



Port as an Industrial Marketing Community: a literature review

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Abstract

The wave of port reforms changed the role of port authorities around the world. Port authorities used to be commercial entities providing services to landside and seaside customers. They were both in charge of regulators and operator's roles. Port reforms separated these two roles and port authorities are now taking over a more complex role of facilitating flows and animating the port community in a Business to Business and Business to Administration context.

Literature in port economics and management, to a few exceptions, is highlighting this change in role, but lacks conceptualisation and applied theories to investigate port strategies in terms of governance, port marketing and port community management.

Industrial marketing theories, however, provide a good understanding of business networks, strategizing dynamics and relationships among actors, resources and activities (ARA). Publications in these fields that consider supply chain as a complex network of relationships provide food for thought in the transportation and logistics sector.

The present research aims at presenting a systematic literature review of industrial marketing peer reviewed articles in the field of transportation and logistics in order to provide theoretical materials applicable for a research agenda in port marketing.

Preliminary results show there are methods, theories, and concepts to be applied in the sector of port, since they consider industrial clusters such as port through the lens of dynamic business networks. Moreover, few articles from the literature review show the premises of use of IMP Group theories into port industry. In a time where one considers ports as reindustrialisation tools, industrial marketing theories seem to be appropriate for further research.

Keywords: Port, Strategy, Industrial Marketing, Governance, Literature Review.

1. Introduction

“Maritime port” means an area of land and water made up of such infrastructure and equipment so as to permit, principally, the reception of waterborne vessels, their loading and unloading, the storage of goods, the receipt and delivery of those goods and the embarkation and disembarkation of passengers, crew and other persons and any other infrastructure necessary for transport operators within the port area (EU Parliament, 2017).

Meanwhile, Port marketing is defined as a form of multi-disciplinary (or intersection of various disciplines) in operation, which includes maritime transport (goods and people included), business marketing, Logistics, service management, supply chain management and maritime economics (Lavissière et al., 2019).

As years go by, port operations have developed and changed to try meeting market trends (Pettit & Beresford, 2009). These trends have been backed by an advancement in technologies in ports and their terminals, at a rate that has never been seen since the industrial revolution (Myers, n.d.). Moreover, the presence of digital innovation in the port sector (Carlan, Sys and Vanelslander, 2017), has led to digital marketing presence in the world (Ivošević, 2021). These among other changes, has opened the market, giving way for the existence of port competition (Meersman, Van de Voorde & Vanelslander,

2010). Which has warranted the coming of port marketing models, concepts and theories even to a multi-disciplinary perspective (Mandják, Lavissière, Hofmann, Bouchery, Lavissière, Faury & Sohier, 2019).

Ports not long ago have used Port Marketing as a form of guide, serving as a key tool in view of fierce competition to capture and search new markets (Laxe, 2010). Despite having this guide, Port Authorities (PAs) have reluctantly seen a great transformation (or even none) from a Business-to-Customer (B2C) to including a Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Administration (B2A) in its operations, lacking the building of a multi-dimensional framework strategic positioning (Parola, Pallis, Risitano and Ferrettic, 2018).

Today, it is seen that a port operates in a “cluster”; defining this, a port cluster is a group of spatially concentrated firms related to one another, in which one is a port, were all are linked through various horizontal and vertical relationships (Talley, 2012). The existence of Port Industrial Clusters has thus been around for a while, as is the case in Rotterdam highlighted by Cuppen, Nikolic, Kwakkel and Quist (2020) examining a case of future energy infrastructures. Industrial Clusters have hereby created a new approach of the market, such that Port marketing cannot stay limited or focusing on the Port Authority (PA) alone for its sustainability but the wider players involved; hence moving away from a dyadic approach to a level of network or Port community approach able to implement and achieve strategic projects (Lavissière, Mandják, Hofmann and Fedi, 2019).

Considering the above, filling the gap present in today’s Port Marketing, on one side the inclusion of B2B and B2A to the present limited B2C strategy by PAs (Parola et al. 2018) and the other changing the Port dyadic approach to a Port community-based approach (Lavissière et al., 2019) is imminent (giving the opportunity for a change in port strategy towards relationship and network building). The desperate need of a new perspective has giving birth to the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) approach by ports. Researchers such as Håkansson and Snehota (1995), Håkansson, Ford, Gadde, Snehota and Waluszewski (2009), and Aarikka-Stenroos, Jaakkola, Harrison and Mäkitalo-Keinonen (2017) using IMP fundamental principles, calling it an extensive network, defined this as a set of networks comprising different but a wide range of stakeholders and actors. Nevertheless, taking into account notably the industrial sector and technologies, cultures, organisational logics, or goals.

IMP considers every possible existing player (be it dormant or active) in the market, from commercial enterprises (of any form), government, or non-profit organizations (Cooke, 1986), just to name a few. Thus, this paper will seek to show an IMP approach in which a port is seen through the lens of its key fundamentals such as the dynamic business networks, relationships that exists among the various actors involved, the available resources and activities. IMP answers basic questions often posed without clear understanding of the why, how, whom etc. For example, the existing relationships/network between ARA having to answer questions like why a port’s customer would be their fierce competitors in another, hence what has one port got to offer, which is absent in the other, meaning why one port is beneficial to the client compared to the other port. In another case, what influences investments by an operator in a port and yet the same operator is a stakeholder in another, or their clients, or even the situation where a shipping line is a shareholder in port terminals. All which IMP could answer when applied to ports.

Therefore, IMP clearly holds the right theories, concepts and methodologies able to be applied to bring better port strategies, considering elements such as port governance e.g., country latest port governance reforms, case study of France (Fedi, Cariou and Monios, 2022), Port Marketing and eventually Port community management. This study will endeavour to bring systematic reviews of the existing literature (peer review articles) in the field of transport and logistics which has appeared

needful with the complexity of existing supply networks and their relationships. This will go on to provide theoretical materials which are applicable as a research agenda in port marketing.

To achieve the aim of this review, we contemplate the following research question which could help tackle the objective of this study:

- What is the potential contribution of Industrial Marketing literature to the concept of “Port Community” and “Port Marketing”?

Research Carried out:

“Relevant publishers and databases were covered such as Elsevier, Emerald Insight, Taylor & Francis, Cambridge Journals and Springer/ Palgrave Macmillan. Two additional journals were identified: the Journal of Maritime Research (JMR) and the International Journal of Transport Economics (IJTE) that were not found in these databases. To ensure that the extant literature from 1980 to 2017 was covered, the searches were extended to include Thomson Reuters' database Web of Science, as well as the reference lists of the retrieved papers”

Supply Chain Forum: About 130 results; 6 relevant papers (1990 to 2024) before 1990 nothing was published according to the databases of Taylor and Francis;

Emerald paper: Over 1800 results papers; 7 relevant like the first search

JBIM: Over 35 papers; 5 relevant;

IMM: Over 2500 papers; 16 relevant

2. Review Methodology

Systematic literature reviews are derived from searches of quality articles and publications in a manner which is unbiased, clear and comprehensive. It started from the medical science, went on to psychology, and followed on to social sciences (Senivongse, Bennet and Mariano, 2017). On the other hand, some other forms of reviews of the evidence found / provided, regarding the guidance and insights to policymakers and practitioners has mostly been left at secondary importance (oftentimes due to the difficulty to interpret and implement considering its nature). Considering practitioners, understanding a contradictory mass of evidence has grown to be harder. The presented key findings to help decision making is often questioned, for its lack of adequate or complete evidence, which then impedes implementation and formulation of policies (Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003). The adoption of a systematic literature review in this study is the ideal method to have a detailed understanding and clearer picture in working out what Industrial Marketing literature contributes to a port community and port marketing strategy. Building relationships, networking, collaboration, interaction etc, mainly used by industries for their growth (Chai, Ehrens and Kiwak, 2023) has emerged as the answer for Port's relationship building in today's competitive environment and thus sustainable growth. IMP could redefine the entire Port strategy and marketing techniques used in the world today. In this way, by introducing an extensive network with various actors comprising of both an economic and non-economic standpoint, relationships that have evolved between them and finally resources involved (Lavissiere et al., 2019). From far back as the 1980s, Ford (1980) explored the idea of building relationships with actors in an industrial network, this then followed with Håkansson & Ford (2002) of

the necessity to bring a new strategy for business network. Today, it has led to the development of a business network model called the ARA (Actor Resource Activity) originally presented as far back as 1992 by the likes of Ford, Gadde, Hakansson, Snehota and Waluszewski, it has been updated with global economic changes and recently modelled by Hakansson and Johansson (2016). ARA provides a framework for studying and analysing long term industrial networks and relationships (Koporcic, 2017). In this model (ARA) is seen in three complimentary key networks linked together, which are the actors' network, resource network and activity network. While the actor network model seeks to redefine actors not as intentional or wilful agents but as any entity nonhuman or human that in one way or the other perturbs or influences the activities of a social system (Crawford, 2020). The resource network model examines the relationship between various available resources which when activated forms a powerful resource network (Harrison & Håkansson, 2006). Finally, the activity network turns to spam from input and output facets, showing a given amount of input, which later produces output via a network of activities (Browning & Ramasesh, 2007).

Search Strategy

IMP application in Port Marketing/Strategy is new compared to previously used methods for Port sustainability. The research scope presented in this systematic review has been specifically aimed at answering the research question by including only the papers pertaining to the IMP methodology of various B2B, B2C and B2A relationships. Quality research in this review will have to be limited to journal papers instead of unfounded publications, or book chapters which David and Han (2004) insist the restriction is necessary to help research quality.

Reading various sample abstracts from relevant papers, some key words were sourced according to the review and aim of the research question. Meanwhile, the lack of relevance of some papers relating to the topic, were excluded. These papers rejected had not been seen relate to the topic been dealt with including the key words. Key words that were searched include: mainly "IMP" and "Port" searched in Transport journals (for "IMP") and business journals (for "Port") respectively. This includes other key words such as "Marketing" (in Transport Journals), and "Supply Chain" & "Transport" (business journals). Major databases and publishers were investigated in order to find all relevant information. These journals included IMP Journal, Maritime Policy & Management (MPM), Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing (JBIM), Industrial Marketing Management (IMM), Supply Chain Forum & Transport Policy. Among others were included publishers also such as Emeralds or Elsevier.

The method used in finding the quality articles is unique in its form and very few have ventured applying this. As explained below.

1. The investigation is regarding mainly IMP search in transport.
2. Given the focus on producing a systematic literature review, we look for IMP keywords in transport journals with a focus on English as the general known business language (Kankaanranta, Louhiala-Salminen and Karhunen, 2015) and transport keywords in industrial management journals.
3. We partnered with academic experts to decide which journals will be appropriate for such review and the key words to be searched, in which we later came to a consensus by sharing and discussing them. This methodology is based on similar technique of a previous research carried out by Lavissière, Sohier and Lavissière (2020).

3. Results

Figure 1 shows the sample of the chosen period we decided to carry out the research. The study was limited to a period of 22 to 23 years starting January 2001 up to end 2023. One observes the beginning of the few years (in the 21st century) experienced an increase in the number of published articles and fell to its lowest 7 to 8 years later in 2008, which later for about 7 years remain stagnant and fluctuated there after until 2022, where it took a sudden dramatic increase ever since (up to 5 articles). In total from 2001 to 2023 we chose 26 articles to be reviewed from selected journals.

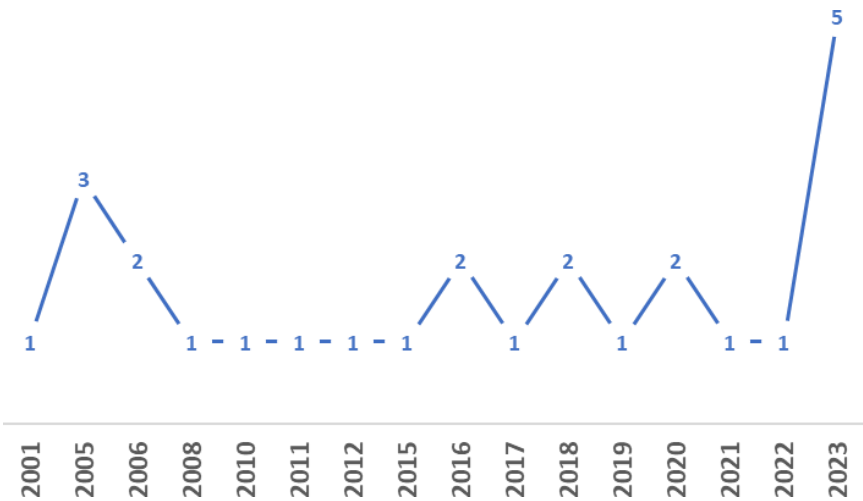


Figure 1: Trends of published articles (2001 – 2023)

Figure 2 highlights the top journals to which articles have been published include JBIM and IMM for business journals and on the other hand, Supply Chain Forum and MPM for transport journals. These academic journals among a limited few have considered the publication of articles highlighting IMP theories. In the search carried out on the IMP journal, 19 results came up on the “transport” search and only 1 was chosen. Meanwhile, 62 results came up on “Supply Chain” search with 0 articles chosen and 6 results were found on “Port” search with 0 chosen. For IMM journal, the key word searched was “Transport” a total of 438 articles came up, with 0 chosen, followed by “Supply Chain” search finding a total of 1752 articles and 2 were chosen, the next word was “Port” search, with 206 articles found and 5 chosen. On the JBIM journal, for the word search on “transport”, a total of 294 articles came up and only 5 were selected, as previously “Supply Chain” over 1000 articles were found with only 0 chosen and searching on “Port” 99 articles were found with only 3 chosen. On the other hand, regarding Transport journals, we began with MPM, in which the key word searched was “IMP” were 15 articles were found and 1 was chosen. Meanwhile another key word “Marketing” was searched and found 1754 articles of which 3 articles were chosen. Another journal was the Supply Chain Forum Journal, where “IMP” also was searched, and 12 results were found and 3 chosen, and after searching for the word “marketing”, 484 results were found and 1 chosen. Another is the Transport policy Journal which was investigated with key word search of “IMP” and found 33 articles and with 0 chosen, while searching on “marketing”, 503 articles were found and 1 was chosen. Lastly, the Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice had a key word search of “IMP” with a total of 45 articles as result but with “0” chosen articles. Meanwhile, the key word search of “Marketing” came up with 648 articles for only 1 chosen article.

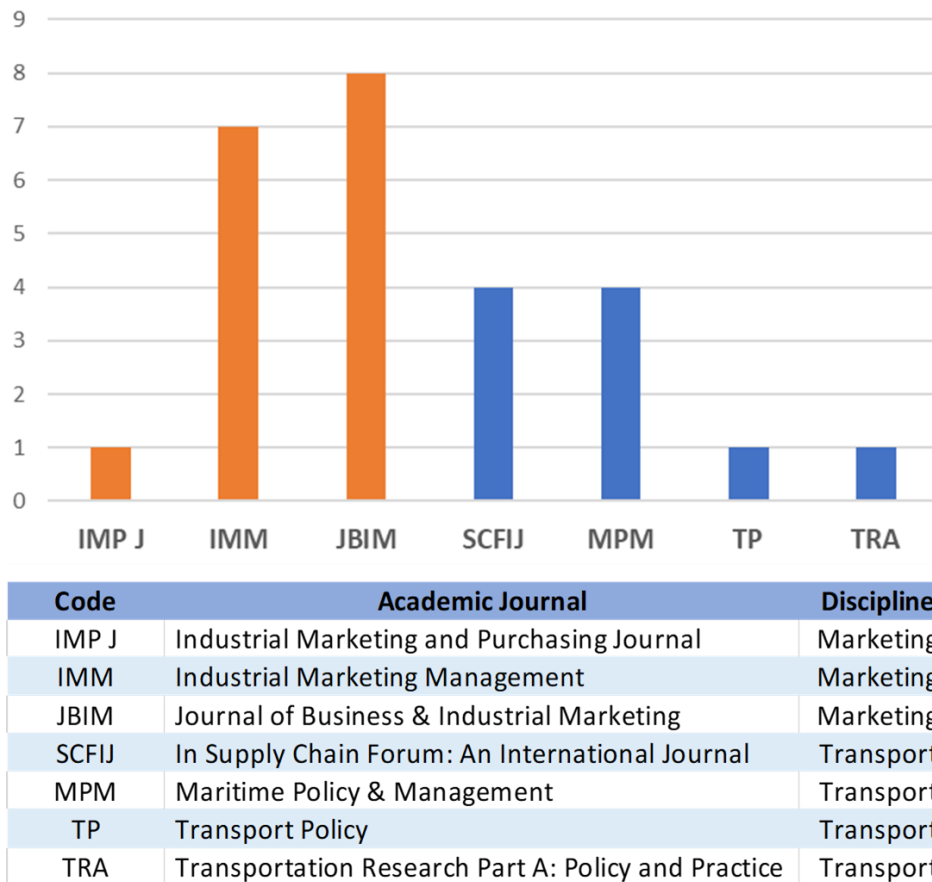


Figure 2: Business and Transport Journals Publications

As illustrated in Table 1, top publications of articles have been in Europe from whom more than one article on the subject has been published; Lavissiere (3), Mandjak (3), Håkansson (2), Parola (2), Hofman (2) and Fedi (2). All who have had an extended number of experience and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in their various field.

Table 1: Highest Publishers on the Topic

Author	Articles	Country of Institution
Mandjak	3	France
Lavissière	3	France
Håkansson	2	Norway
Parola	2	Italy
Fedi	2	France
Hofman	2	France

3.1. What is Port Marketing (Industrial)?

“Industrial Marketing” refers to the exploration of a business marketing perspective of a port and its application in the organisation to enable clear directives of marketing strategies by a PA, whereby there exist a multi-dimensional framework of the PA strategic positioning. In doing so, combining aspects such as; 1. PAs in various strategic business areas (SBAs), 2. the targeted salient stakeholders with their multi-faceted geography and 3. Marketing actions induced portfolio causing Cross Fertilization effects (CFEs) and encourages the success of a PA marketing strategy (Parola et al., 2018). This has led Port Marketing to be viewed from a Multidisciplinary perspective, whereby there may be the potential combination of models and theories of seemingly different but at the same time related fields opening the bases for a flexible and strong port marketing theoretical framework (Mandjak et al., 2019). Hence, this perspective encourages or warrants the need of strengthening relationships that may or may not exist among various port management stakeholders at various levels, such as Businesses or non-businesses, or policy makers and PAs (Lavissiere et al., 2020). The bottom-line seen in the industrial marketing of ports, is deep rooted from industrial network in which the port operates as an actor in it. In very simple terms, industrial network is clearly a specific structure binding together various actor son one hand, activities that are involved on another and finally the eventual resources on a certain or given pattern. In other words, this means the merging of potentially three networks related with each other. The ARA (Actor, Resources and Activities) network forms or creates the basis of that industrial network for ports. An actor seating in a network of diverse relationships has access or utilises other actors' resources, in doing so, actors have control over these resources directly or indirectly via the relationships that exist amongst them (Harrison and Håkansson, 2006).

3.2. How does Port Marketing re-define a Port?

The days were by a PA would sit back expecting flows would come without developing measures to attracts such flows, because of their natural attributes or their potential offers is clearly outdated (Carew, 1992). Today, there is no Port that could guarantee potential increase in the traffic via its port or even the same traffic flow to come through. In some cases, ports that were establish years ago have continued striving and withstanding the fierce competition, some are no longer in existence or faded away ever since, mean while others have not been able to expand from their very own sizes over the past 100 years. Standard product offers are today not acceptable anymore from Ports and the attitude of take it or leave is not permitting those needed successes to come either. Today, the customer has been seen to have a choice and such choices are today a vogue for all successful ports and customers are today determinants (Carew, 1992). Ports from findings cannot thereby continue operating with a dyadic approach to business, especially with the increasing level of port competition (Meersman et al., 2010). As a result, since the need for interorganisational cooperation has become imminent, the industrial network approach seems to have taken a greater approval rating, given the market competitive nature. This is contrary to other models who most at times regard cooperation ways of merely being Legal inter-corporate connections or contracts, whilst encouraging collaborating arrangements only of a formal nature (Melo Brito, 2001). Hence, a port in port marketing can be re-defined from a port community approach due to the vast number of players existing in the network (Lavissiere et al., 2020).

3.3. Port Governing type and the relationship between port actors

Traditionally classified by the World Bank into four models (World Bank, 2013), the port organisation regime varies between centralised, decentralised and private management. The choice is wide, from the *service port model*, under public responsibility and control, including over commercial operations, to the *tool port service*, mainly public, but with some private operators involved for certain port services, to the *landlord port model*, where the PAs are focused on port promotion and regalian activities (i.e., safety, security and environment) whereas commercial operations are carried out by

private operators, to lastly the *private service port*, managed by private companies for most operations. Nowadays, seaports are mainly operated as landlord (Fedi et al., 2022; Monios, 2019) and main port services are operated by private entities, especially in the European Union (ESPO, 2016). Obviously, the structuration and the dynamism of the port actors' relationships are influenced by many factors. Regarding the structuration of their relationships, port actors are generally represented by professional bodies acting on behalf of their members (e.g., shipowners, freight forwarders or maritime agents' association). Moreover, a port association representing the whole port actors is established at the port scale with the aim to lobby the concerned port and its actors and to create an arena for discussion on strategic port issues (e.g. union maritime, 2024). Thanks to the development of digitalization, the main port stakeholders, either competitors or collaborators (Carlan et al., 2016) are interlinked through IT tools such as Port Community Systems (PCS). According to Tijan et al (2012), these stakeholders are referred as Port Community Members (PCMs). Concerning the dynamism of these relationships, it will depend on the port actors' capacity to work in close collaboration and to share common goals such as sustainability (Lavissière et al., 2019). The PA also plays a key role since it initiates the port development strategy, and coordinates the entire Port Community, therefore this is the most important player among all the PCMs (Tijan et al., 2012).

3.4. What is the Port's Market?

Fierce competition and continuous changes happening in ports environment have warranted ports to reinvent themselves and find ways to obtain various forms of competitive advantage. A major means of developing, retaining and obtaining loyal customers, is by developing strong relationships with customers and aiming for customers satisfaction. In doing so, ports can boost their clients via financial, structural or social marketing tactics (Caliskan and Esmer, 2020). Port markets are thus not limited to just customary or primary businesses brought in by clients such as shipping lines or shippers. They extend to a wider network of actors influencing directly or indirectly despite their small impacts. Thus, the port market over the years have changed its operating methods such that markets of a port could come from diverse areas including its past competitors becoming strategic partners, thus more market due to the view of the network structure.

4. Discussion

This paper used the Systematic literature review technique to analyse ports as an industrial marketing community. In total, 26 articles published in various selected peer reviewed journals, which were selected spanning a period between 2001 and 2023 all which have been selected using a systematic approach, classed in both Industrial Marketing journals (JBIM, IMM & IMP) and transport journals (Supply Chain Forum, MPM, Transport research part A & Transport Policy).

The subject of IMP concepts in ports have previously not been researched on. Furthermore, there seem to exist limited research on the network or relationships existing in port marketing despite the rich unexploited area in question. This shows the existing gap and thus would require further investigation. Research avenues exist notably as regards the understanding of port strategies in their marketing approaches.

The contribution offered by industrial marketing clearly redefines how a port should approach its marketing strategy. Failure to understand the existing community it is part of, would mean potentially carrying out the same marketing strategy activities or even none and expecting a different result. IMP methods collates together various active or inactive actors who in one way or the other would influence the very own existence of a port (to grow, not to or even cease to operate). The role of ports today as

another actor would mean, it must be aware of its vast network and where it seats in, and all eventually build up such relationships requiring necessary for its growth.

5. Conclusion and future research

Through a systematic literature review, this paper aims to assess ports as an “Industrial Marketing Community” and the contribution of Industrial Marketing literature to the concept of “Port Community” and “Port Marketing.” Previous researchers in the field of Port Marketing especially, have expressed the need for a stronger development of theoretical frameworks on the topic of Port Marketing (Mandjak et al., 2019). This has not gone unnoticed as this review has embraced the IMP approach to port marketing to explore the existing network extent to ports as a port community. A network approach has thus been used as the way forward to dealing with the complexities of ports and their different activities, involving various actors directedly or indirectly. The IMP concept in ports considers all players involved whether dormant or not, government or non-governmental but also businesses and commercial activities. It presents the dynamic business networks existing between the players, relationships among the various actors involved and the available resources and activities. As limitations, we only considered peer-reviewed journals and did not include conference communications and conference proceedings related to port marketing. Accordingly, some recent contributions or findings to our research question could be underestimated.

More generally, in contemplating a port as an industrial marketing community for a stronger development of theoretical framework in port marketing, the IMP concept has clearly shown potential to answer this research problem. It has also shown there is further search required in the field of Port marketing using IMP and its network approach for port sustainability in a competitive environment, not neglecting areas such as port governance in the matter. Our future research agenda shall embrace these topics.

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