



## Review Article

# Marketing operations alignment: A systematic literature and citation network analysis review

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper was threefold: to analyze operations and marketing alignment issues published in Taylor & Francis, Springer, Science Direct, JSTOR, and Emerald; to identify clusters of articles concerning operations and marketing interface research streams in the literature; and to propose areas for future research. A systematic literature review of 62 academic articles from 29 journals and 5 publishers from 2000 to 2014 was employed. We investigated the article type, data collection method, year of publication and data analysis method, methodology, and research context. Then, we identified the structural understanding of the three research domains by following the guidelines of Main Path Analysis (MPA). A systematic literature review demonstrated a growing trend in operations and marketing alignment issues in recent years. This article presents our results in two parts. First, in the descriptive statistics part, the distribution figures show that 38 articles (76%) accounted for operations management and 12 articles (34%) were from marketing journals. Hence, one marketing and operations alignment issue is a lack in the number of research articles in marketing journals. In the second part, we found three major research domains of operations and marketing interfaces which we conducted using the Pajek software 4.01: a review of the alignment between operations and marketing; identification of variables that impact the company; and analysis of the effect of the interface. Additionally, we concluded with the future of research in operations and marketing alignment for each research domain. Therefore, this paper would benefit other scholars who are interested in studying marketing and operations alignment issues.

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## Introduction

As the resources are insufficient and there is small capacity to support waste, good integration between functions to maximize utilization is important. This is key to a competitive advantage that provides for more efficient

profitability (Tocher & Rutherford, 2009). Most small or large organizations collaborate between functions for adding value. Although all areas of business have many functions, such as human resources, accounting, financing, purchasing, marketing, and operations, Uday (1996) notes that the marketing and operations management interface is a natural functional pair which directly adds to value and builds a competitive advantage, whereas other functions indirectly support value creation (Drucker, 1954, 2007; Porter, 1985). These two functions are a primary response for a business objective and strategy (Porter, 1985).

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Operations provide added value from the resource input into the finished output (Shingo, 1989) and marketing provides added value from the output into the customers' hand by best serving the customer's needs (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990).

Traditionally, marketing and operations functions were studied separately (Karmakar, 1996). Marketing and sales takes responsibility for the whole part of the marketing function and focuses on the creation of customers' needs and how to offer products of distinctive value. In contrast, the operations function focuses on the supply chain and production in order to fulfill the customer's needs. Many scholars argue that marketing and operations functions are the primary keys of efficiency that lead to successful performance (Ho & Zheng, 2004; Malhotra & Sharma, 2002; Porter, 1985; Sawhney & Piper, 2002). Shapiro (1977) was the first researcher who introduced this collaboration between two functions with the question, "Can marketing and manufacturing co-exist?" Malhotra and Sharma (2002) described how the growth in technology, the rise in competition and world globalization can be a springboard that forces firms to find the ultimate way to achieve profitability.

This paper provides a systematic literature review and synthesis of marketing and operations interfaces in published articles related to marketing and operations in academic journals. The purpose of this paper is threefold: to identify different operations and marketing interface research streams in the literature; to develop a conceptual framework; and to propose areas for future research. In particular, this research aims to address the research questions as follows:

RQ1. What is the marketing and operations interface currently?

RQ2. How can marketing and operations interface research be classified into different research streams?

The research is designed as follows. The next section presents a literature review of the growing importance of marketing and operations interface issues. Following that section is a description of the methodology adopted for the selection and classification of published articles related to marketing and operations in academic journals. Then, we propose a conceptual framework to classify marketing and operations interfaces and indicate the results of our systematic literature review. In closing, the paper concludes with the contributions and implications for researchers and practitioners in the future research arena.

## Literature Review

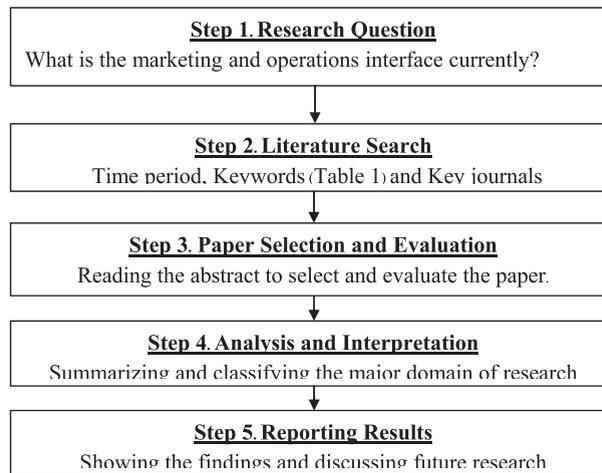
### *Theory of Marketing and Operation Alignment*

The theory of marketing was introduced around 1960. It was at this time that marketing concepts and marketing mix (product, price, place, and promotion) were mentioned in marketing textbooks. The American Marketing Association defined the meaning as "marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchange and satisfy individual and organizational objective[s]" (AMA Board, 1985). Tang

(2010) also noted that marketing is an external-focused function area with a responsibility to monitor market conditions (consumer trends, competition) and develop a marketing plan to increase market share or revenue. Grönroos (1989) argued that marketing mix can represent only a production-oriented definition, but does not constitute market-orientation or customer-orientation because the marketing mix model does not show the interactive elements. Christian (1994) stated that the paradigm shift from transaction marketing to relationship marketing, which became a part of the marketing function, also supports the interactive marketing activity. In transaction marketing, emphasis is on the core product of a firm that offers the same product where the advertising and brand may benefit, or lowering the price may lead to customers while the firm offering a relationship marketing strategy is able to create more value than with transaction marketing. As a result, such firms have an opportunity to communicate with their customers, which makes them better understand the customers' needs. Thus, they can provide a product with several types of added value, such as technology, knowledge, and information, which can increase the customers' satisfaction and make for competitive advantage, whereas the traditional functions cannot support a lean, agile strategy such as JIT (Just In Time), or a downsized, networked organization and TQM (Total Quality Management). The interface can provide a physically powerful customer focus, a commitment to deliver high value to customers, and works very well between the different functions (Powell, 1995).

The traditional operations function is managed as a cost center and does not require the marketers to be a tool of interaction. Recently, operations management theory has been developed by considering marketing decisions, as described by Sweeney (1991), in that operation strategy is provided to reduce any firm negative potential, to offer reliable support to the business strategy, and to increase the sustainable competitive advantage. Consequently, these operations decisions affect market variables, which include time, quality, and consumer support. For example, JIT (Just In Time) is a technical term representing a cross functional strategy. Thus, one cannot conclude that this is traditional operations management because it was recently a competitive strategy in the business world where time and cost are considered to be significant factors in determining a manufacturer's performance. There are many reasons for JIT, such as improving the lead time and cycle time, reducing work in the process, and reducing the cost of inventory. All of these can be implemented when production identifies information about the quantity of demand from the customer via the marketers.

Additionally, Uday (1996) noted that JIT relates to the most important change in inbound and outbound logistics systems, and JIT can change the type of relationship between the firms in considerable ways. It is clear that JIT is required by marketing. Uday (1996) claimed that integration between operations and marketing can create a competitive advantage and added value to the finished product or service. In traditional manufacturing, unit cost is still a performance measurement and marketing performance is determined by revenue. Today, operations and



**Figure 1** Systematic literature review process

Source: Applied from Denyer and Tranfield (2009)

marketing performance is known as cost and productivity. However, Shapiro (1977) argued that there is some conflict in the goal of these functions as the marketing goal tries to enhance the variety of products, whereas the operations goal tries to diminish the cost of switching the production line and increase the economies of scale. In the past, many scholars in both fields have tried to study and discuss this in order to deal with the different functions of this collaboration (Abernathy, 1976; Eliashberg & Steinberg, 1993; Hausman & Montgomery, 1993).

## Methods

This paper approached a comprehensive and systematic literature review method by following the guidelines of Denyer and Tranfields (2009). This method is a systematic approach for classifying, synthesizing, and interpreting the existing literature on marketing and operations interface issues and paves the way for future research (Fink, 2005). It is also a suitable method for building knowledge by analyzing existing research, which can have more importance than new explorations (Cooper, 2010). The methodology applied in this article followed the work of Denyer and Tranfield (2009), which consists of five process steps. Figure 1 shows the research question, literature search, paper selection and evaluation, analysis and interpretation, and the final process of reporting the result.

This method provided the answer to the review question, “What is the marketing and operations interface currently?” by showing the relevant theory and identifying the scope of the marketing and operations interface issue. Then we selected a research database using several online databases to identify related publications. The published sources of this paper were Science Direct, JSTOR, Taylor & Francis, Emerald Insight, and Springer. Then we verified and cross-checked the existing literature papers using Google Scholar, which is an acceptable method by David and Han (2004). Three main keywords were used: “marketing”, “operations” and “alignment”, with equivalent keywords being used for covering all of the relevant papers. Table 1 summarizes the keywords and the results of searching and selection. This table shows the number of articles from wider relevant topics to more narrow relevant topics. After considering the abstract, many articles were eliminated and finally 62 articles from 29 journals were selected based on their abstracts.

The next step was the analysis and interpretation of the selected articles by focusing on the authors, year of publication, research context (country and industry), objective, methodology, article type, data collection method, data analysis method, contributions, and classification dimension, by following the work of Di, Chris, Vincent, and Kan (2014). The last step was identifying the structural understanding of the research domains by following the

**Table 1**  
Search keywords and results (time frame: 2000–2014)

Keyword	Equivalent keywords and search strings	Number of articles	
		Searched titles	Searched abstracts
Operation	Operation; Operative; Manufacturing; Production	27,888	42,333
Marketing	Marketing; Sale	10,795	29,017
Alignment	Interface; Cooperation; Collaborative; Coordination	2,257	3,980
Operation and Marketing	(Operation; Operative; Manufacturing; Production) AND (Marketing; Sale)	57	2,915
Operation and Marketing Alignment	(Operation; Operative; Manufacturing; Production) AND (Marketing; Sale), (Alignment; Interface; Cooperation; Collaborative; Coordination)	41	62

guidelines of Main Path Analysis (MPA) (Colicchia & Strozzi, 2012), and this was conducted using the Pajek software 4.01 (De Nooy, Mrvar, & Batagelj, 2005).

Data Collection

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics part presents the articles' distribution by journal name, year of publication, and article type. Subsequently, we classified additional detail concerning article type using empirical studies by presenting the data collection method, data analysis method, industry, and the country of research contexts. This section provides the current status of the research in operations and marketing interface issues.

Article Classification by Journal Name

Figure 2 describes the 62 articles from the 29 journals. There were 9 articles from the Journal of Operation Management (15.00%), 8 from International Journal Production Economics (13.00%), 5 from Industrial Marketing Management (10.00%), 3 from the European Journal of Operational Research (6.00%), 3 from the Journal of Strategic Marketing (6.00%), 3 from Management Science (6.00%), 2 from the International Journal of Production Research (4.00%), 2 from the Journal of Service Management (4.00%), 2 from the Journal of Academic Marketing Science (4.00%), 2 from Production Planning and Control: The Management of Operations (4.00%), and 1 article each from OR Spektrum Journal (2.00%), the Annals of Operations Research Journal (2.00%), the Business Process Management Journal (2.00%), IIE Transactions (2.00%), the Journal of Business Research (2.00%), the Journal of Decision Systems (2.00%), the Journal of Enterprise Information Management (2.00%), the Journal of Manufacturing Technology Management (2.00%), the Journal of Marketing Channels (2.00%), the Journal of The Chinese Institute of Industrial Engineers (2.00%), Marketing Science (2.00%), Supply Chain Management: An International Journal (2.00%), the Journal of Product Innovation Management (2.00%), and The Service Industries Journal (2.00%). Nevertheless, the distribution figures show that 49 articles accounting for 79 percent were from operations

management, while 12 articles (19%) were from marketing journals. Hence, this means that marketing and operations interface issues are still lacking in the number of research articles and do not get much attention in the marketing journals.

Articles Classification by Year of Publication

In this study, the year of publication of the journal articles ranged from 2000 to 2014. The year 2000 was chosen to be the starting point for the review because a special issue of the Journal of Operations Management had called for papers in February 1999, with a submission deadline of 1 February 2000, and was published online in 2002 entitled "Management the Interface between Marketing and Operations". Thus, Figure 3 presents the number of marketing and operations interface articles. The journal published 6 articles in 2010, with a highly significant increase in year 2014 with 11 articles accounting for 18.00 percent. We believe this could be a trend in interdisciplinary future research.

Classification of Article Type

Figure 4 presents articles classified by type. Most of the articles (35 papers) were empirical research studies and accounted for 56.45 percent, while the rest of the articles constituted 13 modeling articles, 8 review articles, and 6 conceptual articles. The results showed that there are some avenues for future study in all article types, especially conceptual papers.

Methodologies Used in Empirical Articles

Figure 5 shows the data collection method used in marketing and operations interface empirical studies. There were 19 articles using surveys which accounted for 54.29 percent, 7 articles used multi-sources, 6 articles used interview methods, and 3 articles used archival methods as a data collection instrument, accounting for 20.00, 17.14, and 8.57 percent, respectively. This result indicates that the most popular method used in marketing and operations interface issues involved surveys.

Figure 6 indicates the data analysis method that was used in marketing and operations interface empirical

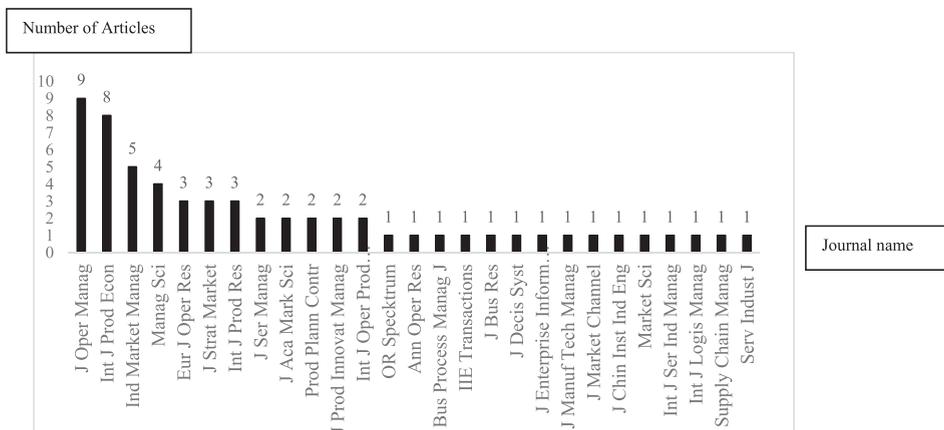


Figure 2 Article classification by journal

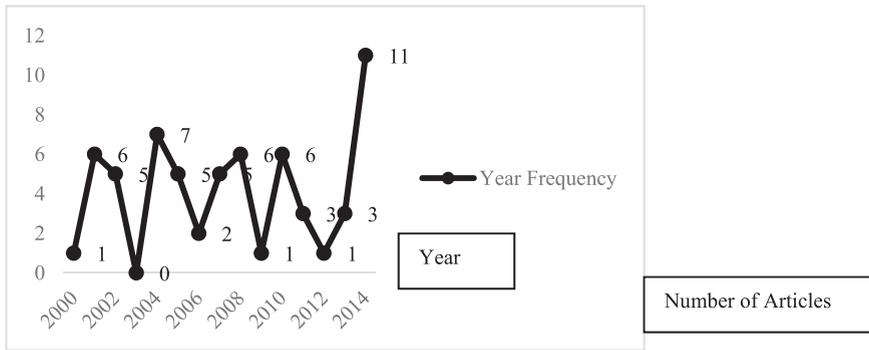


Figure 3 Article classification by year of publication

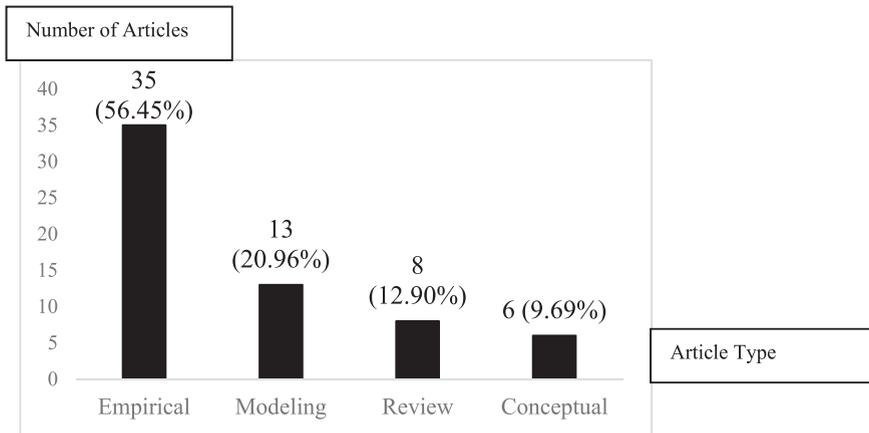


Figure 4 Classification of article type

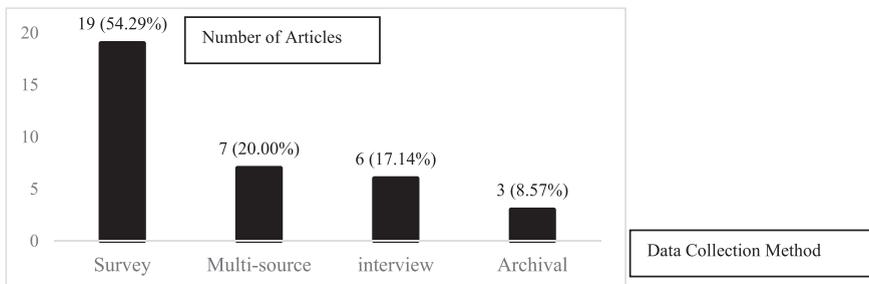


Figure 5 Data collection methods

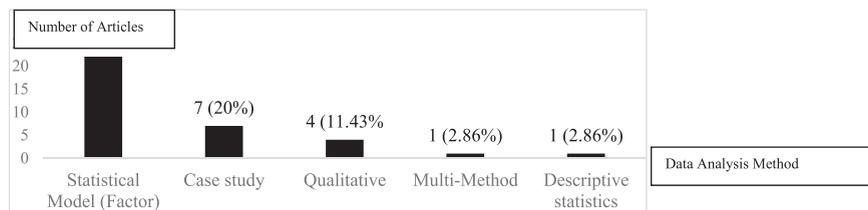
articles. There were 22 empirical papers which used a statistical model (62.86%), 7 papers provided case studies (20.00%), 4 papers used a qualitative method (11.43%), 1 paper used multi-methods (2.86%), and 1 paper provided descriptive statistics (2.86%). Therefore, there could be a gap in future research involving the multi-method approach.

*Empirical Research Context*

This section indicates the context of empirical studies in terms of industry and country. Table 2 presents the top five countries that were studied in the empirical research. The USA was the highest on the list in the empirical research

context with 11 articles (34.38%). Europe (Except UK) was second highest, followed by the UK, India, and multi-countries with 6 articles (18.75%), 4 articles (11.43%), 2 articles (6.25%), and 2 articles (6.25%), respectively.

Table 3 shows a list of the top five industries in the empirical research context. Eight articles studied mixed-industries which had more than one industry (25.00%), such as Computer, Transportation, and Telecommunication. Then, the remaining articles investigated the electronic, service, food, and retail sectors with 6 articles (17.14%), 3 articles (9.38%), 2 articles (6.25%), and 2 articles (6.25%), respectively.



**Figure 6** Data analysis method

### Implications for Future Research

Our findings indicated that 2014 was a growth year for marketing and operations interface issues, but even so, the number of articles was not many and most of the articles were published in the traditional operations management journals, whereas there were only a few publications involving these issues in the main marketing journals. In the descriptive statistics of articles classification, we identified the direction of a variety of further research topics. First, there could be an increasing trend in marketing and operations interface issues in the future and some gaps are still evident. Most of the articles in the existing literature focused on empirical studies, while case studies, modeling, qualitative approaches, and multi-methods were rarely present. However, there were a small number of articles covering empirical research study. Most of the scholars studied the firms' performance improvement while applying a marketing and operations interface by using a survey as their data collection method, then the data were analyzed using a statistical model factor. For example, what is the impact of a marketing and operations interface to a firm's performance? All researchers supported the premise that marketing and operations interfaces can improve firm performance and new product development (for example, [Damie, Victoria, Prakash, & Danny, 2010](#); [Eric, Orville, Walker, Robert, & Joseph, 2001](#); [Prithwiraj et al., 2010](#); [Scott & Benitto, 2002](#)). On the other hand, there were some scholars who argued that marketing and operations have some conflicts in terms of the objective. Thus, they proposed the opposite research question: is increasing the level of functional integration a guarantee to enhance the

performance of a new product, and what is the appropriate level for the integration? We believe that it could be an avenue for future research in terms of competitive advantage. How does a firm interface between two functions and develop this competitive advantage? Second, over the past 10 years, there have been few articles that have used multi-methods for their data analysis. So, it is interesting to propose a mixed-method for future research in order to be more robust, reduce bias and make the paper more general. Third, our findings showed that most of the articles studying marketing and operations interface issues were in developed countries (64.29%), while only 35.71 percent studied this in developing countries. This suggests there should be more interest on focusing on developing countries. Nowadays, free trade areas are growing and the world is in a globalization period. Most multinational corporations invest in their business in developing countries. Thus, it creates an opportunity to study the alignment between marketing and operations interfaces in these different cultures in a research context using a comparison between developing countries and developed countries. Fourth, the distribution of empirical papers by industries has largely focused on the automobile, electronic, and logistics industries (for example, [Eric et al., 2001](#); [Louis & Chyan, 2004](#); [Morgan et al., 2007](#)). We believe that there most marketing and operations issues are published in operation journals because those articles have studied and focused on the manufacturing section, while the research by marketing scholars has not received much attention and emphasis. Therefore, we suggest that there should be greater study and focus on marketing and operations interfaces in the service and retail section; then afterward try to enhance this issue in the marketing field.

**Table 2**

Distribution of empirical papers by countries researched

Top 5 countries	Number
USA	11
UK	4
EU (Except UK)	6
India	2
Multi countries	2

**Table 3**

Distribution of empirical papers by industries researched

Top 8 industries	Number
Mixed-Industries	8
Electronic	6
Service	3
Food	2
Retail	2

### Data Analysis

#### Main Path Analysis of the Research Streams

[Figures 7 and 8](#) identify our understanding of the structure of the three research domains (the review of the alignment between marketing and operations, identification of variables that impact the company, and analysis of the effect of the interface) by following the guidelines of Main Path Analysis (MPA) ([Colicchia & Strozzi, 2012](#)) and using the citation network as a key to link each article, which was conducted using the Pajek software 4.01 ([De Nooy et al., 2005](#)).

#### Review of the Alignment Between Marketing and Operations

Our review of the alignment between marketing and operations was the smallest research domain. [Alex, Daniel,](#)

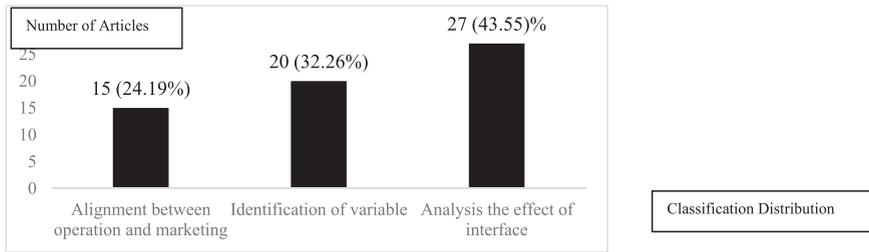


Figure 7 Classification distribution

Luis, Riehs, and Rafael (2014) indicated that all of the resources in manufacturing, such as infrastructure and other resources, have been defined by marketing (even though the decision of the interface may or may not be the best decision) and discussed some conflicts with their objective. Next, we present the key scholars in Figure 9 in order to show the growth of knowledge in the alignment between marketing and operations. Malhotra and Sharma (2002) proposed the importance of marketing operations interfaces and their motivation in creating a special issue to demonstrate a simple framework that delineates wide areas of mutual interest and integration between these two functions. However, there are some conflicts in terms of the purpose between the two functions. Hence, Piercy (2010) examined the problematic relationship between the marketing and operations functions and provided the requirement for a good working relationship between the marketing and operations function within the organization. Tang (2010) cited Niall’s work on the conflict between two functions; then he provided a framework for a marketing and operations interface. In 2014, Michael Dixon et al. discussed several different types of decision-making within

firms producing goods and services who needed active interaction between marketing and operations. However, Oliva et al. (2011) studied Malhotra’s work and implemented a process perspective to find the interface, which was achieved by drawing the difference between the incentive landscape and the planning process, using a case study. They then presented verification that achieving alignment in the execution of plans can be significant rather than informational and have procedural quality. Therefore, we believe that this could be a direction for future research related to these conflicts and factors concerning competitive advantage. For example, how does the interface between marketing and operations function in a product recall? What is the conceptual framework of alignment between a marketing and operations interface? How does a firm manage the conflict between marketing and operations in each stage of new product development?

Identification of Variables that Impact the Company

The identification of variables that impact the company was the second biggest research stream in the marketing and operations interface. Previous research stated that this

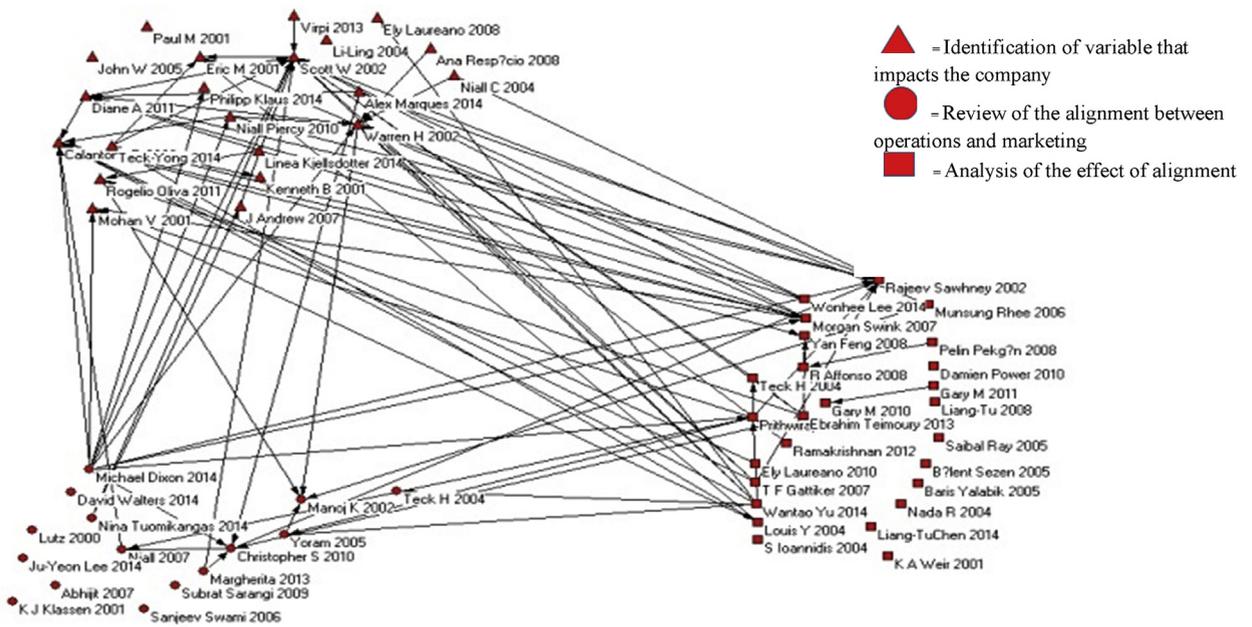


Figure 8 Citation network of the sample articles

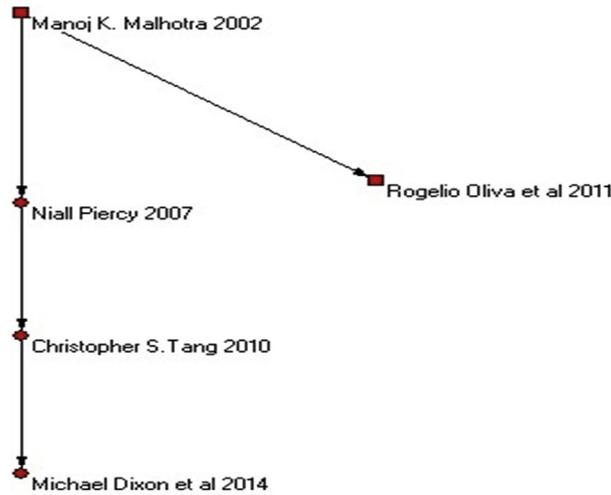


Figure 9 Main path of the alignment between marketing and operations

domain studies the understanding of the relationship between two areas, but does not understand the effect of such an interface (Alex et al., 2014). The scholar on the leading edge of this research domain was Hausman, Montgomery, and Roth (2002), as indicated in Figure 10. He studied the manufacturing and marketing interface by proposing a path model for examining the mediating effect of the manufacturing and marketing interface. He was followed by Piercy and Rich (2004) who cited Warren’s work and investigated the short-comings of the value definitions contained within the lean enterprise and proposed that an opportunity exists for the strategic integration of marketing activities and lean operations. The findings showed that lean value chains can be formed, which offers organizations a better approach to the marketplace than either traditional marketing departments far away from operations or operational lean dominance over marketing. This domain has been expanded by Alex et al. (2014). They investigated the

relationship between marketing and operations and proposed better understanding by analyzing the impact of marketing decisions on delivery performance. Paiva (2010) was cited in Hausman’s work and demonstrated that manufacturing and marketing integration and managerial priorities positively influence business performance. From this domain, we can propose some future research, such as, what is the influence of a marketing and operations interface in the service section? We also propose a factor variable that affects product recalls.

*Analysis of the Effect of Interface*

Figure 11 shows that the biggest research domain in a marketing and operation interface was the analysis of the effect of the interface. This research stream has been proposed by previous scholars regarding the propositions for development of interfaces between marketing and operations (Alex et al., 2014). Mohan and Mitzi (2001) was the

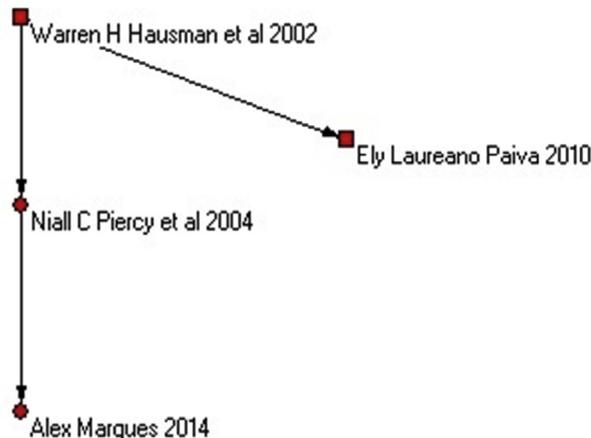
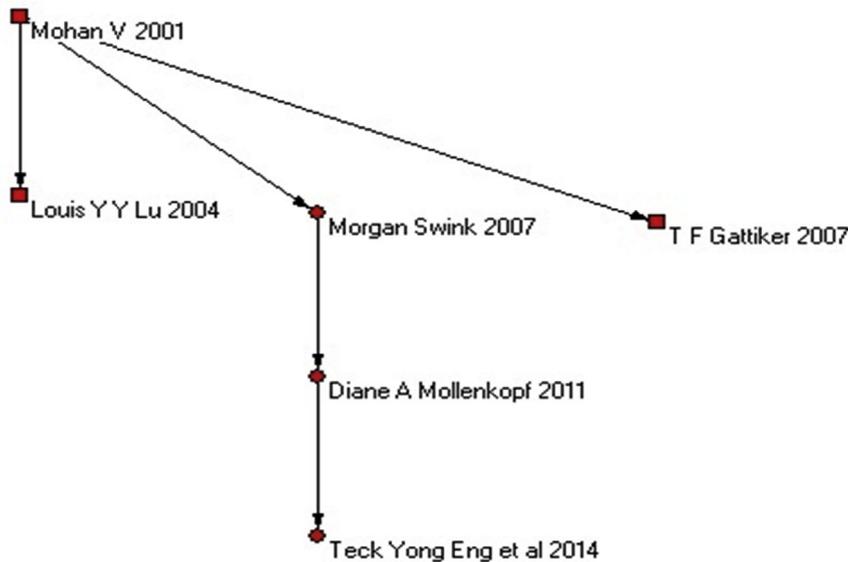


Figure 10 Main path of identification of variables that impact the company



**Figure 11** Main path of analysis of the effect of the interface

first researcher to propose this research domain during 2000–2014, by contributing evidence that organizational process factors are related to achievement of an operational outcome target for product quality and cost. Then, three other scholars cited and extended their work. [Louis and Chyan \(2004\)](#) extended new product development process research in a new environmental context (Taiwan's IT industry) and a new business type. [Gattiker \(2007\)](#) used the ERP systems to propose manufacturing and marketing integration and then [Morgan \(2007\)](#) assessed the influence of MMI in each of four stages of new product development that was on time and successful. [Diane, Robert, & Ivan \(2011\)](#) was cited in Morgan's study and focused on return management at the marketing-operation interface by utilizing the conceptualization of customer value and its related drivers. In 2014, Eng also analyzed and proposed evidence that operational and marketing activities affected competitiveness and firm performance. Thus, future research should focus on sustainable performance. For example, how does marketing and operation interface effect sustainable firm performance, and how does marketing and operation interface improve the competitive advantage in service?

## Conclusion

This article used a systematic literature method to review 62 articles from 29 journals and 5 publishers. Subsequently, 62 articles were classified into three research domains: a review of the alignment between marketing and operations; identification of variables that impact the company; and analysis of the effect of the interface. We utilized Main Path Analysis by following the guidelines from [Colicchia and Strozzi \(2012\)](#) and then used the citation network as a key to link each article, which was conducted using the Pajek software 4.01 ([De Nooy et al., 2005](#))

in each research domain. Most of the empirical research focused on firm performance and new product development. We then analyzed the data using a structural equation model or regression. Some scholars have studied the conflict of these two functions and proposed a requirement or step for the interface.

## Recommendation

Some directions for future research were identified. Some research questions include: How does integration between operations and marketing affect the competitive advantage in the service section? How does company culture affect the marketing and operations interface? What is the influence of a marketing and operations interface in each marketing mix? What is an appropriate mechanism to support better cross-functional relationships? What is an appropriate mechanism or model to support better marketing and operation interfaces? Moreover, the research context in terms of industry and country are also interesting for developing future research. However, there are several limitations in this review article, such as the difficulty in interpreting and classifying the domain from citations. This issue is not one of continuous growth in terms of publication, which decreased in some years and increased in others, but rather is a result of call papers from special issues of journals and whatever they are focusing on at that time.

## Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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