

Crafting conceptual proposition-based contributions in psychology and marketing: the 7C framework

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Crafting conceptual proposition-based contributions: The 7C framework

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Abstract

The declining number of conceptual articles, particularly in psychology and marketing (P&M), represents a key concern for the continued advancement of the body of knowledge. Proposition-based works, a key conceptual article subtype, offer theoretical propositions that introduce new concepts and theorize regarding their specific theoretical associations. However, relatively few guidelines for the preparation of these articles exist, leaving scholars in the dark regarding their development. Addressing this gap, we propose a framework summarizing the development of proposition-based research, offering a step-by-step guide to craft these contributions. The framework identifies the (1) key role of topic (e.g., a focal P&M concept) problematization and motivation, which may be an existing but under-explored or a new-to-P&M topic, and (2) application of a broader (e.g., meso- or macro-foundational) theory to frame the topic, which should exhibit a level of fit with one another. The framework also suggests that the chosen topic and theory co-infuse the development of the model and propositions, for which we provide relevant guidelines. We link this theoretical co-infusion process to prior *intra*-proposition recommendations (i.e., propositional clarity, consistency, conciseness, and contribution), which are supplemented with the proposed *inter*-proposition guidelines of propositional conceptual distinctiveness, comprehensiveness, and coherence.

KEYWORDS

conceptual article, conceptual framework, conceptual model, marketing, proposition, psychology, theorizing, theory

1 | INTRODUCTION

Given its predominant focus on empirical and methodological (vs. conceptual) advances (MacInnis, 2011), psychology and marketing (P&M) research has some way to go in its theoretical development

(MacInnis, 2017; Zaltman, 2000). For example, journals, including the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* and *Psychology & Marketing* offer authors the opportunity to test big (e.g., counterintuitive) ideas in the form of research notes or short reports, highlighting their key interest in empirical (vs. conceptual) work. The development of conceptual

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work also requires an in-depth understanding of specific areas of literature and tends to take time (Kindermann et al., 2024), thus challenging (e.g., early career) researchers. These factors give rise to a pressing need for rigorous, groundbreaking conceptual work to safeguard our discipline's continued advancement while also raising its influence (Key et al., 2020; MacInnis, 2004).

The decline in conceptual articles published in the top-tier P&M journals like the *Journal of Consumer Research* jeopardizes the field's development (MacInnis, 2017), as conceptual work tends to be disproportionately more influential (e.g., in terms of citations or awards) than empirical articles (Lee & Kim, 2023; Yadav, 2010). Conceptual articles also play a key role in the discovery-justification process that characterizes knowledge development (Hanson, 1958; Kordig, 1978). Consequently, leading journals, including *Psychology & Marketing*, have called for conceptual contributions in areas of particular interest to P&M in recent years (e.g., Montecchi et al., 2023).

Conceptual articles, scholarly works covering purely thought-based conceptions that are devoid of data (MacInnis, 2004), can profoundly shape the field (e.g., Belk, 1988; Fournier, 1998; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Keller, 1993; McCracken, 1989; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Sheth, 1973; Zaichkowsky, 1986; Zeithaml, 1988). These works may be published in different formats, including *proposition-*, *narrative-*, or *typology-based* articles (Cornelissen, 2017), each making unique contributions to the field (Cunliffe, 2022). In this article, we focus on the development of conceptual proposition-based research, an important approach for conceptual contributions in the area of P&M. For example, Hollebeek et al. (2023) draw on conservation of resources theory to develop a set of propositions that address consumer engagement as a stressor (vs. a stress-reducing coping strategy).

Conceptual proposition-based research refers to articles offering "theoretical propositions that introduce new constructs and cause-[and]-effect relationships" (Cornelissen, 2017, p. 3). It differs from *conceptual narrative-based research*, which specifies iterative process-based mechanisms to explain specific events (Lafferty et al., 2016), and *conceptual typology-based research* that proposes a theoretical entity's interrelated dimensions (Doty & Glick, 1994). Conceptual proposition-based research in P&M typically proposes a new concept or refines an existing one (e.g., by unpacking salient aspects of consumer purchase decision-making; Donthu et al., 2021), summarizes its theoretical associations, develops a set of propositions, and culminates in a research agenda (e.g., Hollebeek, Sprott, Urbonavicius, et al., 2022), thus advancing acumen of the topic and making a potentially significant impact on the field.

However, despite the importance of conceptual proposition-based research to P&M, relatively few guidelines exist for its preparation (MacInnis, 2017), leaving (e.g., early career) theorists largely in the dark regarding the development of these works and exposing a pertinent literature-based gap. Therefore, while P&M researchers have discussed issues, including the nature and hallmarks of theory building or theorizing (e.g., Giesler & Thompson, 2016; Homer & Lim, 2024; Kassarian, 1982), the dangers of poor construct conceptualization (e.g., MacKenzie, 2003), different roles or purposes of conceptual research (e.g., Jaakkola, 2020; MacInnis, 2011), the structure of conceptual articles (e.g., Palmatier

et al., 2018; Vargo & Koskela-Huotari, 2020), the preparation of literature reviews (e.g., Lim et al., 2022; Snyder, 2019), and the construction of theoretical typologies (e.g., Doty & Glick, 1994; Fiss, 2011), among others, recommendations for the development of conceptual proposition-based research remain relatively few and far between (MacInnis, 2017), warranting further development.

Addressing this literature-based gap, this article focuses on the development of conceptual proposition-based research in the field of P&M. Ulaga et al. (2021) provide a set of four *intra*-proposition guidelines (i.e., propositional clarity, consistency, conciseness, and contribution), which center on research propositions *individually*. We argue that it is also important to assess the propositions *collectively*, as gauged by the proposed *inter*-propositional guidelines of conceptual distinctiveness, comprehensiveness, and coherence (e.g., Hunt, 1983; Koscholke & Schippers, 2016; Miller & Childers, 2012). Collectively, these *intra*- and *inter*-propositional guidelines facilitate the development of theoretically robust sets of propositions.

This article makes the following main contribution to P&M research. Deploying and extending Ulaga et al.'s (2021) *intra*-proposition guidelines, we develop a supplementary set of *inter*-proposition guidelines (i.e., conceptual distinctiveness, comprehensiveness, and coherence) to assess the theoretical robustness of conceptual proposition-based research in P&M. Collectively, Ulaga et al.'s (2021) and our propositional guidelines facilitate the development and assessment of conceptual proposition-based research. We also embed Ulaga et al.'s (2021) *intra*-propositional, and our proposed *inter*-propositional, guidelines in a conceptual framework that offers a step-by-step guide for the development of conceptual proposition-based research in P&M (Corley & Gioia, 2011; MacInnis, 2017), thus bridging the identified literature-based gap.

The framework suggests the role of two critical elements in the preparation of conceptual proposition-based research, which share a salient association: (1) the focal concept (e.g., a micro-foundational psychological concept, like customer engagement), and (2) the broader meso- or macro-foundational theory adopted to frame the topic (see Table 1), which is characterized by higher theoretical aggregation and abstraction than the focal concept (e.g., social exchange theory). To develop rigorous, valid propositions, the research topic, which may be an *existing but under-explored* or a *new-to-P&M* topic, should exhibit synergy or fit with the adopted theory.

Based on the proposed topic-theory fit, theoretically robust propositions see the co-infusion of the topic's core theoretical hallmarks, which are assessed vis-à-vis the selected theory's main tenets that are commonly modeled as its key antecedents and/or consequences in a nomological network (MacInnis, 2011). For example, integrating Service-Dominant (S-D) logic and customer engagement, which share an *interactive* focus, Hollebeek et al. (2019) identify S-D logic's resource integration as an antecedent, and value cocreation as a consequence, of customer engagement, illustrating the co-infusion of these theoretical entities (Brodie et al., 2011). Therefore, to develop propositions that resonate with editors, reviewers, and readers, the topic's and the theory's respective tenets not only require a level of theoretical fit, but also necessitate novel, worthwhile observations pertaining to their theoretical integration

(MacInnis, 2011). To visualize the argumentation provided in the propositions, authors will also typically benefit from developing an accompanying conceptual framework to depict the theoretical associations presented in the propositions (e.g., Oliver, 1989; Ulaga et al., 2021; Zeithaml, 1988). While our analyses primarily apply to P&M research, the broad nature of theorizing (Weick, 1995) also renders their potential relevance to theorizing in other or related areas (e.g., service management).

We next review key literature addressing the development of and judging criteria for conceptual research, with a focus on those published in P&M, followed by a review of existing guidelines for the preparation of conceptual proposition-based research. We then introduce the proposed framework, which offers a step-by-step guide for the development of conceptual proposition-based research in P&M. We conclude with an overview of key implications that arise from our work.

2 | LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 | Conceptual articles: Hallmarks and judging criteria

Conceptual articles, also known as purely conceptual or conceptual-only articles (e.g., Krafft et al., 2015), focus “primarily on theory

development and do... not present data and/or analyses for purposes of theory testing” (Yadav, 2010, p. 2). These articles emphasize evidence based on existing literature, supported by coherent, compelling logic, unlike empirical articles, which emphasize evidence based on observations of the phenomena of interest (Vargo & Koskela-Huotari, 2020). In other words, conceptual articles “seek to make theoretical advances without including an empirical component” (Yadav, 2014, p. 2). Given the limited guidance on the development and assessment of conceptual articles in P&M (MacInnis, 2017), we review the broader stock of marketing and management knowledge in this area below.

Conceptual articles feature the following central practices, which are also used to assess or judge their quality: (i) *Conceptual thinking*, “... understanding a situation or problem abstractly by identifying patterns or connections and key underlying properties” (MacInnis, 2011, p. 140), and (ii) *Conceptualization*, “a process of abstract thinking involving the mental representation of an idea” (MacInnis, 2011, p. 140), which form part of the broader *theorizing* process (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Weick, 1995). Specifically, *theorizing* allows “phenomena... and their relations to each other [to be] transferred into theoretical terms and statements” (e.g., propositions; Ulaga et al., 2021, p. 398). Below, we outline key hallmarks of, and judging criteria for, conceptual articles.

First, given their reliance on literature-based evidence and creative, novel conceptual thinking and conceptualization, conceptual

TABLE 1 Overview of theoretical micro-, meso-, and macro-foundations.

Designation	Description	Example(s)
Theoretical micro-foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theoretical entities with a relatively narrow (e.g., individual-level concepts and relationships) scope that are suitable for empirical testing (e.g., Brodie & Peters, 2020). Defined as “the theoretical building blocks of macro-foundational theory that have narrower conceptual applicability” (Hollebeek et al., 2019, p. 165). Help “anchor... more abstract macro” foundational theoretical entities (Storbacka et al., 2016, p. 3008). Also known as the “micro-theoretical” level (Vargo & Lusch, 2017, p. 50). 	Psychological and behavioral concepts, like engagement or involvement (Hollebeek, Sprott, Urbonavicius, et al., 2022; Storbacka et al., 2016).
Theoretical meso-foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their level of theoretical aggregation and abstraction sits in between that of theoretical micro- (e.g., individual-level concepts and relationships) and macro-foundations (e.g., comprehensive theories). Connect micro-level processes and relevant macro-level theoretical entities (Homer & Lim, 2024; Storbacka et al., 2016). Also known as the “midrange theoretical” level (Vargo & Lusch, 2017, p. 50). 	Broader theoretical entities (vs. theoretical micro-foundations), such as relationship marketing (Brodie, 2017; Gummesson, 2017).
Theoretical macro-foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive or all-encompassing theoretical entities that are characterized by high levels of theoretical aggregation and abstraction, akin to Hunt's (1983) <i>general theory</i> (Hollebeek et al., 2019), which—given their broad scope—are more challenging to operationalize or assess empirically (Storbacka et al., 2016). May set out to explain and/or predict dynamics characterizing the field (P&M) (e.g., Bartels, 1968). Also known as the “meta-theoretical” level (Vargo & Lusch, 2017, p. 50). 	Wide-ranging or all-encompassing theoretical entities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vargo and Lusch's (2016) Service-Dominant (S-D) logic. Hunt's (1971) morphology of theory and general theory of marketing. Bartels' (1968) general theory of marketing.

articles do not draw on primary, empirical data to explore or test their assertions (Peterson & Crittenden, 2012; Shepherd & Suddaby, 2017). Instead, they “contribute to scientific knowledge by explaining phenomena and the existing and predicted conceptual relationships between phenomena” (Li et al., 2021, p. 645), reflecting a theory building (vs. theory testing) approach (Locke, 2007; Shepherd & Sutcliffe, 2011; Yadav, 2014), akin to qualitative research (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). In other words, by drawing on and extending the literature in a particular domain, conceptual articles develop new, or refine existing, theory (Corley & Gioia, 2011; Hulland, 2020). By unveiling novel, original insight, potential benefits of conceptual articles include their capacity to advance, or leave an important footprint on, the field or specific subareas herein.

Second, rigorous, meaningful conceptualization has been identified as core to the advancement of knowledge (e.g., by clearly defining focal concepts; MacKenzie, 2003). Here, *concept explication*, “the development of theoretical concepts with careful attention to the interplay between their definition” and theoretical connections (Reese, 2023, p. 1), represents a pertinent requirement to build the contribution of conceptual articles (Kindermann et al., 2024). In other words, conceptual articles introduce and conceptualize a new theoretical entity (e.g., a micro-foundational psychological concept) and explore its theoretical association to specific elements of the adopted broader (e.g., meso-/macro-foundational) theory (for an overview of theoretical micro-, meso-, and macro-foundations, please refer Table 1). Key findings on the interface of the topic and the adopted theory are commonly formalized in a set of theoretical propositions (e.g., Dootson et al., 2018; Sheth & Parvatlyar, 1995), which may also be depicted visually in a conceptual framework (Hollebeek et al., 2019; Srivastava et al., 1998). For example, drawing on rational choice theory, Bettman et al. (1998) develop a set of propositions and an associated model of consumer choice processes.

Third, though conceptual articles contain a *literature review*, “a more or less systematic way of collecting and synthesizing previous research” (Snyder, 2019, p. 333), these articles extend beyond the former’s scope (Palmatier et al., 2018). Specifically, conceptual articles chart into new territory (e.g., by proposing a new concept or by integrating existing theoretical entities in new ways), reflecting an important forward-looking aspect (Yadav, 2010) that has the potential to steer future scholarship in new directions (Lee & Kim, 2023). However, despite their promise, “the validity of claims made in conceptual articles must rely on evaluative considerations, such as exploratory adequacy and conceptual robustness” (Yadav, 2010, p. 14), suggesting a greater potential subjectivity in their evaluation process (e.g., given their lack of empirical evidence) and, thus, raising the risk of claims made in these articles being disputed or refuted (vs. those that are tested in empirical articles).

Fourth, conceptual articles have been classified in different ways. For example, while MacInnis (2011) identifies the core purposes of conceptual work as envisioning, relating, explicating, and debating ideas, Cloutier and Langley (2020) distinguish linear, parallel, recursive, and conjunctive theorizing styles in conceptual research. Moreover, Li et al. (2021) suggest the importance of conceptual

framing, refining, and reconciliation, and Cornelissen (2017) sets forth the key role of proposition-, narrative-, and typology-based research. These classifications partition or split conceptual articles in specific ways, facilitating (prospective) theorists’ and readers’ understanding and/or development of these relatively unstructured works.

Finally, differing evaluative criteria have been proposed to assess conceptual articles (e.g., Whetten, 1989). For example, MacInnis (2011) identifies *interestingness* as a major overall criterion to judge conceptual work. She states (p. 136): Interesting ideas “challenge strongly held assumptions about the state of the world. Interesting ideas add insight. They are not just new; they provide different perspectives that alter others’ thinking.” Relatedly, Moorman et al. (2019) recommend conceptual work to “challeng[e] the boundaries of marketing,” which may be implemented through tactics, including the development of surprising, unexpected, provocative, or counter-intuitive ideas (Davis, 1971; MacInnis, 2017), or by borrowing theoretical entities from other or related disciplines and discussing their (e.g., interdisciplinary) dynamics and effects (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015), among others. For example, drawing on the communication literature, Miller and Allen (2012) apply and extend McCracken’s (1989) process of meaning transfer to celebrity affiliates in the context of mature brands.

Moreover, while Ulaga et al. (2021) suggest that conceptual articles are judged in terms of their clarity, consistency, conciseness, and contribution to the advancement of theory, MacInnis (2017) notes the importance of raising a *big idea* in these articles to secure their contribution. For example, Mick (1986) introduces the linguistic notion of semiotics into consumer research (i.e., a *then* new-to-P&M topic). Relatedly, Corley and Gioia (2011, p. 12) propose two main criteria to assess the contribution of these articles, including (1) originality (incremental vs. revelatory), and (2) utility (scientific vs. practical). Of these, impactful conceptual articles typically offer a substantial (vs. negligible) contribution (Lindgreen et al., 2021), while also featuring elevated theoretical *and* managerial utility or value (e.g., Kumar et al., 2019). The provision of a compelling statement of a theoretical article’s contribution to, or advancement of, current insight, therefore, is a *sine qua non* to publish these works in leading journals.

To pinpoint an article’s main contribution(s), it is essential to convincingly problematize and motivate the topic (e.g., a focal P&M concept; Alvesson & Sandberg, 2020). Specifically, what is (are) the key knowledge-based gap(s) the article seeks to address and why is the development of further insight into these issues important for P&M scholarship and practice (e.g., Hulland, 2019; Van de Ven, 1989)? To ensure the academic *and* practical value of their work, scholars may link their theoretical argumentation to relevant practical (e.g., topic-, company- or mini-case study-based) examples to illustrate its practical applicability (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006). Moreover, visual depiction of key findings in a conceptual framework can facilitate the interpretability of the proposed analyses (MacInnis, 2011). In some cases, preliminary, qualitative research (Hollebeek et al., 2019), or a systematic literature review (Lim & Weissmann, 2023), is also added to strengthen the authors’

theoretical rationale. Given our focus on conceptual proposition-based research, we next review existing guidelines for the development of propositions.

2.2 | Guidelines for crafting propositions

Though conceptual proposition-based research accounts for a significant portion of published conceptual work in P&M (e.g., Bettman et al., 1998), relatively few guidelines for its development exist (Denyer et al., 2008; MacInnis, 2017). *Propositions*, “novel statements specifying relationships between concepts” (Ulaga et al., 2021, p. 396) “allow [readers] to distill the essence of an argument chain into a simple and memorable form.... [by] offer[ing]... parsimony and precision in conveying the gist of a theoretical contribution” (Delbridge & Fiss, 2013, p. 327), reflecting their value to P&M scholarship.

Ulaga et al. (2021) propose a four-step propositional development procedure that includes grounding, crafting, connecting, and simplifying, which focus on ascertaining the theoretical rigor of individual propositions.

First, *grounding* refers to the provision of an appropriate theoretical and/or practical foundation for a proposition (Ulaga et al., 2021, p. 401). For example, Hollebeek (2018) draws on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, including individualism-collectivism, to make predictions about cross-cultural customer engagement.

Second, *crafting* unpacks the motivation for, and creation of, the propositions (Ulaga et al., 2021), including by specifying the nature and direction of the proposed conceptual associations (Kilduff, 2006; MacInnis, 2004). That is, researchers are advised to not only identify relevant theoretical associations between the focal micro-foundational entity (e.g., a specific P&M concept) and the adopted (e.g., meso- or macro-foundational) theory, but also to specify its nature or direction. For example, Hollebeek, Hammedi, et al.'s (2023) P1 reads: “When a consumer's brand engagement acts as a stressor to the individual, [their] (a) challenge engagement will be conducive to the development of [their] role-related eustress, and (b) hindrance engagement will be conducive to the development of [their] role-related distress”.

Third, *connecting* links the propositions to available supporting theoretical or empirical evidence (Ulaga et al., 2021), thereby motivating and explaining the integration of specific theoretical entities in a proposition and helping to justify its contribution (Yadav, 2010). Reviewers typically require empirically testable propositions, permitting their operationalization or *empiricizing* in future research (MacKenzie, 2003; Ulaga et al., 2021).

Fourth, *simplifying* offers an important check of a proposition's theoretical rigor, ensuring its key constituents and theoretical associations are clearly defined, explained, and signposted in the article (e.g., MacKenzie, 2003), thus minimizing inconsistencies, ambiguity, and/or tautology in their wording (Lindgreen et al., 2021). To *simplify* one's findings, we recommend using an accompanying conceptual framework or model to visually depict the propositions (e.g., Kumar & Ramachandran, 2021; MacInnis, 2011; Oliver, 1989).

3 | CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

We propose a conceptual framework that synthesizes the development of conceptual proposition-based research in P&M, thus building on and extending prior insight (e.g., Cornelissen, 2017; Ulaga et al., 2021). While Ulaga et al. (2021) provide a set of *intra*-proposition guidelines (i.e., propositional clarity, consistency, conciseness, and contribution) and a propositional development procedure (i.e., grounding, crafting, connecting, and simplifying), we extend these authors' work by offering a complementary set of *inter*-proposition guidelines (i.e., propositional conceptual distinctiveness, comprehensiveness, and coherence) that highlight the parallel importance of ensuring theoretical robustness across the suggested set of propositions. Collectively, these *intra*- and *inter*-propositional criteria safeguard the development of theoretically robust sets of propositions.

In Figure 1, we include these *intra*- and *inter*-propositional guidelines as part of a broader process framework that offers a roadmap for the development of conceptual proposition-based research in P&M. Below, we discuss the framework's components, including (1) topic problematization and motivation (e.g., Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011), and (2) the application of broader (e.g., meso- or macro-foundational) theory to the topic (e.g., Storbacka et al., 2016), which should exhibit a level of theoretical fit with one another. Collectively, these steps will *co*-infuse the development of the propositions, for which we provide specific guidelines below. Authors may also wish to visually depict their propositions (e.g., in a conceptual framework or model) to facilitate the interpretability of their work to readers (MacInnis, 2017).

3.1 | Topic problematization and motivation

As shown in Figure 1, conceptual articles may address (1) an *existing but under-explored* P&M topic (Zavestoski, 2002; see the Marketing Science Institute's *Research Priorities* for ideas), or (2) a *new-to-P&M* topic, which while “new to [a discipline], ...[may] not [be] new elsewhere” (e.g., by featuring in other disciplines; Hunt, 1994, p. 15). Of these, investigation of an existing but under-explored P&M topic tends to be more common, including by assessing an extant topic (e.g., a focal psychological concept) from a new theoretical perspective. For example, building on prior work addressing consumptive meaning-making, McCracken (1989) introduces the idea that cultural product-related meaning is mobile (vs. static) around cultural levels. To justify the proposed perspective, authors will typically first synthesize prior literature in relevant (e.g., closely related) areas, from which they then identify key literature-based gap(s) that is (are) used to problematize and motivate their work (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

One way to craft the literature-based gap is by suggesting that while the proposed topic and theory have been studied in isolation, acumen of their theoretical *integration* lags behind, as therefore undertaken in the study at hand. For example, Fournier (1998) brings

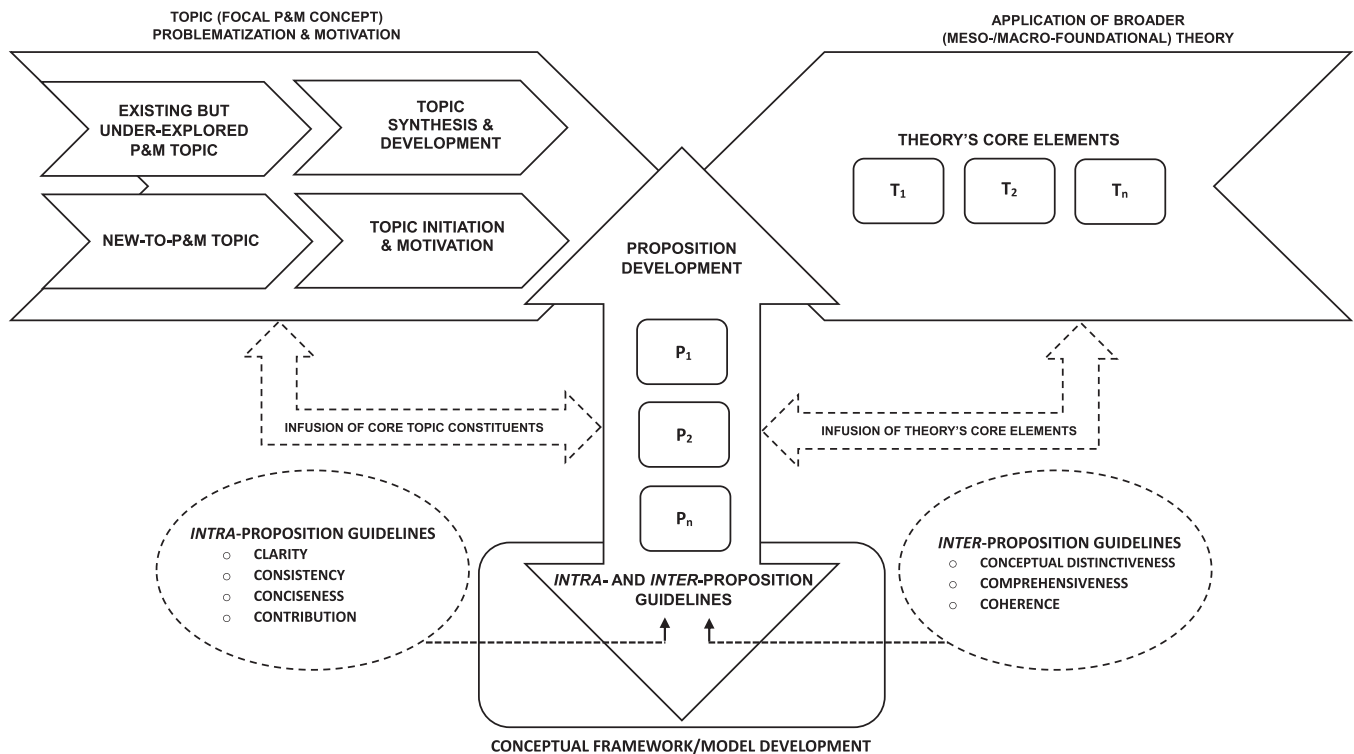


FIGURE 1 The 7C framework for crafting conceptual proposition-based research in psychology and marketing. Notes: P&M: Psychology and marketing; *Intra*-proposition guidelines: Proposed by Ulaga et al. (2021); *Inter*-proposition guidelines: Developed in this research. Source: Authors' own elaboration.

relationship theory into the marketing discourse on consumer/brand relationships, offering a *then* novel topic-theory integration. More recently, authors have, likewise, integrated contemporary or emerging topics with relevant theories to forge a novel contribution. For example, Mariani et al. (2022) address how artificial intelligence (AI) can be applied to better understand and nurture firm stakeholders' sustainable behavior, thus deriving novel insight at the interface of these theoretical entities.

The identified literature-based gap(s) is (are) then used to problematize and motivate (the need for) the topic's further development (e.g., based on its postulated importance for P&M research/practice) in the proposed study (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011), to which Mitroff et al. (2004) refer as *problem-sensing*. One way to warrant a study's contribution is to address unexpected, counter-intuitive, provocative, or surprising dynamics that are yet to receive literature-based attention (MacInnis, 2017). For example, while the literature initially assumed that more satisfied customers yield increasingly favorable organizational returns, authors like Ofir and Simonson (2007) and Lim et al. (2020) have shown that rising satisfaction may also backfire or incur negative effects (e.g., by raising customer expectations or by seeing otherwise declining utility to the firm).

That is, while the assessment of counter-intuitive or unexpected ideas is commonplace in empirical research, this tactic may *also* be applied in conceptual proposition-based research to boost its *interestingness* and contribution (MacInnis, 2011; Brodie &

Peters, 2020). For example, Clark et al. (2020) develop a set of negative effects that may accrue from customers' positive engagement with brands, and vice versa. More generally, investigating the potentially negative (positive) effects of a variable or dynamic that is typically viewed as positive (negative), respectively, may help secure the contribution of conceptual proposition-based research. For example, theorists may wish to pinpoint specific favorable consequences transpiring from negative concepts (e.g., customer complaining behavior, defection, service failure, or negative word-of-mouth), or potentially unfavorable outcomes arising from theoretical entities that are, generally, seen as positive (e.g., by addressing the dark side of AI, loyalty programs, or mobile payment systems; e.g., Grewal et al., 2021).

New-to-P&M topics that are deemed interesting, timely, relevant, and well-argued have the potential to make a revelatory theoretical contribution (Corley & Gioia, 2011), exposing their potentially elevated impact. For example, Huang and Rust (2022) develop a model addressing how consumers may team up with collaborative AI in the retailing context. However, given the inherent novelty of new topics to the field, it is important to not only persuade editors and reviewers of the theoretical rigor and importance of the proposed topic-theory integration, but also of its practical relevance to the discipline (MacInnis, 2017).

While existing but under-explored P&M topics likewise require a strong motivation (Kindermann et al., 2024), new-to-the-field topics

tend to require additional problematization and motivation to warrant their *raison-d'être* in P&M. To convince readers of the value of the proposed theoretical entity (e.g., a focal psychological concept), its unique conceptual or definitional domain, its nomological network as informed by a particular theoretical perspective (e.g., Sheth & Parvatlyar, 1995), and its anticipated benefits (vs. those offered by existing or related literature-based entities) require explicit clarification.

To problematize and motivate the topic, whether an existing but under-explored or a new-to-P&M topic, it is pivotal to unpack (1) *what* the article does to advance existing insight (i.e., its core contribution), (2) *how* it proposes to do so (i.e., through the adopted approach), and (3) *why* these analyses offer value to P&M scholars and practitioners (e.g., by explaining how firms can use, leverage, or otherwise derive value from the attained insight), thus helping to satisfy the critical “so what?” question (Whetten, 1989; Cropanzano, 2009; see Table 3). The article's theoretical and practical contributions should be linked to, complement, and/or logically flow from one another, warranting their integrative (vs. isolated) preparation. For example, by showing how possessions extend the self, Belk (1988) not only advances scholarly insight (e.g., by unveiling the psychological processes characterizing product ownership), but may also benefit practitioners (e.g., by allowing them to better leverage consumers' psychological ownership processes). Impactful conceptual proposition-based research therefore tends to advance marketing scholarship and practice alike (Moorman et al., 2019).

3.2 | Application of meso- or macro-foundational theory

The adoption of a broader meso- or macro-foundational theory is necessary to frame the topic (e.g., a micro-foundational P&M concept) addressed in the propositions (Hollebeek et al., 2019), akin to Ulaga et al.'s (2021) *grounding*, as shown on the right side of Figure 1. The adopted (e.g., meso-/macro-foundational) theory thus provides the lens *through which* the topic is viewed (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). For example, using Davis' (1989) Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to frame consumers' blockchain-related behavior would yield the expected inclusion of the TAM constituents of blockchain-related perceived usefulness, ease-of-use, attitude toward blockchain, and/or individuals' blockchain-related behavioral intent (see Figure 1: T_1, T_2, \dots, T_n) as key propositional components (see Figure 1: P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n ; Hollebeek & Belk, 2022). In other words, the chosen theory determines or guides the nature of the theoretical associations set forth in the propositions.

To position the article, clear justification and explanation regarding *how* the chosen theory (e.g., TAM) informs the topic (e.g., consumers' blockchain-related behavior), and *why* these analyses matter, are required. Authors are advised to compellingly argue for the existence of elevated theoretical fit between their topic and the chosen theory. For example, drawing on the theory of liquidity, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) develop the concept of *liquid* (non-ownership-based) *consumption*. Therefore, for both existing but

under-explored and new-to-P&M topics, we recommend linking the chosen topic to the selected theory to demonstrate the suitability of their integration.

For under-explored topics that have been previously addressed in P&M (but from alternate theoretical perspectives vs. that proposed), it is important to first synthesize prior insight (see Figure 1: *Topic Synthesis*; Snyder, 2019), followed by explication of the nature and value of the proposed theoretical integration (see Figure 1: *Topic Development*). New-to-P&M topics lack prior theoretical grounding in the P&M literature, requiring researchers to draw on other relevant theoretical foundations (e.g., sourced from related fields, like organizational behavior). To initiate the proposed topic, unpacking of its expected value is required (see Figure 1: *Topic Initiation & Motivation*).

Finally, researchers should keep in mind the specific journal they wish to target with their conceptual proposition-based research. Though many of the outlined principles are germane across journals, journal-based specificities and differences also exist. For example, while *Psychology & Marketing* may exhibit an interest in the application of psychological theories and techniques to marketing, more generalist marketing journals (e.g., the *Journal of Marketing*) may (also) embrace topics and theories grounded in related disciplines like economics or finance (e.g., Srivastava et al., 1998).

3.3 | Proposition and framework development

Drawing on the rationale presented in the previous sections, we offer recommendations for the development of conceptual proposition-based research, thus extending the work of authors, including Cornelissen (2017) and Ulaga et al. (2021). Figure 1 suggests that the key hallmarks characterizing the topic (e.g., a micro-foundational P&M concept) and the (e.g., meso-/macro-foundational) theory are jointly infused to develop the propositions. In other words, this theoretical *co-infusion*, which is the crux of conceptual proposition-based research, should see the logical integration of relevant tenets of the topic *and* the theory in its propositional development (Lindgreen et al., 2021).

An important way to safeguard topic-theory integration is to link specific elements of the theory (illustrated as T_1, T_2, \dots, T_n in Figure 1) to specific aspects or characteristics of the topic. For example, a study exploring SERVQUAL (i.e., topic) from an S-D logic perspective (i.e., macro-foundational theory) may see the application of SERVQUAL's core tenets (i.e., assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibles; Parasuraman et al., 1985) to S-D logic's foundational premises (Vargo & Lusch, 2016), yielding a set of propositions addressing their theoretical interface, akin to Ulaga et al.'s (2021) *connecting*. However, researchers may at times find themselves *getting stuck* in the propositional development process (e.g., due to lacking clarity, depth, or *interestingness* of their draft propositions, limiting the study's potential contribution). In this case, we advise scholars to step back, reassess, and revisit the topic's and the theory's core hallmarks to deduce valuable insight that is of

TABLE 2 *Intra-* and *inter-*proposition guidelines.

<i>Intra-</i>proposition guidelines (Ulaga et al., 2021)	
1. Clarity	"The researcher should... build a logically detailed case allowing the reader to clearly infer the reasoning underlying the research proposition(s)" (Ulaga et al. (2021), p.401).
2. Consistency	The extent to which a "research proposition... [is]... internally" logical or intelligible (Ulaga et al., 2021, p.403).
3. Conciseness	The extent to which a proposition is "parsimonious while capturing the breadth and depth of theory developed" (Ulaga et al., 2021, p.403).
4. Contribution	The extent to which a proposition "is relevant to both theory and managerial practice" (Ulaga et al., 2021, p.403).
<i>Inter-</i>proposition guidelines (newly developed in this research)	
1. Conceptual distinctiveness (mutual exclusivity)	The need for a set of propositions to minimize theoretical overlap across one another (Miller & Childers, 2012; Bierman, 2011).
2. Comprehensiveness	The need to ensure that the propositions, collectively, cover the full ambit of theoretical eventualities (e.g., Hunt, 1983).
3. Coherence	The need for the propositions to "hang or fit together" (vs. appear as a random collection of statements; Koscholke & Schippers, 2016).

interest to editors, reviewers, and readers, as shown by the double-sided arrow titled *Proposition Development* (see the center of Figure 1).

Propositions should be clear, consistent, concise or parsimonious, and make a significant contribution to the literature (Ulaga et al., 2021), thus offering imperative criteria for individual propositions, to which we refer as *intra-*proposition guidelines (see Table 2). Supplementing these, we propose three additional *inter-*proposition guidelines to *collectively* evaluate a set of propositions, thus recognizing that propositions should not only make sense and expose theoretical rigor individually, but also collectively. The suggested *inter-*proposition guidelines include propositional (1) conceptual distinctiveness, (2) comprehensiveness, and (3) coherence, as discussed further below and summarized in Table 2.

First, *conceptual distinctiveness* refers to the need for the propositions to show minimal theoretical overlap with one another, or to exhibit mutual exclusivity (Bierman, 2011). Propositions are mutually exclusive if their proposed dynamics are unable to co-occur at the same time and do not coincide with one another, theoretically (Miller & Childers, 2012). This is important, because if the effects predicted in different propositions within the same propositional set do overlap, the dynamics occurring in one may *co-influence* those characterizing another, impairing researchers' ability to isolate specific dynamics or effects and obfuscating empirical testing of the propositions. Conceptual distinctiveness is therefore important to minimize theoretical confounding or contamination across the propositions (Hill & Ward, 1989), safeguarding their theoretical rigor and validity (MacKenzie, 2003).

Second, *comprehensiveness* ensures that the propositions, collectively, cover the full ambit of possible theoretical eventualities (e.g., Parvatiyar & Sheth, 2021; Hunt, 1983), thus leaving *no stone unturned*. For example, the adoption of Davis' (1989) Technology Acceptance Model warrants the systematic development of a

proposition addressing *each* of the theory's elements to comprehensively cover its theoretical ambit (vs. selectively addressing some but not all of these). That is, propositional comprehensiveness is important to ensure that no theoretical elements have been missed in the overall set of propositions.

Third, *coherence* refers to the need for the propositions to "hang or fit together" (vs. appear as a random collection of concepts or statements; Koscholke & Schippers, 2016, p. 2805). Coherent propositions appear as a logical set of interrelated statements (MacInnis, 2017), boosting their interpretability and contribution. To safeguard propositional coherence, the chosen theory plays a key role: Systematic examination of the theory's core elements vis-à-vis the hallmarks of the proposed topic helps ensure propositional coherence, as the propositions fit or make sense together *by virtue* of the deployed theory (Cropanzano, 2009; see the case example in Table 3).

Finally, to check whether a manuscript in draft meets Ulaga et al.'s (2021) *intra-*proposition and our *inter-*proposition criteria, and to enhance readers' understanding of the predominantly textual analyses presented in the conceptual proposition-based research, we recommend authors to also develop a conceptual framework that visually depicts the theoretical associations outlined in the propositions (Embley, 2011; Jaccard & Jacoby, 2020; Meredith, 1993; Yap & Lim, 2004; Zeithaml, 1988).

To help researchers craft conceptual proposition-based research, we summarize the framework's components, to which we apply an illustrative case study of a recent conceptual proposition-based article published in *Psychology & Marketing* to further facilitate readers' understanding of how to develop such works (Leung et al., 2024; see Table 3). The selected case article by Hollebeek, Sprott, Sigurdsson, et al. (2022), titled "Social Influence and Stakeholder Engagement Behavior Conformity, Compliance, and Reactance," conceptualizes the *stakeholder engagement behavior*

TABLE 3 Application of the 7C framework to an illustrative conceptual proposition-based case article.

Framework component (Figure 1)	Key judging criteria (Literature review)	Illustrative case
Topic problematization and motivation	Focus on theory development	<p>Hollebeek, Sprott, Sigurdsson, et al. (2022). Social influence and stakeholder engagement behavior conformity, compliance, and reactance. <i>Psychology & Marketing</i>, 39(1), 90–100.</p> <p>Note: SEB: Stakeholder engagement behavior.</p>
	Conceptual thinking, conceptualization and, concept explication	<p>☑ The case article examines an <i>existing but under-explored P&M topic</i> (i.e., the interplay of social influence, stakeholder engagement, and relational consequences).</p> <p>☑ The article illustrates <i>topic synthesis and development</i> (e.g., by integrating and extending prior research on social influence, engagement, and the relational consequences of cooperation, coopetition, and competition in the context of SEB).</p> <p>☑ <i>Crafting the literature-based gap</i>: Synthesis of what is (un)known in the topic area (Grant & Pollock, 2011) and why it matters to learn more about it (Patriotta, 2017). e.g., the case article states (p. 91): “However, little remains known regarding the psychological effect of social influence on SEB, necessitating further investigation. We therefore explore the psychological impact of social influence on SEB, which we posit takes one of three forms (i.e., SEB conformity, compliance, or reactance), depending on the focal stakeholder's (i.e., influencee's) level of agreement with the influencer's exerted pressure or influence.”</p> <p>☑ <i>The contribution: Problematizing and motivating the topic's development</i>: (1) what the article does to advance existing insight; (2) how it proposes to do so; and (3) why these analyses matter to P&M theory and practice. For example, the case article states (p. 91): “...despite stakeholder engagement's recognized systemic nature, the effect of social psychology-based social influence on SEB remains tenuous..., as therefore explored in this paper (i.e., <i>the what</i>). Specifically, we investigate how influencees change their behavior to meet an influencer's request or demand (Kelman, 1958), as exhibited through their displayed level of SEB conformity, compliance, or reactance, respectively... (i.e., <i>the how</i>) ... Our observations add to this growing discourse by applying the widely used social psychology concepts of conformity, compliance, and reactance to socially influenced SEB (Kelman,), exposing a key contribution” (i.e., <i>the why</i>).</p> <p>☒ Without a clear, compelling problematization and motivation (i.e., <i>what, how, and why</i>), newly proposed theoretical development is unlikely to proceed to acceptance.</p>
	Extends beyond a literature review	<p>☑ For example, the article <i>conceptualizes</i> SEB on p. 91: “Integrating and extending customer engagement behavior and Hollebeek et al.'s (2024) stakeholder engagement, we thus conceptualize SEB as a marketing stakeholder's <i>behavioral manifestation toward [their] role-related interactions, activities, and relationships</i>.”</p> <p>☒ <i>Conceptual thinking</i> (e.g., by proposing a new concept) and <i>conceptualization</i> (i.e., by defining the concept) are required aspects of conceptual proposition-based work. Without these, an article cannot make a significant contribution. To source (e.g., new concept) ideas, we advise authors to consult industry sources.</p> <p>☑ Conceptual proposition-based work <i>integrates</i> and <i>extends</i> its topic areas in important, insightful ways, requiring a core <i>creative</i> aspect. For example, the case article explains how it extends prior <i>cooperation</i> and <i>competition</i> research (p. 91): “Though seminal authors, including Deutsch (1949a/b), proposed the relational notions of cooperation/competition over half a century ago, their association to marketing-based SEB is yet to be made (Wolf et al. 2021), as therefore undertaken in this paper. We also add the hybrid form of <i>coopetition</i>, which implies the influencee's partial acceptance/partial dissent of an influencer's request.”</p> <p>☒ Conceptual proposition-based work that <i>fails to go beyond</i> reviewing existing literature-based topics is unlikely to gain acceptance. For example, even systematic literature reviews increasingly require conceptual development to supplement their review-based analyses (e.g., by developing a model and/or propositions; e.g., Hollebeek et al. (2024)).</p>
	Envisioning, explicating, relating, and/or debating (MacInnis, 2011)	<p>☑ The case article states (p. 91): “...our analyses reveal MacInnis' (2011, p. 146) <i>integrating</i> purpose of conceptual research, which “draws connections between previously differentiated phenomena, finding a novel... perspective on how these entities are related.”</p> <p>☒ If conceptual proposition-based research <i>does not reflect</i> MacInnis' (2011) <i>envisioning, explicating, relating, or debating</i> purposes, this may signal a key <i>theoretical red flag</i>. Authors preparing conceptual proposition-based work should thus ensure that their analyses reflect at least one of these.</p>

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Framework component (Figure 1)	Key judging criteria (Literature review)	Illustrative case
		<p>Hollebeek, Sprott, Sigurdsson, et al. (2022). Social influence and stakeholder engagement behavior conformity, compliance, and reactance. <i>Psychology & Marketing</i>, 39(1), 90–100.</p> <p>Note: SEB: Stakeholder engagement behavior.</p>
	<p>Interestingness (MacInnis, 2011)</p>	<p>☺ <i>Interestingness</i> is the extent to which conceptual proposition-based work is perceived as <i>interesting</i>. The case article safeguards its interestingness (p. 91) by (1) <i>extending</i> the stakeholder engagement to SEB concept, and (2) <i>applying</i> a social influence lens to advance understanding of the effects of socially influenced SEB, instigating (i) stakeholder compliance that yields cooperation, (ii) stakeholder compliance that yields cooperation, or (iii) stakeholder reactance that yields competition.</p> <p>☹ Some analyses, while <i>novel</i>, may <i>lack interestingness</i> to readers and should thus be avoided. For example, analyses that are too straightforward or intuitive (e.g., <i>by exploring the effect of brand love on purchase behavior</i>) typically fail to meet the required threshold for conceptual proposition-based research.</p>
	<p>Challenges the field's boundaries (Moorman et al., 2019)</p>	<p>☺ Stakeholder/actor engagement has been primarily explored for individual stakeholders (e.g., Hollebeek, Kumar, et al., 2022), limiting insight into its <i>social dynamics</i>. By taking a social influence perspective of SEB, the case article advances extant insight in important ways (see p. 91).</p> <p>☹ <i>Without a big idea</i>, it will be difficult to challenge the boundaries of the field. One way to develop a big idea is by combining prior literature in new ways to move the field forward (e.g., Fournier (1998) brought relationship theory into consumer research).</p>
	<p>Originality: Incremental vs. revelatory (Corley & Gioia, 2011)</p>	<p>☺ The case article's contribution is <i>incremental but substantial</i>, based on its (1) conceptualization of SEB, and (2) application of a novel social influence perspective of SEB (see p. 91).</p> <p>☹ <i>Without originality, whether incremental or revelatory</i>, it will be difficult to publish conceptual proposition-based research. We thus advise authors to ensure their work is novel (e.g., by ensuring that the proposed concept and its theoretical associations have not been explored in prior research).</p>
	<p>Utility: Scientific versus practical (Corley & Gioia, 2011)</p>	<p>☺ By suggesting that (1) SEB conformity yields cooperation; (2) SEB compliance yields cooperation; and (3) SEB reactance yields competition, the case article chiefly <i>contributes to</i> the studied <i>theoretical</i> areas.</p> <p>☺ However, to publish conceptual proposition-based research, it is also pivotal to show how the article <i>contributes to practice</i>. The case article states (p. 91): "Moreover, by fostering enhanced insight into multiple stakeholders' behavioral engagement, our analyses are expected to benefit managers seeking to optimize their returns from different stakeholders."</p> <p>☹ While contribution to theory forms the crux of these works, its practical contribution is <i>also</i> key to persuade readers of its practical value (i.e., answering the "so what?" question).</p>
<p>Application of meso- or macro-foundational theory</p>	<p>Meso- or macro-foundational theory adoption, integration, and fit</p>	<p>☺ It is important to <i>apply a fitting meso- or macro-foundational theory to frame the focal micro-foundational concept</i> (e.g., SEB; see Table 1). The case article states (p. 91): SEB is "subject to interacting stakeholders' communication and <i>social influence</i>, [or] the ways in which stakeholders modify their behavior to meet the demands of a social environment... However, little remains known regarding the psychological effect of social influence on SEB, necessitating further investigation. We therefore explore the psychological impact of social influence on SEB, which we posit takes one of three forms (i.e., SEB conformity, compliance, or reactance), depending on the ...influencee's level of agreement with the influencer's... influence."</p> <p>☹ Lacking topic-theory fit will make it difficult to draft compelling propositions. To overcome this issue, we advise identifying <i>natural, intuitive linkages</i> between the two.</p>
<p>Proposition and model development</p>	<p>Development of propositions and model</p>	<p>☺ As per Figure 1, we recommend the <i>theoretical co-infusion</i> of (1) the topic's (a P&M concept's, e.g., SEB's) and (2) the chosen theory's (e.g., a social influence perspective's) core hallmarks to develop the propositions and its associated model.</p> <p>☹ While some authors use only propositions (without a framework/model), we recommend using <i>both tools</i> to (1) optimize clarity to readers, and (2) serve as a quick reference, facilitating the attainment of citations and impact of the work.</p>

(Continues)

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TABLE 3 (Continued)

Framework component (Figure 1)	Key judging criteria (Literature review)	Illustrative case
<p>Hollebeek, Sprott, Sigurdsson, et al. (2022). Social influence and stakeholder engagement behavior conformity, compliance, and reactance. <i>Psychology & Marketing</i>, 39(1), 90–100.</p> <p>Note: SEB: Stakeholder engagement behavior.</p>		
Intra-proposition guidelines (Ulaga et al., 2021)	Clarity	<p>Clarity implies that the propositions <i>clearly summarize</i> the intended theoretical associations (Ulaga et al., 2021, p. 403).</p> <p>☑ For example, the case article's P1a states (p. 94): "Influencees who accept their influencer's exerted social influence will display SEB conformity with the influencer's request."</p> <p>☒ Unclear proposition wording will compromise readers' understanding. For example, the following alternate, unclear wording of P1a would likely compromise comprehension: "Influencees will display SEB conformity with the influencer's request (i.e., need to qualify which influencees will display SEB conformity with the influencer's request).</p>
	Consistency	<p>Consistency describes the extent to which a proposition is <i>internally logical or intelligible</i> (Ulaga et al., 2021, p. 403).</p> <p>☑ For example, the case article's P2b deploys logical wording (p. 94): "An influencee's SEB compliance with the influencer's exerted social influence is conducive to cooperation in the influencee-influencer relationship."</p> <p>☒ An illogical proposition may specify a predicted association that lacks theoretical consistency (e.g., by failing to systematically follow the adopted concept's or theory's core hallmarks). For example, an alternate, inconsistent P2b might read: "An influencee's SEB compliance with the influencer's exerted social influence is conducive to their non-volitional engagement."</p>
	Conciseness	<p>Conciseness refers to a proposition's level of <i>theoretical parsimony</i> (Ulaga et al., 2021, p. 403).</p> <p>☑ For example, the case article's P1b reads (p. 94): "An influencee's SEB conformity to the influencer's exerted social influence is conducive to cooperation in the influencee-influencer relationship."</p> <p>☒ A non-concise proposition unnecessarily incorporates additional concepts or terms that are not required to convey its core proposed association(s). For example, an alternate, non-concise version of P1b might read: "An influencee's SEB conformity to the influencer's exerted social influence is conducive to the influencee's reciprocity, favorable attitude, and cooperation in the influencee-influencer relationship."</p>
	Contribution	<p>Contribution refers to the extent to which a proposition "is relevant to both theory and managerial practice" (Ulaga et al., 2021, p. 403).</p> <p>☑ The case article states (p. 91): "...despite stakeholder engagement's recognized systemic nature, the effect of social psychology-based social influence on SEB remains tenuous..., as therefore explored in this paper. Specifically, we investigate how influencees change their behavior to meet an influencer's request or demand (Kelman), as exhibited through their displayed level of SEB conformity, compliance, or reactance" (i.e., propositional contribution).</p> <p>☒ Without a clear statement of the article's (and the propositions') contribution, readers are likely to have difficulty assessing these. We recommend (1) developing a crystal-clear mental image of what it is that the work adds to theory and practice, and (2) clearly communicating the value of the attained insight, including by using relevant examples.</p>
Inter-proposition guidelines (this article)	Conceptual distinctiveness	<p><i>Conceptual distinctiveness (mutual exclusivity)</i> refers to the need for a set of propositions to minimize theoretical overlap across one another.</p> <p>☑ To ensure conceptual distinctiveness, we advise each proposition to focus on a separate tenet of the adopted theory. For example, each of the case article's propositions address a specific <i>social influence</i> tenet (e.g., P1a-c), contributing to their conceptual distinctiveness.</p> <p>☒ However, if unchecked, lacking cross-propositional distinctiveness can still creep in (e.g., in the case of the adopted theory's similar vs. clearly distinct elements). For example, as <i>cooperation</i> comprises aspects of both cooperation and competition, a level of theoretical overlap may exist between the case article's P2b (effect of SEB compliance on cooperation) on the one hand, and P1b (effect of SEB conformity on cooperation) and P3b (effect of SEB reactance on competition) on the other.</p>

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Framework component (Figure 1)	Key judging criteria (Literature review)	Illustrative case
		Hollebeek, Sprott, Sigurdsson, et al. (2022). Social influence and stakeholder engagement behavior conformity, compliance, and reactance. <i>Psychology & Marketing</i> , 39(1), 90–100.
		Note: SEB: Stakeholder engagement behavior.
	Comprehensiveness	<p><i>Comprehensiveness</i> ensures that the propositions, collectively, cover the full ambit of theoretical eventualities (i.e., that nothing important has been missed).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ The case article secures comprehensiveness of its propositions by drawing on social influence theory's full ambit (i.e., by developing a proposition for each of the theory's elements). ☒ Propositional comprehensiveness would be compromised if the case article had missed one or several of the theory's elements, yielding a smaller number of propositions in their work.
	Coherence	<p><i>Coherence</i> refers to the need for the propositions to hang or fit together (vs. appear as a random collection of statements).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☑ By drawing on social influence theory, the case article ensures theoretical coherence of its propositions (i.e., as each proposition addresses a focal aspect of the theory). ☒ Low propositional coherence would occur if the case article had taken some elements from social influence theory, supplemented with elements from other theory (e.g., S-D logic's cocreation or social exchange theory's reciprocity). For example, an alternate, noncoherent version of P2a might read: "<i>Influencees who partially accept their influencer's exerted social influence will display moderate reciprocity to the influencer.</i>"

(SEB) concept to which it applies the social influence notions of conformity, compliance, and reactance, yielding the new composite concepts of SEB conformity, compliance, and reactance. It also explores the predicted effects of these new composite concepts on their respective prevailing relational consequences (i.e., cooperation, cooperation, and competition).

Key judging criteria for conceptual articles are enlisted in the second column of Table 3 (discussed in the literature review), which we integrate with the framework's respective components. For example, the first part of the framework, *Topic Problematization and Motivation*, largely corresponds to the Introduction section of conceptual proposition-based articles (i.e., by focusing on theory development, conceptual thinking, conceptualizing, and outlining the work's interestingness and contribution). Therefore, while these judging criteria are applied throughout the article, the Introduction tends to feature their particularly high concentration, as shown under *Topic Problematization and Motivation* in Table 3. We next outline key implications that arise from our analyses.

4 | DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

4.1 | Theoretical and managerial implications

We developed the 7C framework (Figure 1) to guide P&M researchers seeking to develop conceptual proposition-based contributions to the field, thus advancing prior insight in this area (e.g., Cornelissen, 2017; Ulaga et al., 2021). The framework differentiates

conceptual proposition-based research that discusses existing but under-explored (vs. that addressing new-to-P&M topics; Donthu et al., 2023; Hunt, 1994). For existing but under-explored P&M topics (e.g., consumer behavior vis-à-vis new-age technology; Kumar et al., 2022), we recommend authors to first synthesize the existing, related literature in the topic area, followed by the creative development of relevant linkages to the adopted theory. For example, Hollebeek, Sprott, Urbonavicius, et al. (2022) suggest how the *dark triad* personality traits of Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy impact stakeholder engagement (e.g., P₂: "A narcissistic stakeholder's self-aggrandizing engagement will tend to subjugate [their] interactee's engagement," p. 1236).

Researchers are also advised to uncover novel dynamics (e.g., by identifying key trends shaping the present or the future), offering opportunities for new theory development (Zaltman, 2000). We therefore urge researchers to prioritize the problematization of pertinent issues that marketers face, which may develop into important new-to-P&M topics (Donthu et al., 2023; Hunt, 1994). Here, it is pivotal to motivate and unpack the topic's importance (i.e., to make a compelling case for the need for it in the field), given its lacking foundation in our discipline to date.

Authors of rejected works, lamentably, tend to let themselves down by failing to adequately problematize and motivate the need for, and value of, their research. To resolve this issue, we advise researchers to thoroughly unpack their topic, whether an existing but under-explored or a new-to-P&M topic (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011; MacInnis, 2017). In this process, perseverance, critical evaluation of one's own work, the willingness to revise one's work, and potential support from colleagues are indispensable. After choosing their topic,

researchers will typically apply an applicable broader (e.g., meso-/macro-foundational) theory to frame the topic (Gilson & Goldberg, 2015; Figure 1). We advise for these to exhibit an elevated topic-theory fit, raising the manuscript's appeal and *interestingness* to editors, reviewers, and readers (MacInnis, 2011). In some cases, authors may apply relevant aspects from multiple (e.g., meso-/macro-foundational) theories (vs. a single theory) to derive integrative insight into the topic. For example, Mele et al. (2014) adopt goods- and service-dominant logic to explore the innovation concept.

Next, key hallmarks characterizing the chosen topic and theory are co-infused or integrated (see center of Figure 1), enabling the advancement of knowledge and representing the crux of conceptual proposition-based research. This systematic topic-theory integration not only helps safeguard the commensurability of the propositions with prior research and secure its contribution (Ulaga et al., 2021), but more practically, also helps guide the propositional development (e.g., by ensuring the theory's comprehensive coverage in the propositions). Based on the framework, we thus advise researchers to (1) thoroughly assess and understand the hallmarks characterizing their chosen topic and theory, and (2) determine and communicate how their theoretical integration advances scholarly and managerial insight, thus moving the field forward (Hollebeek, Kumar, et al., 2023).

Our analyses also raise important managerial implications. For example, by reading and understanding conceptual proposition-based research, practitioners are exposed to new ideas, helping them stay abreast in their role (e.g., by better understanding/predicting new business trends). Specifically, many literature-based concepts that were first published in purely conceptual work (e.g., brand equity, customer engagement, or customer value), have found their way into the boardroom and onto managers' strategic agendas (e.g., Aaker, 1991; Brodie et al., 2011; Keller, 1993; Srivastava et al., 1998; Woodruff, 1997). Our analyses thus facilitate the development of managerial understanding of the nature and characteristics of conceptual proposition-based research, helping them to thrive in their businesses.

4.2 | Limitations and further research

Despite its contribution, this research has several limitations that can be addressed in further research.

First, our theorization focuses on developing widely published conceptual proposition-based research and thus does not address Cornelissen's (2017) narrative- or typology-based conceptual research. Theorists may therefore wish to further explore, or prepare guidelines for, the development of these other conceptual article subtypes, thus extending authors, including Doty and Glick (1994) or Fiss (2011), among others. A level of potential theoretical overlap may also exist between conceptual proposition-based and narrative- or typology-based articles, which also merits further research. For example, a conceptual article may first classify a relevant theoretical entity (e.g., Hollebeek, Hammedi, et al.'s (2023) adoption of the

eustress (vs. distress) typology), followed by the development of propositions that incorporate the proposed or adopted typological subcategories. The development of guidelines for the preparation of such *combinatorial* conceptual articles is likewise recommended.

Second, editors and reviewers typically favor empirically testable (vs. nontestable) propositions. However, as our analyses apply to conceptual proposition-based research, we did not address the transition of propositions to subsequent hypothesis development and testing (Ulaga et al., 2021). While propositions can be used to insightfully summarize un(der)explored theoretical associations, empirical testability tends to incur additional (e.g., methodological) assumptions and requirements, which likewise merit further scrutiny. It can also be challenging to ascertain causality of specific predicted associations (e.g., which comes first), requiring an iterative theorizing process (e.g., to adjust or refine prior assertions or propositions; Brodie & Peters, 2020).

Finally, while the empirical P&M literature is traditionally predicated on the adoption of theory to develop its hypotheses, some authors advocate the conduction of empirical inquiry *without* hypotheses (Graebner et al., 2023), including by taking an empirics-first approach (Golder et al., 2023). These approaches also warrant further exploration vis-à-vis the development and future of conceptual proposition-based research.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

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