

## Executive Summary

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### **The Interface Between Marketing and Sales: The State of the Art and a Research Agenda**

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For many activities, such as pricing and promotion decisions, new product development decisions, decisions on expansions into new geographic markets, distribution strategy decisions, and decisions on advertising, firms need expertise from both marketing and sales. This article addresses this interface between the marketing and the sales department. Many studies have investigated the drivers and consequences of the quality of cooperation between these two departments. While quantitative research on the marketing–sales interface produced many results about the effect of the quality of cooperation on business performance and the antecedents of the quality of cooperation, a clear and structured overview of this stream of research is lacking. The purpose of this article is to: 1) summarize the most important findings on the marketing–sales interface in a compact and structured way to give guidance to managers on how to achieve a high quality of cooperation, 2) identify major gaps in the literature and outline a research agenda with suggestions for future research.

We begin by developing a conceptual framework to structure the relevant research. The conceptual framework is based on the constructs and relationships studied in the relevant literature. We integrate and add to existing frameworks from both conceptual and empirical work. To the best of our knowledge, the framework is the first to fully structure the quantitative marketing–sales interface literature.

The findings suggest that the management of the marketing–sales interface is important for company performance. A high quality of cooperation between marketing and sales drives performance. The drivers of the quality of cooperation are categorized into structural aspects, process and system aspects, culture aspects, and people aspects. As to structural aspects, physical and departmental proximity is not particularly helpful in increasing the quality of cooperation, but managers should try to bring employees together through cross-functional teams. With respect to process and system aspects, a higher degree of formalization of the workflows between

marketing and sales leads to better quality of cooperation. The culture of the organisation and the competencies of employees also play an important role. As to people aspects, the greater the differences in market knowledge, product knowledge and interpersonal skills and the more unequal the distribution of market knowledge, product knowledge and interpersonal skills, the worse is the quality of cooperation.

Despite the findings to date, many questions remain about the organisation of the marketing–sales interface. For the research gaps and the research agenda, we distinguish between substantive topics (e.g. the lack of research of specific relationships, specific functions or tasks), theory-based topics (e.g. agency theory) and methodological topics (e.g. common method bias or endogeneity).