2006, 2742, 79	6,7,7,8
			2018 (13, 459)			
			2019 (16, 678)			
			2020 (11, 921)			
43	51	253	7:2011 (11, 17)	26	2004, 2612, 137	1, 1, 7, 14, 13, 13, 17
			2015 (12, 128)			
			2016 (32, 169)			
			2017 (41, 423)			
			2018 (26, 377)			
			2019 (34, 522)			
2020 (51, 825)						
44	46	178	5:2012 (12, 74)	29	1998, 2687, 174	5, 4, 12, 15, 36
			2017 (11, 211)			
			2018 (18, 300)			
			2019 (17, 564)			
45	18	156	9: 2010 (12, 49)	31	2005, 4071, 98	3, 2, 2, 5, 6, 5, 7, 12, 9
			2011 (13, 102)			
			2013 (11, 224)			
			2015 (10, 235)			
			2016 (16, 384)			
			2017 (11, 364)			
			2018 (13, 581)			
			2019 (19, 706)			
			2020 (18, 1024)			
46	10	98	3:2007 (10, 48)	32	1996, 3428, 86	4,9,7
			2019 (10, 414)			
			2020 (10, 524)			
47	7	124	3: 2011 (15, 152)	36	2000, 4900, 146	6,2,5
			2016 (11, 446)			

			2018 (10, 592)			
48	40	198	8:2011 (12, 27)	40	2005, 5314, 163	1, 5, 2, 4, 2, 10, 7, 11
			2013 (14, 135)			
			2014 (11, 272)			
			2016 (15, 488)			
			2017 (15, 579)			
			2018 (30, 823)			
			2019 (28, 1034)			
			2020 (40, 1443)			
49	4	202	6:1996 (10, 45)	41	1992, 5640, 111	2, 5, 3, 4, 8, 7
			2010(15, 271)			
			2011(17,240)			
			2014(10,460)			
			2015(15,359)			
			2016(11, 439)			
50	18	198	8:2006(11, 123)	44	1992, 6063, 391	1, 2, 2, 4, 1, 0,8, 7
			2008(17, 221)			
			2010(16, 398)			
			2012(14, 403)			
			2013(13, 417)			
			2015(10, 421)			
			2016(18,533)			
			2020(18,724)			
51	8	151	3:2005 (10, 226)	61	1996, 19465, 150	1,3,7
			2007 (12, 428)			
			2008 (10, 559)			

Note: \*Effort was made to not identify the names and universities of the researchers. The 51 researchers come from the following 12 countries: UK (22), USA (4), Italy (4), Spain (1), Cyprus (3), Denmark (3), Finland (3), Sweden (2), Austria (1), Russian Federation (1), United Arab Emirates (3) and Australia (4). It was checked in Scopus that all 51 researchers had publications on international marketing topics. The data was taken from Scopus during the last week of December 2020.

Source: On-line web page of SCOPUS

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study reveal at least three categories of researchers who behave as factory authors by exchanging their papers with other researchers and adding their authorship and in return receiving authorship of their own papers. This phenomenon can impact international marketing negatively. There are different levels of factory authors who take advantage of others to increase their number of publications in Scopus. Firstly, the second category of young researchers exchanges papers with similar researchers whose motive is to publish whatever they can and obtain citations. This group of researchers is not focused on one area/field of international marketing. Secondly, the third group shows that mature researchers are now focused on publishing material in Scopus to get more papers and citations even though they



are full professors, where the ladder has no extra steps for achievement. The sixth group of researchers seems to behave as leaders of this phenomenon and motivate the rest of the researchers in the field in the wrong way.

There is evidence that authors belonging to the first category are top authors in international marketing who have managed to publish at least ten or more papers in one year since they run PhD programmes in their universities. Furthermore, the fourth group includes two established authors who publish their papers as solo papers or in teams of two or three authors. They do not want to exploit the benefits, if any, and avoid the weaknesses and disadvantages of the short-term strategy of exchanging papers with four or more co-authors. Finally, the fifth group of researchers comprises established and less established top authors who have somehow started to realise the benefits of cooperating on papers with four or more co-authors but do not want to enter into the factory approach, meaning publishing in teams of 4 or more and multiplying their production of papers like the researchers in the sixth group.

### **Managerial Implications**

The Scopus organization and its CEOs should examine ways to eliminate the trend of researchers engaging in factory production. It can warn researchers continuing to research in this direction in terms of the ethics of acting against ordinary researchers who do not receive such support from other researchers. As a second stage, it can expel them from the community of Scopus researchers. Since the second group of researchers' motives are to publish more and receive more citations, this attitude results in ignorance of the good contribution of their papers and the fact that quantity does not lead to quality in papers. In addition, a recent incident in one university revealed that a candidate for a position who belonged to the second group of researchers managed to enter the final interview stage as the evaluating committee of the university did not bother to investigate why this candidate was so successful in publishing papers.

Additionally, the chief editors of some high-level publications, for example, three and four-star journals in the ABS list, should be cautious and try to avoid special issues from the same group of researchers who want to publish as many papers in the same journal and obtain as many self-citations and external citations as possible. These cases may not produce scientific papers but may have the objective of boosting specific authors' names to secure higher academic positions. At the same time, the editors of the journals in question may not realise what is happening, but nevertheless should not accept these special issues which may influence their reputation negatively in the future. Since there is evidence of the phenomenon of the factory approach model among authors in international marketing, chief editors should be aware that some special issues or publications are produced to fulfil the needs of some authors to obtain possible advancement to higher positions in the academic field of international marketing.

Finally, other implications of this study are that established "*factory authors*" do not produce anything innovative in the literature, but set a bad example to the new generation of authors striving for publications and obtaining good university positions. Simultaneously, "*factory authors*" may put constraints on their peers in trying to obtain a promotion or university position.

## Limitations

The study investigates the various types of researchers based on information only from Scopus, meaning that in another study the papers of authors published in the Emerging List of Web of Science, a separate database from Scopus, could be used.

Furthermore, a limitation of the study is that the findings are based on a convenience sample of 51 researchers who have at least ten publications in Scopus within one year.

The study is based on an investigation of authors or members of the editorial boards of leading journals such as *International Marketing Review*, *International Business Review*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Management International Review*, *Journal of International Marketing*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of World Business* and *Journal of International Business Studies*. As the sample size is rather small, another researcher could obtain a bigger sample drawn, for instance, from the 500 initial authors classified in international marketing at Google Scholar or the approximately 7000 members of the Academy of International Business.

Finally, the current study has the limitation that it has not developed a conceptual model comprising relationships between opportunism and other relevant constructs.

## Future Research

Google Scholar could be used in another study to collect the names of the leading 500 researchers based on the number of their citations in international marketing and then to check these names in Scopus in terms of their number of publications per year. However, the individuals who are classified in the international marketing list at Google Scholar have been proposed by themselves and not from an independent authority. Therefore, this list is not an objective one, but is instead a subjective one based on the opinion and the aspirations of the researchers. Another list that could be used is the circa 7000 members of the Academy of International Business composed of academics and other individuals who pay the annual fee.

A survey should further investigate the factory approach model. One could analyse the researchers' motives for becoming involved in the factory approach to publications, i.e. getting papers published to promote one institution, obtaining monetary rewards from an institution, or others. For example, many authors prefer to publish alone as a means of gaining self-satisfaction. Other researchers may behave differently depending on the institution's publishing requirements, i.e., publishing papers in outlets of the local list. For example, British universities promote the ABS list, Danish universities request authors to publish in the BFI list, Norwegian universities encourage publications in the Norwegian list, Finnish universities promote the UFO list, Australian universities direct authors to publish in the ABDC list, and American universities encourage authors to use Cabell's directory. Future researchers should also investigate whether new authors who follow the factory approach model focus on literature reviews, systematic reviews, or meta-analyses compared to a limited number of empirical studies.

Furthermore, it is worth researching authors of international marketing who regularly publish with the same research team. A research team's constant production of papers is also considered a kind of factory approach for publishing papers. However, in most cases, these authors continuously target ABS3 or ABS4 outlets. Finally, this study suggests an investigation of some case studies of special issues published by leading journals in international marketing where the same group of researchers publish the whole special issue with their names in a

different order. In addition, I would propose a model based on a survey investigating the motivational factors and barriers for authors in international marketing who work in teams of four co-authors or more and produce ten or more papers in Scopus.

Additionally, future research could also investigate the same authors through the Web of Science, as some journal outlets, especially from the USA, did not apply for Scopus accreditation, e.g., the Journal of Current Research in Global Business and other American-origin journals which do not employ European databases such as Scopus. As a practical implication, this study suggests that Clarivate should introduce barriers to academics who want to behave as “factory authors”.

Finally, another study in the form of a survey should investigate the phenomenon of new authors as compared to established authors in the academic area who follow the factory approach in their publications in international marketing. Opportunism could be engaged in a model demonstrating relationships as in the models discussed earlier in the literature review by Skarmeas et al. (2002) and Katsikeas et al. (2009). These proposed studies could provide new insights for future researchers into developing models based on relationships of constructs engaging the construct of interpersonal opportunism.

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