Abstract

The research theme of this paper is marketing management in professional services firms. According to marketing theories different perspectives are suggested. On the other hand we have the marketing mix perspective which focuses on market analysis and a marketing mix suitable for this. On the other hand we have interaction theory and network perspective which focus on delimiting and handling relationships. Contributions from the marketing mix perspective are quite clear concerning marketing problems and activities. They present normative theories with guidelines for how to do market analysis and how to design a marketing plan. However, empirical studies show that this approach often doesn’t fit the situation of professional services firms. They interact heavily with customers as well as others. Professional services firms therefore perceive marketing plans as irrelevant to themselves. They believe it is a matter of mass-producing industrial firms. Many leaders in services firms, however, recognise interaction theory and the network model as perspectives which fit their situation. But contributions from these perspectives are very heterogeneous and fuzzy concerning marketing problems and activities.

In a study of engineering and architectural firms participating in developing construction projects the focal question was, «What are the firms marketing problems and activities?». The aim of this research project was twofold. The first part was a broad theory generating study the purpose of which was to describe how construction projects are developed. The aim of the second part was, from an interactive/network approach, to offer clearer answers to the question «what are the marketing problems and activities that architects and engineers have when participating in project development?"
In the paper there is a short presentation of the study of how construction projects are developed. Then marketing problems and activities are presented. Firstly, the screening and scanning of the market by professional services firms' is discussed. Secondly three types of marketing activities are presented, and finally two strategic marketing concepts are discussed: Competence Based Anticipation and Transaction-chain Organizing.