
Marketing integration in cross-border mergers and acquisitions: conceptual framework and research propositions

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Abstract: As for Mergers and Acquisitions (M&As), cross-border M&As are particularly problematic and complex. The most challenging issue is the integration of different management styles and departmental practices. Once the integration seeps deeper into functional levels, the M&A commitment offered at strategic level is faced with operational implementation challenges. The marketing departmental function is usually heavily involved in this integration process. Research on marketing integration in relation to M&As has paid little attention to the process of combining resources from two similar departments, particularly in a cross-border M&A context. Furthermore, existing research does not clearly highlight those factors that contribute to successful marketing integration. Hence, this paper discusses the phenomenon of marketing integration in the cross-border M&A context. Collaboration, interaction, marketing synergy and redeployment of marketing resources are proposed as antecedents to the integration. Drawing from the extant literature, propositions are developed and mechanisms to improve M&A integration performance are elaborated.

Keywords: mergers and acquisitions; functional integration; marketing; literature review.

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1 Introduction

Cross-border Mergers and Acquisitions (M&As) are very intricate phenomena compared to domestic M&As (Stahl and Mendenhall, 2005). Despite their complexity, cross-border M&As enjoy sizable popularity and are considered a viable means for international growth. While this stands in sharp contrast to their high failure rates (Schoenberg, 2006), cross-border M&As are serving as an alternative to other forms of internationalisation (Sinkovics et al., 2011). Indeed, recent meta-analytic studies are not able to establish clearly the predictors for M&A success or failure (Stahl and Voigt, 2008) and evidence from past research suggests that most cross-border M&As take substantial time to show benefits (Agrawal et al., 2011), only exhibit average performance results or fail altogether (Marks and Mirvis, 2011a). Moreover, research on M&A is arguably rather fragmented and mostly dispersed in various disciplines of business and management studies, leaving potential gaps that need to be addressed (Weber, 2011; Weber and Tarba, 2011).

The literature on cross-border M&As can be segmented into the following strands: first and foremost, there is research interest in organisational amalgamation issues related to M&A performance effects (e.g., Lien et al., 2006; Wang and Boateng, 2007; Zollo and Meier, 2008; Zou and Simpson, 2008). Secondly, issues involving human

resources practices (e.g., Antila and Kakkonen, 2008; Marks and Mirvis, 2011b; Weber and Fried, 2011), employees' dismissal (e.g., Yong and Aguilera, 2008), due diligence (e.g., Angwin, 2001) and communication and management of soft-factors (e.g., Weber et al., 2012). The third research avenue focuses on national cultural differences in international M&As (e.g., Morosini et al., 1998; Kroon et al., 2008; Saunders et al., 2009; Tanure et al., 2009).

This paper specifically reviews M&A integration from the perspective of performance enhancement and success (Haspeslagh and Jemison, 1991; Froesea and Goeritz, 2007). However, rather than looking at cross-border M&A in more general terms, we look specifically at departmental, functional integration (Ghauri and Buckley, 2003; Shimizu et al., 2004), in our case marketing integration. While a few select studies have already examined the role of functional/marketing integration (Homburg and Bucerius, 2005; Vanitha et al., 2008), given that the marketing department is seen as an important enabler of cross-border M&A integration success our contribution to the literature is twofold. First, we propose a conceptual model on how to accommodate the marketing integration in M&As by introducing social capital factors and resource based-view factors as antecedents. Second, we bridge previous empirical work with a view of functional marketing integration and outline potential implications for future empirical research in this area.

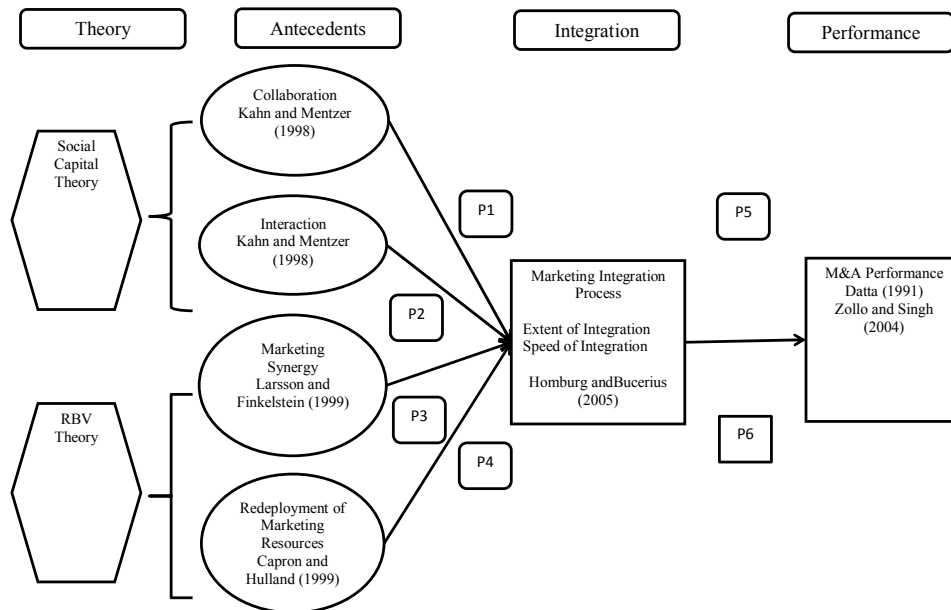
2 Motivation

Despite existing studies in the area of M&A integration in general and functional integration in particular, there is still room for conceptual and empirical explorations (Capron and Hulland, 1999). The rationale for looking at marketing area integration is that marketing offers a high potential to create sales synergy and new business opportunities through combining various functions and value chain components of the acquired and acquiring firm (Wan and Yiu, 2009). Weber and Dholakia (2000) stressed that marketing consolidation is a strategically motivated step in boosting revenues through adding new product lines and expanding market research especially in foreign countries. By building on a research model proposed by Homburg and Bucerius (2005), the present study proposes antecedents that facilitate the marketing integration process leading to enhanced M&A performance (see Figure 1). Social networking elements such as collaboration and interaction are introduced. Collaboration and interaction are dimensions, which have been used as major success factors in contributing to M&A post acquisition management generally (Puranam et al., 2003; Marmenout, 2011) and marketing departmental integration in particular (Kahn and Mentzer, 1998). Social capital elements such as interaction, coordination, control and conflict resolution are essential in cultivating new characteristics and employee motivation in organisational integration, particularly in the marketing environment (Srivastava et al., 1999). Furthermore, human relations and direct connectivity are fundamental in developing comprehensive integration in M&As through R&D transfer, intensive personal contacts and joint marketing projects between the merging companies (Anderson et al., 2001).

Another important contribution is through the utilisation of marketing resources, i.e. marketing synergy and redeployment of marketing resources. Synergy is a main goal that firms aspire to accomplish (Larsson and Finkelstein, 1999). However, synergies in M&As are not easy to achieve and represent a significant financial burden (Schweiger and Very, 2003; Sirower and Sahni, 2006). Arguably, concentrating on the integration of marketing departments in M&As is a lucrative strategic approach leading to synergistic

benefits (Weber and Dholakia, 2000). The amalgamation of marketing departments offers tremendous advantages such as ready-made sales executives to boost sales revenues, opportunities to combine marketing functions such as logistics and sales operation as well as to slash advertising and promotion costs and also the potential to reduce overlapping and surplus resources.

Figure 1 Conceptual model of marketing integration in the M&A context



With regards to the redeployment of marketing resources, Capron and Hullan (1999) highlight that acquisitions offer an opportunity to capture new marketing resources such as brands and sales forces that are rather difficult to develop internally. Furthermore, through acquisitions the acquirer firm can redeploy its superior marketing resources in the target firm, which may push marketing efforts and contribute to improved revenue generation. In a similar vein, Anand and Singh (1997) state that if the firm can redeploy its resources or assets, then subsequent M&A performance will be improved. Lakshman (2011) proposes a knowledge-resource based model to cultural integration in M&As and explains the processes through which these resources impact integration effectiveness. This corresponds to findings by Ahammad and Glaister (2011) who assert that knowledge transfer to and from the acquired firm is significant positive determinant of acquisition performance.

However, applying M&As as a strategy to integrate resources from two different organisations into one major entity may encounter a number of challenges, especially during the integration process at the functional level. After reviewing Weber and Dholakia's (2000) research about synergies in M&As, Maruca (1996) states that firms in almost all the cases spent too much time focusing on financial outcomes and not enough on planning how to integrate the combined firms. Consequently, they failed to recognise the potential for synergies such as marketing advantages and economies of scale in terms of the partner's product lines, market position, existing customers and enthusiastic marketing personnel.

Additionally, it is a challenging task to combine two firms from different geographic areas and with different organisational cultures (Very and Lubatkin, 1996; Weber et al., 1996; King et al., 2004). According to Meschi and Metais (2006), one of the major challenges during the integration process in M&As is the difficulty of developing and exploiting skills and acquiring knowledge. Aguilera and Dencker (2004) note that a lack of compelling strategic rationale and unrealistic expectations about possible synergies are also among the issues that undermine the process of integration. In fact, failing to implement favourable integration processes could lead to inferior acquisition outcomes (Cartwright and Schoenberg, 2006). However, a clear communication of the purpose of the integration together with careful planning and execution create a favourable environment for the achievement of synergies which then can contribute to M&A success in terms of an enhanced financial performance.

Therefore, special arrangements are needed to facilitate the success of the integration process, particularly in the integration of marketing departments. Marketing managers can be seen as the most resourceful managers in enhancing profits and growth, especially by retaining existing customers and capturing new customers (Richey et al., 2008). As a foreign firm, the acquirer is vulnerable due to its limited knowledge of how to capture the local market in the acquired firm's country. Nevertheless, the acquiring firm can contribute in terms of its international experience and insights from its home country marketing strategy. Yet, all of these individual contributions are not sufficient without carefully planned and implemented procedures to enhance inter-firm collaboration and knowledge transfer.

3 Theoretical background

3.1 Resource-based view (RBV)

In M&A research, the RBV has been discussed particularly in terms of the deployment and the integration of resources between target firms and acquirers (Capron et al., 1998; Yung-Ming, 2006; Colombo et al., 2007). It also provides the identification of a proactive strategy associated with strategic resources that are valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and not substitutable within a firm's sustained competitive advantage (Barney et al., 2001; Lockett et al., 2009). This means that by engaging in M&As firms can enhance their global competitiveness and obtain tangible or intangible resources. However, according to Harrison et al. (2001) the acquisition of resources is not sufficient for the creation of long-term competitive advantages. To sustain a competitive advantage the combined firm needs to be able to create a valuable, unique and inimitable synergy.

In this study, we look at how the RBV applies to the redeployment of marketing resources and to marketing synergy. These factors are used to expedite the process of marketing integration in order to achieve a better M&A performance (Homburg and Bucerius, 2005). Redeployment of marketing resources is vital as it is key at the operational level in departmental amalgamation (Bahde, 2003). It requires strategies that allow both firms to exchange information and develop strong marketing personnel (Harrison et al., 2001). This may help marketing managers to identify and communicate their strengths by highlighting successful and failed past and present strategies. The best marketing strategies can then be redeployed (Capron and Hulland, 1999).

In terms of marketing synergy, we base our arguments on those of Chatterjee (1986). He shows that a collusive synergy is associated with higher value compared to financial synergy and operational synergy. Collusive synergy is achieved by companies that

exhibit similar industry or departmental background and are combined into one entity. In our study, this translates into the identification and realisation of marketing resource synergies such as advertising, distribution, sales force and market research. These are important for the development of marketing capabilities and proficiencies in the newly combined firm (Song et al., 1997). Therefore, if both firms make an effort to combine their marketing capabilities to realise hidden synergies the newly combined firm is likely to be able to increase its performance through superior marketing activities (Larsson and Finkelstein, 1999).

3.2 Social capital theory

Social capital has emerged as one of the most salient concepts in the social sciences and is of central interest to organisational researchers (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Lin et al., 2006). It refers to the extent to which members of an organisation are driven to establish social contacts and interactions within or outside their organisation (Li and Chen, 2010). This concept looks at how social interactions such as public relations can facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation and coordination (Putnam, 1993) and how social capital can enhance network and industry growth (Walker et al., 1997). Furthermore, issues such as the creation of inter-unit linkages through networks (Tsai, 2000), external knowledge acquisition through customer relationships (Yli et al., 2001), the creation and sharing of new intellectual capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998), knowledge transfer between network members (Inkpen and Tsang, 2005) and social capital as the driver of alliances (Chung et al., 2000) are also key in social capital theory.

In this study, we highlight interaction and collaboration as the core social capital drivers enhancing marketers' relationships (Weiss and Hughes, 2005) and leading to a smooth interdepartmental integration, particularly when integrating the marketing department with other departments, such as manufacturing and Research and Development (R&D) (Kahn and Mentzer, 1998). This is also emphasised by Duysters et al. (1999) with respect to establishing combination capabilities through business communities and the improvement of partner selection processes. Furthermore, these social capital drivers could develop into long-term relational advantages and at the same time expedite the marketing integration process. This is supported by Jean et al. (2010), who stress that social capital creates commitment among the partners. Increased commitment leads to resource sharing that is mutually beneficial to both parties. These relationships could also improve the likelihood of successful marketing integration within cross-border M&As.

In M&A integration, communication and cooperation among staff are vital (Sirower and Lipin, 2003). In fact, within M&As almost all organisational restructurings that involve the integration of people require the application of soft side strategy through the relationship capital approach (Cullen et al., 2000; Sudarsanam, 2003). According to Marks and Mirvis (2000), firms that are involved in M&As will be able to integrate more smoothly if they develop some form of transition structure, which they can achieve through educating their staff and improving social interactions. Teerikangas et al. (2011) highlight the significance of 'integration managers' throughout the integration process, thus emphasising the value-capturing roles of managers and their contribution to acquisition performance. This is in line with the notion that communication aspects and emotions are important contributors to M&A integration (Kusstatscher, 2006). Hence, we introduce the aspect of social capital as antecedents to the marketing integration process (see Figure 1). It links through the interaction and collaboration based on a study

conducted by Kahn and Mentzer (1998). Thus, the RBV and the social capital theory are applied to explain how resources such as interaction, collaboration, marketing synergy and redeployment of marketing resources are used and manipulated to expedite the process of marketing integration and ultimately to achieve better M&A performance.

4 Previous research – marketing integration process in M&As

Marketing integration is concerned not only with internal collaboration within an organisation but also with collaboration across firms. This collaboration is much more complex if it involves two different countries, especially in the case of a firm from a developing country acquiring a firm in a developed country. Although the overall aspect of the integration process will be similar, factors such as different cultures and unexpected local behaviour could jeopardise the integration. This process becomes more complicated in the M&A context. Therefore, the integration process must be effectively managed in order to avoid failures and at the same time improve the M&A performance.

As there is no uniform definition of the marketing integration process (Rouzies et al., 2005), we define it as the combination of two marketing departments into one major entity which will coordinate and manage large marketing resources. The term process does not refer to a stepwise method but rather to proposed mechanisms that can expedite and provide benefits for the combination of the two marketing departments. Figure 1 shows the proposed conceptual model for the marketing integration process in the M&A context.

Research into marketing integration began with the discussion of behavioural factors. For example, Ruekert and Walker Jr. (1987) examine how the marketing staff interacts with staff in other functional areas in terms of fulfilling marketing functions. They introduce an inter-functional interactions framework divided into three main dimensions: (a) environmental situation; (b) structure and process and (c) outcome dimensions of an inter-functional social system. The findings indicate that inter-functional interaction involving marketing personnel and other personnel is influenced by resource dependencies. Secondly, co-ordinations seem to play an important role in linking cross functional units. Furthermore, it appears that the more similar two functional departments are in tasks and objectives, the greater the amount of communication that will occur between the individuals in two departments and also the less difficulty they will encounter in communicating effectively with one another. Finally, the degree of conflict seems to increase if the level of interaction increases between marketing personnel and another functional area.

Kahn and Mentzer (1998) propose that among the behavioural elements that are related to social factors, interaction and collaboration are the major drivers in influencing performance outcomes within the marketing integration area. They emphasise that meetings and information flows between departments lead to better interactions (Nick, 2008). Furthermore, collaboration is found to act as an affective sharing process which develops commitments that are required to achieve togetherness. Accordingly, the collaboration component should be emphasised to achieve better performance in integrating two departments. On the other hand, interaction should be employed as a bridge to establish contacts. Too many meetings and documented information exchange may jeopardise performance as too much interaction can lead to unfavourable relationships.

Other research streams focus on the integration of marketing departments with other departments such as R&D (Parry and Song, 1993), sales (Guenzi and Troilo, 2006; Palmatier et al., 2007), human resources (Chimhanzi, 2004), quality (Longbottom et al., 2000), logistics (Ellinger, 2000), the Internet (Prasad et al., 2001; Uhlenbruck et al., 2006) manufacturing (Song et al., 1997), engineering (Lancaster, 1993) and other departments.

In terms of R&D and marketing department integration, Griffin and Hauser (1996) stress the importance of joint product development and innovativeness. The high level of cooperation and the amalgamation of expertise results in more marketable products improve sales and reduce product failures in the marketplace (Garrett et al., 2006). Another outcome of R&D and marketing integration can be improved new idea generation and product commercialisation (Song et al., 1997). Song et al. (1997) examine whether other departments for example the manufacturing department could also play a major role in the integration process. Manufacturing departments can contribute in terms of increased production efficiency and cost minimisation (Goodman and Dion, 2001). Through this, the combined firm gains advantages which supports the R&D and marketing department. Song et al. (1997) introduce two antecedents: internal facilitators and external forces. They find that internal facilitators such as evaluation, reward procedures and top management support significantly influence cross-functional cooperation and new product performance.

Cho and Hahn (2004), on the other hand, examine the antecedents and consequences of the socio-cultural differences between R&D and marketing managers. They emphasise the importance of a joint reward system and interdepartmental connectedness. However, their results show that socio-cultural differences are barriers to the inter-functional integration between R&D and marketing departments and thus, do not support better NPD performance. Khan (2001) investigates the influence of market orientation and interdepartmental integration on NPD performance in relation to the marketing and manufacturing departments. The findings confirm that market orientation and interdepartmental integration significantly improve product development and product management performance.

In terms of integration between marketing and sales departments, Rouzies et al. (2005) propose integrating mechanisms as the antecedents of sales and marketing integration such as structure, process/system, culture and people. Guenzi and Troilo (2007), on the other hand, suggest long-term strategic orientation, an effective marketing-sales relationship and customer-oriented sales people as antecedents. Surprisingly, research into marketing department integration particularly within the M&A context is limited (Homburg and Bucerius, 2005).

Capron and Hullan (1999) study the redeployment of three marketing resources (brands, sales forces and general marketing expertise), specifically in merging firms following horizontal acquisitions. They investigate the impact of such redeployments on performance. According to their findings, all three marketing resources are likely to be redeployed evenly in the M&A contexts. They report that the immobile resources are more likely to be redeployed from the acquired firm compared to the otherwise less immobile resources. Furthermore, resources are more likely to be redeployed from acquirer to acquire rather than in the reverse direction. Ultimately, all the three marketing resources are reported to positively affect the firm's performance.

Table 1 Empirical research in M&A integration-related studies

<i>Author (s)</i>	<i>Locations/type of M&A/ period/industry</i>	<i>Data resource/Collection method</i>	<i>Objectives of Study</i>	<i>statistical analysis</i>	<i>Results</i>
Capron and Hurland(1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - USA and Europe - Horizontal Acquisitions - Period 1988-1992 - Multiple Industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The International Merger Year-book (1990, 1991, 1992), M&A source book, M&A International (1991, 1992, 1992) and Fusions et Acquisitions Magazine (1989, 1990, 1991, 1992) - Ten interviews - Final sample n = 253 - Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To investigate the degree of redeployment of three marketing resources across merging firms following horizontal acquisitions - To examine the impact of such resource redeployments on subsequent performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Correlations - Regression Model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquirer and the target firm frequently redeploy their resources - Immobile resources are more likely to be redeployed from target firm to the acquirer firm
Cording et al.(2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - US - Only horizontal acquisitions - Applied to both acquirer and target firms - Period 1997-2001 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Securities Data Corporation's (SDC) - Survey - Final sample, n = 137 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To examine how causal ambiguity is related to performance outcomes in acquisitions by identifying a mechanism that reduces intra-firm linkage ambiguity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partial Least Square (PLS Graph, version 3.0) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intermediate goals strongly reduce the intra-firm linkage ambiguity therefore allow acquisition into a more easily manageable situation - Intermediate goal achievement fully mediates the relationship between integration decisions and acquisition performance
Datta (1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acquisitions in US - Manufacturing and Mining sectors - Period 1980-1984 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey - Quarterly issues of M&A Sample 703 - Final sample n = 173 acquisitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To examine the impact of differences in rewards and management styles on post-acquisition performance - To identify whether the relationship depends on the extent of post-acquisition integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Correlations - Regression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compatibility of management styles is important to improve acquisition performance - Differences in top management styles have a negative impact on performance in acquisitions characterised by both high and low levels of post-acquisition integration. - No such relationship was observed in either the high or low integration subgroups.

Table 1 Empirical research in M&A integration-related studies (continued)

<i>Author (s)</i>	<i>Locations/type of M&A/ period/industry</i>	<i>Data resource/Collection method</i>	<i>Objectives of Study</i>	<i>statistical analysis</i>	<i>Results</i>
Homburg and Buecerius (2005)	Germany, Austria and Switzerland Horizontal M&A Period of 1996-1999 Multiple industries	Survey M&A Database University of St. Gallen Switzerland and M&A related European Business Magazines Final sample, n = 232	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To investigate how the marketing integration process affects integration outcomes - To investigate how these relationships are affected by certain moderators - To analyse the importance of market-related performance for M&A performance 	Correlations LISREL 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing integration process positively drives M&A performance - Marketing issues more important than cost savings
Larsson and Finkelstein (1999)	US and Europe Database: case catalogues, reference lists, computer searches and direct inquiry	112 empirical case studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To develop and test a model that synthesises theoretical perspectives on strategic combination, organisational integration, HRM and financial performance - To examine the mechanisms of synergy realisation 	Correlations Structural Equation Modeling (LISREL 7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisational integration was strongest predictor of synergy realisation - Employee resistance was negatively associated with synergy realisation
Schweizer (2005)	Database: Pharmaceuticals and Biotech companies in 1990s in Europe (acquirers) and US (target)	Five in-depth case studies Semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To investigate how the acquiring pharmaceutical companies integrate acquired biotech companies to gain access to their know-how and technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Matrix technique for comparative analysis - Comprehensive case description 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unique contribution to M&A literature - It is suggested to focus on the rapid integration of all non-R&D-related functions of the acquired business - R&D related functions should retain a high degree of autonomy - Biotech culture is worth preserving
Richey et al. (2008)	US Across 71 industries	Survey Ernst and Young Database Final sample, n = 104	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To suggest key success factors such as relationship marketing manager retention - To assess the impact of firms' post-acquisition performance through employee-mediated relationships 	Hierarchical linear regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The retention of relationship marketing managers could enhance the chance of the combined firm's survival - More attention is needed to avoid productivity decreases

Table 1 Empirical research in M&A integration-related studies (continued)

<i>Author (s)</i>	<i>Locations/type of M&A/ period/industry</i>	<i>Data resource/Collection method</i>	<i>Objectives of Study</i>	<i>statistical analysis</i>	<i>Results</i>
Vanitha et al. (2008)	- US	- Event study	- Introduces strategic emphasis alignment as construct	Ordinary least square	Strategic emphasis alignment had positive results for the consolidation of all industries involved
	- Multiple industries	- Final sample, n = 206	- To show that similarity and complementarity create value		
	- Period of 1990-2001	- SIC and Thomson M&A database	- To show how marketing resources (advertising) influence M&A value creation		
Weber et al. (2011)	- Israel	- Survey	- To explore the role of the integration approach in the implementation of M&As.	Inter-correlations Through regression analysis	Findings suggest that the fit of the integration approach is positively related to integration effectiveness and mediates its relationship with synergy potential and cultural differences
	- Period of cases, 2004-2006	- Final sample, n = 52	- To suggest a revised framework for integration approach to better explain integration effectiveness		
	- Archive of the Israel Antitrust Authority	- usage of fit between the recommended and the actually implemented integration approach to better explain integration effectiveness			
Zollo and Singh (2004)	- USA	- Interviews and survey	- To examine the extent of acquired firm integration and the extent to which it replaces the firm's top management team	Correlation Regression Ordinary Least Square	Firms could develop collective competence by not only accumulating experience but also investing time and effort in activities that require higher cognitive effort
	- Commercial banking industry	- Final sample 51 from 250 banks			
	- Period 1986-1994				

Another interesting study on marketing integration within the M&A context is by Homburg and Bucerius (2005). The study investigates firms operating in the German-speaking part of Central Europe (Germany, Austria and Switzerland). The results indicate that marketing integration contributes to cost savings but has a negative effect on market-related performance.

Vanitha et al. (2008), on the other hand, investigate how marketing functions create value in M&A. They examine when and how similarity and complementarity between merging firms create value but under varying merger motives. They attempt to address any linkages that may exist between marketing resources and financial performance. They find that marketing actions such as consolidating products and markets can produce positive impact on shareholder value.

Weber et al. (2011) explore the fit of the integration approach to the synergy potential of the merged companies and the cultural differences between them. The results indicate that there is a positive relationship between the fit of the integration approach and integration effectiveness. Furthermore, this relationship is mediated by the synergy potential and cultural differences.

Despite the fact that studies specifically investigating marketing integration in M&As are rare, studies focusing on M&A integration have made valuable contributions to topics such as strategic fit (Datta, 1991), synergy realisation (Larsson and Finkelstein, 1999), relationship marketing (Richey et al., 2008), integration between biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies (Schweizer, 2005), organisational integrity (Cording et al., 2008) and learning (Zollo and Singh, 2004). Please refer to Table 1.

5 Antecedents to marketing integration in the M&A context

Within this body of literature, to the best of our knowledge, no previous studies have proposed antecedents to the marketing integration process which are simultaneously expected to improve M&A performance. Although some researchers have explored the area, their studies had a different and unrelated context. For example Song et al. (1997) explore the antecedents of cross-functional cooperation in the integration of marketing, R&D and manufacturing departments in the Mexican electronic industry. Others have investigated the topic in the context of socio-cultural differences between the integration of R&D and marketing departments in the Korean high-tech industry (e.g., Cho and Hahn, 2004). Bahde (2003) discusses M&A integration in general rather than going deeper into an operational setting. Hence, in the present study, following Homburg and Bucerius (2005) and Capron and Hulland (1999), we propose four antecedents for the marketing integration process. These antecedents are collaboration, interaction, marketing synergy and redeployment of marketing resources. These antecedents are clearly shown in Figure 1.

5.1 Collaboration

Combining people in M&A integration is a challenge as it involves various backgrounds and different needs which can represent enormous obstacles during the integration process. These obstacles include differences in work setting, company goals and vision, business applications and mindset. However, collaboration among staff is critical to business success, especially when it involves combining two entities into one. This is

more difficult when integrating two different national backgrounds into one. One way to facilitate the integration process is by fostering understanding among staff members through formal and informal social network collaboration (Birkinshaw et al., 2000).

Kahn and Mentzer (1998) find that formal collaboration such as working together, achieving goals collectively and sharing ideas are among the most popular collaboration approaches employed to facilitate the integration of marketing and manufacturing departments. In terms of informal collaboration approaches, working together informally was found to significantly influence the integration process. Blomqvist and Levy (2006) underline that collaboration is a key to enable knowledge creation in an uncertain environment. Drawing on the organisational trust literature and research on post-merger integration, Stahl et al. (2011) propose that the two firms' relationship history, the inter-firm distance and the acquirer's integration approach will influence target firm employees' trust in the acquiring firm's management (Stahl et al., 2011). Furthermore, collaboration with foreign partners can benefit firms through providing them with knowledge and strategies that might be extremely costly and difficult to obtain via other methods of cross border entry, such as joint ventures and other non-equity alliances (Shrader, 2001).

Another approach is to encourage staff collaboration on joint projects. Teamwork and collaboration enable the sharing of resources through interdepartmental connections (Weiss and Hughes, 2005). At the same time, it fosters marketing know-how and skills exchange. Similarly, Stank et al. (1999) find that the more frequently collaborative projects take place, the better the subsequent performance and the easier the implementation of improvements in interdepartmental relationships. Therefore we propose:

P1: The greater the marketers' collaboration, the better the extent and speed of marketing integration.

5.2 Interaction

In general, the term interaction refers to any contact or relationship that is directly implemented, be it with customers, staff, or employees under a particular manager's supervision or outside his supervision. In particular, interaction concerns communication activities during a specific project or assignment collaboration. In our context, interactions among staff are mostly related to the process of disseminating information through communication, cooperation and conflict resolution within a complex international assignment such as International Joint Venture (IJV) and other strategic alliances (Damanpour et al., 2010). From a marketing perspective, interactions take place in the marketing environment and concern the relationship between a marketing manager and his subordinates. It refers to how the marketing manager carries out his coordinating role in terms of achieving customer satisfaction (Ruekert and Walker Jr., 1987).

In M&As, these transaction and communication activities are mostly applied during the integration process to encourage information sharing, increase trust and staff coordination and most importantly to avoid potential conflicts between the two firms. The aim is not only to develop a smooth information flow but also to foster a sense of common identity and commitment by enforcing active interaction among them. In fact, most of the interactions come from information exchange including meetings, teleconferencing, memoranda and the exchange of any standard documentation (Kahn

and Mentzer, 1998). Furthermore, communication in M&As has been identified as a vital driver in routine working environments but little explicit attention has been given to the question of staff interaction between acquiring and target firm (Allatta and Singh, 2011).

Kahn and Mentzer (1998) study interactions in the integration of marketing departments with other departments such as R&D and manufacturing. In our work, we look at marketing integration in M&As. We define interaction as a method of communication such as by telephone and by email that facilitates relationship building between the two marketing departments. This is important as communication will be a basic road map to guide those marketers when making decisions during the transition process (Schweiger, 2002). Therefore, this leads to the research proposition below.

P2: The greater the level of interaction, the greater the extent and speed of integration.

5.3 *Marketing synergy*

We use the definition of Weber and Dholakia (2000) to define marketing synergy that is the combination of the two firms by reducing duplicated marketing-related resources. However, this synergy must be effectively managed especially during the period of integration otherwise the combining entity may suffer losses. If it is managed appropriately, marketing synergy can lead to the creation of a competitive advantage and to enhanced firm performance (Hooley et al., 2005). For example, Harrison et al. (1991) show that when firms acquire other firms which are in some form related to them, this will create synergy. This is also supported by Bohlin et al. (1998) who states that the synergy created during M&As can develop dynamic energy arising from ongoing encounters between people and groups with different world views, knowledge and experience, and it transforms the whole idea into something greater than the sum of its parts. Weber et al. (2011) develop a theoretical model and explore the combined effects of corporate culture, national culture and synergy potential on various integration approaches as well as their influence on M&A performance by combining variables of pre-merger and post-merger stages.

To harness the valuable differences between two merging companies and convert them into opportunities for innovation, performance excellence and market leadership, the combined companies need to take a very careful look at the entire integration process. One notable study in synergy was conducted by Larsson and Finkelstein (1999). In fact, their study leads us to propose marketing synergy as a factor. They examine how synergy realisation is a function of the similarity and complementarities of the two merging businesses (combination potential). The challenge of this situation starts with how to integrate and manage similar marketing resources and then to avoid the overlapping of operations incurring unnecessary costs. Therefore, they need to identify duplicate resources such as advertising strategies, sales force skills and others (Larsson and Finkelstein, 1999).

The present study proposes that marketing synergy is one of the factors contributing to the efficiency of the marketing integration process. This synergy is believed to lead to a better combination of products or services important for obtaining new customers and also key to customer retention (Richey et al., 2008). It can also reduce other potential duplications such as warehousing, brand positions, customer service facilities, advertising, product development efforts etc. (Hakkinen, 2005). Thus, the marketers of both firms need to determine to what extent they should be integrated so that the resulting

marketing synergy enhances the effectiveness of the new marketing strategy in both firms. The first challenge is how to integrate and the next is how to avoid overlaps in their operations, which would incur unnecessary costs. Therefore, we propose:

P3: The greater the degree of marketing synergy, the greater the extent and speed of integration.

5.4 *Redeployment of marketing resources*

The redeployment of marketing resources promotes the sharing and structuring of marketing resources of both the acquiring and the acquired firm. Guenzi and Troilo (2007) note that this strategy enhances marketing capabilities by generating superior customer service. However, more attention needs to be accorded to the collaborative relationships among marketers as these are the key to developing a smooth structuring process and synchronisation within the marketing integration. In this study we define the redeployment of marketing resources as the use of partner resources by the other partner, which may involve a physical transfer of resources to a new location or the sharing of marketing resources without physical transfer.

Krishnan et al. (2004) study the redeployment of resources in M&As leading to product-mix reconfiguration toward high-profit products. They show that resource redeployment can translate into product portfolio enhancement or market share increase. They also stress that mergers facilitate the product-mix reconfiguration by relaxing institutional and organisational constraints on resource redeployment. By looking at the hospital industry in the USA, they find that resource redeployment towards attractive product lines does not appear to eliminate the unprofitable product lines. This is due to the non-profit status of most of the hospitals in the sample.

Anand and Singh (1997) emphasise that some resources are fungible. Firms with declining existing businesses should be able to redeploy some of their resources when they enter new markets. This can be done by redeploying the resources within the firm through diversification-oriented acquisitions or through consolidation-oriented acquisitions. Anand and Singh's (1997) results indicate that consolidation is a better choice for firms in declining industries compared to diversification if they are seeking a higher return. This is mostly due to the costs and risks involved in the transformation of a firm. Since it is more profitable to redeploy resources in a consolidation environment, firms should measure the attractiveness of potential targets by identifying opportunities for consolidation.

M&As can be also used as an alternative way of capturing new resources, specifically marketing resources such as unique and established brands that most firms find difficult to develop internally within a short period of time (Jaju et al., 2006). In fact, combining brands or using a new brand, especially to market a particular product or service is a key factor in speeding up integration (Hise, 1991). Capron and Hullan (1999) also note that the redeployment of marketing resources such as brands, sales force and general marketing expertise can enhance the acquiring company's competitive position and lead to better financial performance, especially if the organic development of these resources is difficult or time-consuming.

Based on the above arguments, we propose that:

P4: The greater the redeployment of marketing resources, the greater the extent and speed of integration.

6 Marketing integration

6.1 Extent of integration

Since integration can cause costly and time-consuming changes, Schweiger (2002) posits that only those functions, lines of business and geographic areas that support the strategy and source of synergy should be integrated. Similarly, Datta (1991) stresses that the main benefit of integration is to make more effective use of the existing resources and capabilities. In addition, the integration of duplicate departments and functions reduces costs in production, finance, inventory holding, marketing, advertising and distribution (Howell, 1970). For this reason, this stage is also known as the transition stage, during which the acquirer examines each area of business and decides what and to what extent to integrate (Schweiger et al., 1987). If integration plans can be developed early in the process, such as during the transition period, organisations can make important changes quickly. The quicker they confirm which areas they will combine, the better the integration process will be.

According to Homburg and Bucerius (2005), M&A integration can be either low or high in their extent of integration. However, a low or high level of integration does not necessarily lead to high or low cost savings. In other words, a deep integration is not always the best solution. A further benefit of integration is its potential impact on staff relationship enhancement (Schweiger and Goulet, 2000). These relationships are key in terms of knowledge and information sharing (Zhanwen and Haifeng, 2007). A lack of information sharing between the two firms could jeopardise the future success of the integrated entity.

We use a similar dimension to that proposed by Homburg and Bucerius (2005). The merits of both firms are evaluated in terms of marketing systems, structures, activities and processes. Furthermore, the extent to which the two firms are different in terms of sales systems also needs to be weighed in order to determine how they can be integrated. Therefore, we propose:

P5: The greater the extent of integration, the greater the M&A performance.

6.2 Speed of integration

Speed in M&A integration is associated with decisiveness, gaining advantages and time saving (Angwin, 2004). Speed is found to be particularly important in the integration process (Orit et al., 2003; Homburg and Bucerius, 2006). It is defined as the period of time needed to achieve the intended level of marketing integration (Homburg and Bucerius, 2006). A slow integration process is suggested to create problems and weakens the opportunity to take advantage of the energy stirred up by an M&A (Huang and Kleiner, 2004). Practitioners and consultants are increasingly praising the virtues of acting rapidly post-deal and the first 100 days are claimed to be critical for acquisition success (Angwin, 2004). According to Schweiger and Goulet (2000), the issue of speed can be categorised into two schools of thought: the slow integration approach and the idea that integration should be executed as quickly as possible.

In the first approach, the acquirer takes time to get to know the target firms, staff, culture, operations and markets before making any drastic changes. Some empirical evidence suggests that uncritical acceptance of the benefits of speed in post-acquisition

integration may prove detrimental to performance (Angwin, 2004). The alternative is to pursue a speedy integration. This approach suggests that transformations to make the new business work efficiently should be done swiftly and that fast integration motivates employees to stay on during the transitional stages (Schweizer and Patzelt, 2012). Schweizer and Patzelt (2012) find that fast integration has a positive effect on employees' motivation to stay with the firm. They also find that the more the leadership style of their supervisors is characterised as relational, contextual, inspirational and supportive, the stronger the positive effect of fast integration is. Hadjian (2000) uses a metaphor to suggest that the speed of integration is actually a 'hinge' that holds together the success of the combined firm. We thus propose that:

P6: The greater the speed of the integration, the greater the M&A performance.

7 Conclusion and future directions

This paper set out to make a contribution through extending our understanding of the marketing integration process in cross-border M&As as first mentioned and explored by Homburg and Bucerius (2005). In doing so, the antecedent dimensions collaboration, interaction, marketing synergy and redeployment of marketing resources were introduced in order to support the marketing integration process in cross-border M&As. The integration stage of cross-border M&As is crucial, as it determines whether the combination of the companies will improve the organisation's sustainability and growth particularly at the international level. This may even be a matter of survival, as many M&As have not prevailed due to half-hearted attempts at the integration stage (Cartwright and Schoenberg, 2006). In fact, many M&A studies have emphasised that the integration stage is the key to harmonising and educating which are the key for making the integration successful (Cartwright and Cooper, 1990; Bower, 2001; Buckley and Ghauri, 2002).

Therefore, this paper attempts to expand the current understanding of the marketing integration process in the M&A context by developing a conceptual model and incorporating and conceptually supporting antecedent factors. We argue that these antecedent factors can facilitate the marketing integration process in cross-border M&As. We argue that the interaction and collaboration among marketers who are involved in the M&A will revitalise the structure and strategies of previous marketing departments (Weber and Dholakia, 2000). These activities can enhance the new marketing environment which emerges in the new combined firm thereby boosting the M&A performance. In previous studies, these factors have been revealed to support marketing integration (Stank et al., 1999). Additionally, we also propose marketing synergy and the redeployment of marketing resources (Weber et al., 2011). We believe that the integration of two firms through an M&A may create synergy, economies of scale, value and the bundling of resources both for the firms and the shareholders (Hitt et al., 2001; Almor et al., 2009; Wang and Zajac, 2007). However, these resources need to be wisely managed and streamlined in order for the newly combined firm to integrate effectively.

We also highlight some future research avenues derived from these propositions. Future research may wish to look at specific industries providing more in-depth findings and a better understanding of certain business phenomena. Such research would ultimately lead to improved business strategies and allow us to learn from previous

lessons as has been done, for example, in the banking industry (Kim and Finkelstein, 2009). Cross-country comparisons may also lead to interesting and highly valuable results in future studies. For example, the study conducted by Harris and Carr (2008), revealed that national values influence business directions and explain management behaviour, which signals the true behaviour of international managers. Therefore, an in-depth study is needed to unveil this phenomenon, particularly in the context of cross-border M&As (Meglio and Risberg, 2011).

Furthermore, the scope of the marketing integration process in M&As is limited to the marketing environment which cannot be generalised to other departments such as manufacturing, logistics, human resources or R&D. This investigation is focused on how the marketing departments of two firms can be combined to improve and to utilise the marketing resources from two different countries. Consequently, future research may wish to investigate the integration process in other departments.

The present study only focuses on collaboration, interaction, marketing synergy and redeployment of marketing resources. However, there are many other potential factors that could be employed as antecedents of the success of the marketing integration process. Future studies could also explore other antecedent elements, especially in terms of human factors related to the marketers involved in the M&A integration. In fact, previous research findings indicate that the interaction of human factors is vital to the success of M&A integrations (Weber and Tarba, 2010; Vasilaki, 2011). For instance, in the integration of the marketing and sales departments, Rouzies et al. (2005) propose integrating mechanisms that encompass organisational structure, process, culture and people. On the other hand, Garrett et al. (2006) propose four mechanisms, formalisation, centralisation, role flexibility and inter-functional climate, which boost the integration of a marketing department with a R&D department, which eventually improves new product development.

Another avenue for future studies may be the focus on issues around branding. How does the combined firm utilise its brand or integrate its brand in order to enhance the marketing strategy within the M&A context? This is an interesting issue with high potential for future research (Cem et al., 2008; Lambkin and Muzellec, 2008; Dieng et al., 2009).

Another recent issue that possibly influences departmental integration is staff emotions. Nowadays, emotion in the workplace is a popular topic in organisations (Callahan, 2008). A study would likely entail how and whether the integration process in an M&A would affect the marketers' emotions, what kind of emotions influence the integration and most importantly, whether emotions could improve or worsen motivation in the integration process and how emotions could be countered. According to Callahan (2008), these emotions can be countered through emotional intelligence, the ability to recognise and manage our own and others' emotions through four clusters: context, challenges, communication and community. In fact, emotional intelligence has been stressed in a different way in relation to the attachment experience within acquisitions (Schweiger et al., 1987). Hence, emotional intelligence can be used to construct a fit measure to evaluate the impact of the antecedents of the marketing integration process within the M&A contexts. Furthermore, Finkelstein et al. (2009) emphasise the powerful emotions involved in making considerable decisions, particularly concerning the issues of integrating two firms into one new entity. A recent example in this area is a paper by Sinkovics et al. (2011) who explore how managers behave and communicate by drawing on employees' emotional perceptions.

Further research could also extend the marketing integration process not only to focus on the speed and extent of the marketing integration process, but also to examine aspects such as the visibility of the organisational structure while the two firms combine, the degree of coordination through communication flow in the integration process and the flexibility of the departments of the acquirer and the target firm in acknowledging the integration procedure. Another notable issue about the integration phase is when the best time for two firms to combine is and how unhappy subordinates should be managed during the integration process. As for the marketing integration outcomes, the present study uses cost savings and relationship effectiveness among the marketers. It is recommended that a further in-depth investigation of each of the marketing integration outcomes should be undertaken. For example, to what extent do the marketers get together to resolve any problems and improve relationships after they have been involved in the integration process.

Experience in M&As has been widely used as a control variable and some previous studies have even used it as a moderator; however, past research has given mixed results and therefore it is unlikely to reveal an energising of firm acquisition performance (Meschi and Metais, 2006). Some international firms such as General Electric Capital (GE) have been successful in using their experience in M&As as a business development tool. In fact, half of its businesses were generated through acquisitions and it is believed to employ the M&A as a replicable process rather than a one-time only event (Ashkenas et al., 1998). Hence, M&A experience can be proposed for future studies particularly to be the control variable and maybe as moderator.

Finally, the M&A performance measures in our study were all perceptual described in terms of general performance such as the level of customer service, return on investment etc. Further research may wish to explore two levels of dependent variables: financial performance and non-financial performance. Instead of focusing solely on M&A performance, future studies could look at financial performance, for example acquirer performance (Laamanen and Keil, 2008), operating performance (Cornett et al., 2006) and financial performance: accounting returns and investor returns (Fowler and Schmidt, 1988). On the other hand, in terms of non-financial performance, we would suggest that future studies look at the marketing performance in the M&A context. Marketing performance will provide more insights into the marketing discipline. Moreover, as this study marketing integration, by employing marketing performance, future studies would be able to identify specific marketing aspects that prevail in the M&A context. Further details about marketing performance can be explored through articles by Ambler and Roberts (2008) and Craig and Aron (2002).

In all, the marketing integration process is a critical agenda to marketing departments, particularly in organising marketing resources in cross-border M&As as it can be expected to lead to better outcomes through superior marketing combination and the bundling of marketing resources. The challenge of integration needs to be supported by using appropriate antecedent factors such as collaboration, interaction, marketing synergy and redeployment of marketing resources to ensure its effectiveness and to avoid conflict among marketing staff. Additionally, the relationship between the two parties needs to be positively managed as communication and cooperation are crucial drivers of M&A strategy success (Kusstascher, 2005; Weber et al., 2012).

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