

The Internationalization of German Marketing Science

By Hermann Simon

In the 1970s, marketing science in Germany was limited to the German-speaking world. My early appeal to publish in English and to change the language of German journals to English met with strong opposition from established professors. Today, 40 years later, a considerable number of German-speaking marketing scientists belong to the international top group in the Hirsch-index ranking. German journals are now publishing in English, but the transition came late, and it will be difficult to acquire A-journal status. In terms of inbound internationalization a lot remains to be done.

this insight. Besides Klaus Brockhoff, who had published earlier in *Econometrica* (see Brockhoff 1976) [2], I was, to my knowledge, the only German marketing researcher publishing in journals like *Management Science* or *Journal of Marketing Research* (see Simon 1978, 1979a) at that time. I repeated my appeals several times without achieving much effect. Together with the late Franz Böcker, then professor at the University of Regensburg, I founded a working paper series under the name “Marketing Science Group of Germany” in which we published English-language articles by German authors and sent them to 300 marketing scientists in other countries. But such an initiative does not achieve much impact, and after the tragic death of Franz Böcker in a traffic accident in 1991, I discontinued the series.

1. German marketing science in the 1970s

When I gave up my professorship at the University of Mainz in 1994, I looked back at more than 20 years of research. The end of my university career induced me to take stock of my time as an academic and of the general state of marketing science in Germany. [1] During my years as a researcher at the University of Bonn two decades earlier, I had recognized that German-speaking marketing scientists must not confine themselves to the “Island of Germany”. My impressions from international conferences and my stays as postdoc and visiting professor at MIT, Stanford, Harvard, and INSEAD reinforced

2. Challenging the establishment

In 1979, when I was still a young researcher and not yet a professor, I published an article on the international activities of German marketing scientists. My goal was to challenge established academics to become more active internationally and to publish in English, the lingua franca of science (Simon 1979b). This article did not win me many friends among the tenured professors. How dared an assistant – who hadn’t even earned the right to call himself a professor – challenge established chairholders for not being present on the international stage? How dared he require them to publish in English?



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3. A black hole

Years later, I followed up that article with a more nuanced one under the title “German management science in international competition: a black hole?” (Simon 1993). My central claim was that German academics read English-language journals but did not publish in them. Like a black hole, they constantly sucked in information, but emitted none of their own. As a result, German management scientists remained unknown and had little impact outside the German-speaking countries.

I even went a step further and argued that German management journals should switch to publishing in English, an idea considered pure heresy by my colleagues. Walter Endres, a well-reputed professor at the Free University of Berlin, wrote: “I raise objections to Hermann Simon’s

suggestions. His proposal that German journals publish English-language contributions is inappropriate. He also demands more English-language publications from German management scientists. That would make things easy for the Americans and the British, but why don't they undertake the effort to learn German? Simon places the burden of overcoming language barriers solely on the shoulders of Germans. He apparently has no interest in preserving German as a language of science." (Endres 1994). [3] From today's perspective, such views sound strange. But that was the reality of German academia in the 1970s, 80s and 90s.

In recent years, many German-based management journals have been renamed, such as *Journal of Business Economics* (formerly *Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaft*), *Schmalenbach Journal of Business Research* (successor to the *Zeitschrift für betriebswirtschaftliche Forschung*), and *Marketing ZFP – Journal of Research and Management* (originally *Marketing – Zeitschrift für Forschung und Praxis*). While these journals publish predominantly or exclusively in English today their international reputation is still not where it could and should be. One clear reason is that they were latecomers to the world of English language publishing. The situation is better in fields such as operations research or economics, where German journals made the conversion to English much earlier. For management journals it will be very difficult to acquire A-journal status in an already very crowded field.

4. A big improvement

What has radically changed for the better is the presence of German marketing and management academics at the international level, both at conferences and in journals. Professor Alfred Kuss of the Free University of Berlin already said in 2013 (p. 44): "In the last few years one could observe a dramatic increase in the number of German contributions to leading international journals." He notes that in the leading *Journal of Marketing* the share of articles from German authors more than doubled in ten years, from 6.2 percent to 12.6 percent. While this development is extremely gratifying, Kuss also notes that only a small number of authors was responsible for that increase.

Since the diagnosis of Professor Kuss, the international visibility of German-language marketing science has continued to improve. The most valid indicator for the global reputation of an author is the so-called Hirsch Index (Hirsch 2005). It corresponds to the number of publications n by an author that have been cited at least n times. A variant is the i10 index, which indicates the number of publications that have been cited at least ten times. 33 German-speaking marketing scientists have achieved a Hirsch Index of more than 30, which is very high as the following quote shows: "We found that, on average, assistant professors have an h-index of 2–5, as-

sociate professors 6–10, and full professors 12–24. These are mean or median values only – the distribution of values at each rank is very wide." (American Association for Clinical Chemistry 2019). A Hirsch Index of more than 30 can realistically only be achieved through repeated and sustained publication activities in leading journals and in English. The table contains the names of the researchers and the index values. [4]

Today, Germans are the second strongest group of authors in marketing science, after the Americans. The situation is similar with regard to the participation of German-speaking marketing scientists in international conferences. At European conferences, German speakers usually make up the largest group, and at global conferences only the Americans are represented in larger numbers. The internationalization of German marketing science has taken time, but the outcome far exceeds my expectations from 1979 when I presented my original provocative demands.

5. The language barrier remains

There is no way to deny, however, that most authors who are native German speakers (including myself) have to accept that native English speakers have a clear and significant advantage. Even someone with excellent command of English as a foreign language is unlikely to reach the level of a well-educated native speaker. This problem is by no means new. Cusanus (Nicholas of Cusa, 1401–1464), who came from my home region and was one of the most outstanding scholars in the late Middle Ages, obviously wrote in Latin, the lingua franca of all scientists at the time. In 1440, over 50 years before Copernicus and around 200 years before Galileo, he wrote "Terra non est centrum mundi" (The earth is not the center of the world). But in his own perceptions he felt about Latin the same way many German speakers feel about English, namely, that authors who write in a foreign language are at a disadvantage compared to native-speakers. He wrote: "Only with the greatest effort, as if one must fight against one's own nature, is a German capable of speaking Latin correctly." (de Cusa 1994, p. 240). Cusanus complained about his own unpolished writing style, but admired the ease and elegance with which classically educated Italians wrote. Many Germans, including me, feel the same way about our English texts compared to those of our American and British colleagues. This problem is, of course, not confined to Germans. In my experience it is even more serious for people who grew up as native speakers of a Romance, Slavic, or Asian language.

6. Inbound internationalization

The positive assessment of outbound internationalization does not apply to the same extent to inbound internationalization. Inbound internationalization includes contribu-

Name	First Name	Institution	h-Index	i10-Index
Homburg	Christian	University of Mannheim	104	320
Grunert	Klaus	Aarhus University	85	276
Herrmann	Andreas	University of St. Gallen	73	230
Sarstedt	Marko	Otto von Guericke University Magdeburg	70	119
Schlegelmilch	Bodo	Vienna University of Economics and Business	58	132
Stauss	Bernd	Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt	55	133
Simon	Hermann	Simon-Kucher & Partners	52	178
Hennig-Thurau	Thorsten	University of Münster	51	101
Esch	Franz-Rudolf	EBS University	49	164
Kotzab	Herbert	University of Bremen	48	84
Skiera	Bernd	Goethe University Frankfurt	47	126
Kleinaltenkamp	Michael	Free University of Berlin	46	121
Brockhoff	Klaus	WHU Otto Beisheim School of Management	45	117
Albers	Sönke	Kühne Logistics University Hamburg	45	119
Tomczak	Torsten	University of St. Gallen	44	135
Eggert	Andreas	Free University of Berlin	41	62
Krafft	Manfred	University of Münster	39	85
Reinartz	Werner	University of Cologne	39	57
Kollmann	Tobias	University of Duisburg-Essen	39	100
Sattler	Henrik	University of Hamburg	38	80
Stock-Homburg	Ruth	Technical University of Darmstadt	38	83
Meyer	Anton	Ludwig Maximilians University München	37	97
Schoder	Detlef	University of Cologne	37	85
Spann	Martin	Ludwig Maximilians University München	36	77
Bögenhold	Dieter	University of Klagenfurt	36	138
Morschett	Dirk	University of Fribourg	35	68
Freiling	Jörg	University of Bremen	33	90
Aschemann-Witzel	Jessica	Aarhus University	32	59
Franke	Nikolaus	Vienna University of Economics and Business	32	47
Ivens	Björn	University of Bamberg	32	64
Woratschek	Herbert	University of Bayreuth	31	61
Clement	Michel	University of Hamburg	30	77
Schramm-Klein	Hanna	University of Siegen	30	63

Tab. 1: German-speaking marketing researchers with a Hirsch-Index of 30 or higher (data retrieved at 11th March 2021)

tions by foreign authors to German journals, the appointment of non-German-speaking scientists to professorships at German universities, and guest visits by foreign researchers. One of the few exceptions is Professor Wayne D. Hoyer of the University of Texas at Austin. He has maintained numerous contacts with German scientists and reports how productive the resulting exchanges have been for him and his German collaborators (Hoyer 2020). Especially in comparison with American universities and international business schools, German universities are lagging far behind in the integration of foreign talent. Every Bundesliga club brings in the best players from around the world, and German companies with in-

ternational operations are also much more progressive in this regard than universities. There is considerable need to catch up in German marketing science when it comes to inbound internationalization.

7. Conclusion

For younger scholars, the linguistic isolation I experienced 40 years ago may be difficult to imagine. But my appeal to publish in foreign journals as well as to convert German journals to the English language met with strong rejection at that time. As a result, German business jour-

nals switched to English much too late and missed the opportunity to occupy top positions internationally.

The international activities of German-speaking marketing scientists have developed much more encouragingly. A large number of scientists from German-speaking countries achieve remarkable Hirsch Index values and form the second largest group in top journals and at international conferences after experts from the US. By comparison, there is still considerable need for inbound internationalization in marketing.

Notes

- [1] For more details see: Simon, H. (2021). *Many Worlds, One Life – A remarkable journey from farmhouse to global stage*, autobiography. New York: Springer. German version: Simon, H. (2018). *Zwei Welten, ein Leben – Vom Eifelkind zum Global Player*. Frankfurt: Campus.
- [2] There were other publications by authors of German origin who worked in America, e.g. by Gert Assmus, who was a professor at the Tuck School.
- [3] Author has copy. Professor Endres (born 1917) had the chair for business studies at the Free University of Berlin from 1969 to 1985.
- [4] The Hirsch Index is published only for authors who have registered with Google Scholar. So it may be that there are authors whose index is above 30, but who have not registered.

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Keywords

German Marketing Science, Internationalization, Publications, International Collaboration, Language Barrier.