

## **Market information and the role of networks in international markets**

**Carl Arthur Solberg**

Norwegian School of Management BI  
Sandvika, Norway

### Abstract

Market information is a major problem in international markets, particularly for small firms and newcomers (Seringhaus and Rosson 1990). This paper discusses two main sources of international market information: objective market research and information provided through network relations. It is posited – in line with sociological economists (Granovetter 1973 and 1985 and Burt 1992) - that this latter source of information in many cases is more reliable and useful than research provided through market research. This stance is however contingent on the quality of the network and the skills of the firm in carrying out or commissioning marketing research. A typology of four different kinds of firms is developed and discussed, based on the two dimensions. The four categories are: the small beginner, the established beginner, the network-oriented firm, the international firm.

## Introduction

Sound marketing decision-making requires information on a range of subjects such as technology, costs of operations, customers, competitors, regulations etc. This information reduces the uncertainty under which decisions are made. For firms operating in international markets – with increased number of unknown factors – the level of uncertainty is normally higher and the subsequent need for information greater than in the domestic market. Yet, exporters' market research seems to be much more subjective and less precise than research in domestic markets (Cavusgil 1985). This paper endeavours to cast light on the role of different kinds of market information to firms operating in international markets. In particular, it will explore “objective” market research as a source of information as opposed to market information acquired through networks, termed “market intelligence” by Diamantopoulos and Souchon (1999).

Marketing research is seen as a key discipline in marketing and any curriculum in marketing includes a compulsory course in marketing research. In spite of this, and in spite of the increased uncertainty in international market environments, exporters seem to exhibit a rather “tepid” stance to systematically gathering information from foreign markets, let alone carrying out marketing research (Diamantopoulos et al, 1990, Schlegelmilch 1993). Drawing on literature on incremental internationalisation (Johanson and Vahlne 1977 and 1990, Bilkey and Tesar 1978, Cavusgil 1984) two explanations may be offered: 1) exporters, and in particular newcomers to foreign markets, generally lack the resources necessary to carry out market research of any magnitude (Douglas and Craig 1983); 2) exporters also lack the necessary insight into relevant local marketing issues, making it challenging for export management to define the *real* need for information to make sound decisions. It is maintained

in this paper that the lack of research by exporters does not necessarily harm their export development and that the insistence by academicians and consultants that market research should be obligatory before entering any new market is not only exaggerated, but it may in some instances also be counterproductive.

The paper will after a brief literature review, develop a model and discuss implications for research.

### Literature review

Market oriented firms achieve supposedly better performance than firms that are not, and collection of market information is a key variable in explaining market orientation of the firm (Kohli and Jaworski 1990, Narver and Slater 1990). Therefore it is important to study the processes to acquire market information. Moorman (1995) discusses different aspects of market information processes, suggesting that they take place at the individual level and organisational level. However, she fails to introduce the interorganisational level of information processes, which is the hallmark of this paper. She also divides the information process into four distinct phases: acquisition, transmission, utilisation and implementation. Nonetheless, the perhaps most important phase in any market information gathering project, problem definition, was left out in her discussion. We believe that neglecting this important phase of the marketing research project will lead us to overlook a major issue in *international* marketing research: the emic (culture specific) vs etic (pan-cultural) approach in research (Douglas and Craig 1983). As a result, inexperienced firms in international markets risk to end up with ill-defined projects when they are confronted with new and unknown marketing situations.

A number of authors discuss information behaviour of exporters. Diamantopoulos and Souchon (1999) identify three sources of export market information: market research, export assistance and market intelligence and develop and test measures of these information sources in relation to the use of information (conceptual/instrumental and symbolic use). Hart, Webb and Jones (1994) divide international market information into three categories: 1) Market feasibility information; 2) Adaptation information and 3) Country background information. They find that the use of international market research is “rather marginal”. Benito, Solberg and Welch (1993) discuss four categories of market information according to degree of formality and use (ad hoc decisions or continual surveillance). They found in a survey of Norwegian exporters that informal information gathering prevail and that formal market intelligence systems are rather rarely established. Based on the same data, it has been found that the more the firm is knowledgeable about international markets, the more it appears to seek market information (Solberg and Andersen 1991). Furthermore, Benito et al (1993) observe that information from customers and partners and sales subsidiaries by far outweigh any other sources, and that use of consultants (market research) and export assistance relatively seldom are used by exporters. The larger the firm, the more formal the information gathering procedures, and the more export dependent the more the firms tend to use internal sources. McAuly (1990) found that experienced exporters tended to concentrate their information gathering activities on relatively fewer sources than newcomers, the explanation being that “it takes time to identify and screen those sources which are most relevant and useful” (p. 60).

Also type of business seems to play a role. In a study of market orientation in Norwegian shipping companies Solberg (1988) found that only four out of 22 companies used marketing

research, all of them being in the cruise or liner business. The remainder, generally in tanker, bulk or car shipping only occasionally or not at all resorted to market research, suggesting that (international) market research is a function of industry. In the bulk markets (such as tanker shipping for instance) or in industrial markets with a limited number of players (such as car shipping), the need for “objective market research” is marginal. Two different explanations may be offered: In the first case – given the relatively atomistic structure of that market - most of the information is embedded in the price; in the second case – a market characterised by close relationships between buyers and sellers – information is to a larger extent gathered through the network.

In a survey of US multinationals, Keegan (1974) found that the lion’s share of the information gathered from international markets is based on person-to-person informal sources. The study highlights the relatively modest role of documentary information such as publications, information services, reports and letters. None of the managers in that survey used any form of formal system for monitoring published information, the result of which was duplication and redundant monitoring within the same organisation. Also, the respondents were divided concerning their interest in such a system. One may conclude from the survey that formal information gathering from foreign markets is seldom being implemented in US multinationals.

Concerning the role of marketing research as such, it has been alleged that managers and market analysts represent two distinct “worlds” or communities (Deshpandé and Zaltman 1982 and 1984), the former seeing themselves as businessmen and the latter as scientists, each with separate norms and languages. For instance Martilla and Carvey (1975) note that problems arise because words have different meanings in the two groups. Terms such as

“correlation”, “significance”, “standard deviation” and “variance” are probably present only as faint reminiscences in the minds of managers, whereas they for researchers have distinct meanings. The result of this divergence between the two “camps” is often mutual mistrust between them (Caplan, Morrison and Stambaugh 1975), which in turn may lead to underutilisation of both market research as such and – if carried out – its results. It could also lead to “a clash of professional values as to how much research is needed and to what degree it should replace or complement managerial intuition” (Desphandé and Zaltman 1984, p. 33).

In fact the inclination of managers to trust their intuition rather than relying on “hard facts” extracted from market research is often observed. This intuition is generally based on long experience in operating in the market, discussing with their peers in the industry and their own observation of effects of their decisions and ability to implement them. If carried out, market research is often used symbolically to justify decisions already made (Diamantopoulos and Souchon 1999). The role of interaction between the two communities has been confirmed by Deshpandé and Zaltman (1984). This factor plays a major part in explaining the use of market research in firms, followed by political acceptability of the results. In other words, if managers like what they see, then they will use the results; if not, well .....

Hart and Diamantopoulos (1993) investigated performance effects of international market research among British manufacturing firms, finding at the outset no correlation between extent of use of market research – both in house and commissioned - and company performance. Contrary to their expectations they did not find any difference between large and small firms in this respect. Nor did they find any difference between high and low performers concerning type of information and source of information. It is worth while noting that it is not necessarily the market research activity as such that counts, rather “the crucial

question is *how good* is the information and *how effectively* it is used” (Hart and Diamantopoulos 1993, p. 68). This is in line with Cooper (1988) and Hill (1990) who – in a product development setting (in many respects akin to a market development, ie. export, setting) – found that market research as such was not a significant discriminator between successful and failed product launches; however, the quality of its execution was.

Gripsrud, Solberg and Ulvnes (2000) found in a survey of firms in the Norwegian food and forest-based industry that exporter trust in foreign channel partner significantly impacts on use of sources: the higher the trust, the more the exporter relies on the partner to be informed about local market conditions. They also note that different sources of information contribute differently to the ability of exporters to develop viable strategies (measured as export performance), depending on the length of relationship with the partner. Unpublished data from the same study reveal that commissioned market research correlates *negatively* and significantly with export performance in cases of firms with limited relations with their foreign channel partner, and positively and significantly when relations between exporters and their partners have lasted longer than five years. One possible explanation to this pattern may be sought in the ability of the exporter to define research issues relevant to each local market situation. One may contend that the longer experience in the market, the more capable the exporter is to comprehend the details in the market and to commission relevant research. The data also suggest that resources explain the use of commissioned market research: the larger the firm (in terms of sales volume) the more its use of market research.

Thus, two factors seem to impact on information behaviour of exporters: their resources (in terms of size and management capabilities) and their trust in their local representative. Such trust may be institutional either through explicit and/or implicit contracts or arrangements

(Granovetter 1985), or through institutions external to the partners such as legislation (Zucker 1986). Trust may also be gained through long-term relationships (Morgan and Hunt 1994, Håkanson and Snehota 1995).

Rangan (1998), discussing information behaviour, introduces the cost of search and deliberation, arguing that firms relying on their networks are better equipped to identify business opportunities than firms relying on “objective” market research only. Referring to Granovetter (1973) he maintains (p. 6) that “[s]uch networks can aid efficient and successful search because they are more likely to interconnect actors with non-redundant and pertinent information. ...in reality, networks offer a cost-effective way of enhancing the probability of uncovering at least some of the relevant but latent economic opportunities out there”. In the same vein Burt (1992) states that:

“There are limits to the volume of information you can use intelligently. You can keep up with only so many books, articles, memos, and news services. Given a limit to the volume of information that anyone can process, the network becomes an important *screening* device. It is an army of people processing information who can call your attention to key bits – keeping you up to date on developing opportunities, warning you of impending disasters. This second-hand information is often fuzzy or inaccurate, but it serves to signal something to be looked into more carefully” (p. 62, emphasis added).

The main argument is that information search is made possible and economical through social and professional networks, and the commitment and trust inherent in such networks ensures the reliability of the information provided. Networks are defined by Thorelli (1994) as “links involving economic performance, technology transfer, diffusion of know-how and expertise, and forging or exploitation of trust and the flow of legitimacy” (p. 447). Discussing trusted informants (through social networks) with whom one has previous business experience, Rangan (1998) cites Granovetter (1985, p. 490) stating that:

“This is better information for four reasons: (1) it is cheap; (2) one trusts one’s own information best -- it is richer, more detailed and known to be accurate; (3) individuals with whom one has a continuing relation have an economic motivation to be trustworthy; and (4) departing from pure economic motives, continuing economic relations often become overlaid with social content that carries strong expectations of trust and abstention from opportunism”.

Conversely, extending on Rangan (1998) one may assert that independent market research involving definition, identification, gathering, assessment and distribution of information - in the absence of social networks as is often the case of international marketing - is not only more costly, but also associated with more uncertainty than recurring to the information embedded in social networks. As a consequence, firms with managers that actively use their networks in order to get information or verify it may experience lower information costs and/or superior information quality than firms without such networks.

Newcomers to international markets without any history with their partners must however recur to “institutional trust” (Zucker 1989) or make use of an extended network stretching it beyond the immediate range of their relations. One may expect the links to the extended network members to give reliable information because of the embedded nature of the network relations. According to Granovetter (1985) it is too costly for any member to engage in malfeasance and opportunism because cheating will damage one’s reputation. He observes that close-knit communities of traders “generate clearly defined standards of behaviour easily policed by the quick spread of information about instances of malfeasance” (p. 492). Therefore it seems critical for exporters new to a market to get an inroad into extended networks where they can access trusted information. It is here relevant to draw on Granovetter’s (1973, 1982) and others’ discussion on the strength of different ties. Granovetter (1973, p. 1361) assert that: “the strength of a tie is a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding) and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie”. Baker (1992, p. 400) uses the terms

“thick “ and “thin” networks depending on the following factors: task related communication, informal socializing, advice-giving and advice-taking, promotion decisions etc.

We may in this context distinguish different levels of network relations:

1. Primary networks relations where the player is directly dependent on its network partners (ie. direct supplier or customer, intermediary etc).
2. Secondary network relations where the player is indirectly dependent on its network partners (ie. subcontractor to the suppliers or customer’s customer). Indirect network relations are accessed through direct relations, described by Burt as “ports of access to clusters of people beyond” (p. 69).
3. Tertiary relationships where no immediate dependence is observed, but where actors through linkage to their primary or secondary networks may be in a position to offer information or a mediating role (for instance suggesting a potential partner in an unexplored market). Examples are here trade associations, rotary or sport clubs, alumni associations, ethnic diasporas etc. We believe it is particularly this latter extended network that is relevant for newcomers to foreign markets.

Through the referencing mechanisms built in the institutional arrangements embedded in such networks it is possible to access critical information even through tertiary network relations. We may say with (Granovetter 1985, p. 489) that “[i]nstitutional arrangements do not produce trust but instead are functional substitutes for it”. Thus exporters new to a market may make shortcuts to information without having to incur large outlays in form of for example commissioned market research. Also, Johanson and Mattson (1988) suggest that “if the suppliers, customers and competitors of the firm are international even the purely domestic

firm has a number of indirect relations with foreign networks. Relationships in the domestic market may be driving forces to enter foreign markets. The firm can be ‘pulled out’ by customers or suppliers... the (international) extension pattern will be partly explained by the international character of indirect relations” (p. 302).

Finally Granovetter’s (1973 and 1982) concept of the strength of weak ties should be discussed. Weak ties may be in the present context defined as relations with firms or individuals that are nurtured at least once a year (Granovetter 1973), and that constitute alternative and correctional viewpoints to the information acquired through strong ties (with for instance primary relations as noted above). We believe that many of the tertiary relationships are to be considered as weak ties, constituting an interesting, supplementary source of information to exporters. Through weak ties - the exporter may access information giving alternative perspectives on the issues at hand. The task of the exporter is then to “economize” with its management time to build a structure of network relations that are non-redundant (Burt 1992), enhancing the richness of information available to exporters. Such networks should include both strong and weak ties, or in the above taxonomy primary, secondary and tertiary relations.

### Model development and propositions

Based on this brief review we suggest a typology of exporters and discuss key features concerning their information behaviour and strategy development. Figure 1 gives a rough idea of the main characteristics of the different categories in the model. We will in the following describe each cell in more detail.

<i>“Objective” market research</i>	<b>Extensive</b>	<b><i>The established beginner</i></b>  Nationally oriented firms that need info for their first steps abroad. Risk to make “good” research on irrelevant issues.	<b><i>The international firm</i></b>  Large internationally oriented firms. Well developed market intelligence systems.
	<b>Limited</b>	<b><i>The small beginner</i></b>  No experience and network. Risk to make poor marketing decisions, based on intuition and hearsay.	<b><i>The network oriented firm</i></b>  Ethnic or special trades firms basing their decisions on info from trusted networks.
		<b>Undeveloped</b>	<b>Well developed</b>
<b><i>Network relations</i></b>			

Figure 1: Typology of exporter information behaviour

#### The small beginner

In this cell we find firms with limited resources deterring them from engaging in marketing research to identify business opportunities abroad (Douglas and Craig 1983, Seringhaus and Rosson 1990). Resources in this context must be understood broadly: both financial resources (or willingness to pay consultants for market research) and managerial ability to define and carry out marketing research in foreign markets, either themselves or through consultants. These companies also lack the necessary primary or secondary network relations that potentially could help them to uncover foreign market opportunities. Tertiary relations, through trade associations, rotary clubs or the like, could potentially make the link to foreign market opportunities. The first steps to internationalise will in any case be hesitant, with lack of information, scant network often established coincidentally (Johanson and Vahlne 1977,

Wiedersheim-Paul and Welch 1979). The unsolicited order (Wiedersheim-Paul and Welch 1979) may play the role of the emerging network, which slowly will build around the activities of the exporter. Export assistance (Diamantopoulos and Souchon 1999) may also play a part in this phase, inviting the exporter to tie up with networks otherwise inaccessible to the exporter and providing it with meaningful information. The ability of the exporter to capitalise on these resources (networks and information) may vary with its management orientation (for instance entrepreneurial, market oriented or bureaucratic, cf. Selnes and Hårvik 1991). The case of the Norwegian furniture manufacturer, Stompa Møbler, could be a case in point: the managing director of this firm explicitly told an audience that he did not believe in market research! It was too costly, it did not tell him anything that he did not know, and it was using a language that deterred his firm from reading it. His first involvement in international market back in the 1970s was a “reluctant contract” with a French mail order distributor whom he met at a Trade Fair in Copenhagen. This firm had since gradually “climbed the internationalisation ladder” and has developed a good market position in countries like UK and Germany.

#### The established beginner

These firms have a good market position at home, and have for various reasons (globalisation, increased competition, technological advances etc) decided to expand internationally. Since their foreign network is limited – given their domestic orientation – they need to recur to market research to uncover market opportunities abroad. Often they have decided on what country to enter without any deep investigation, and the research carried out is mainly concerned with identifying a local representative.

Given their leadership position in their domestic market, these firms have often a qualified staff of middle managers and analysts that could engage in market research, either on their own or through externally commissioned research projects. However, according to Diamantopoulos et al (1990) and Schlegelmilch et al (1993) only one in two exporters conducts any form of marketing research, and even fewer engage external consultants to do so. Also, their leadership position may make these firms believe that they are “invincible” and that they can transfer their successful domestic marketing practices to other countries. David Ricks’ (1983) “Big Business Blunders” gives a good account of ill-defined international marketing projects committed by well-known market leaders. The reason for many of these flaws lies primarily in faulty marketing research, underestimating local idiosyncracies in the problem definition phase of the research project (cfr the emic approach, Douglas and Craig 1983). Network relations, although not the universal remedy to this situation, could potentially give direction to the research. Obviously, focus groups in the initial phases are one other way of achieving relevance to the research (Douglas and Craig 1983).

Firms in this cell may have well developed domestic networks, and may be skilful in monitoring and controlling their local domestic marketing activities. However, entering new markets, these attributes fall short of relevance. A case in point may be the Norwegian fast moving consumer goods supplier Stabburet who when entering the US market with its crispbread totally failed: they believed that the states in the US Midwest richly populated with Scandinavian descendents would embrace a traditional dish from the “old motherland”. They did some research, but not on the issues that really counted: the marketability of the proposed concept to its suggested target audience. Only after “going by the textbook” – using focus groups to develop an adapted concept - the venture started to show results (Solberg 1999).

## The network firm

This group of firms consists of a variety of different kinds of trades, anything from suppliers to ethnic shop-keepers who buy from their country of origin, to diamond traders. In Norway, the domicile of the author, both the shipping and the fishing industries have a large percentage of players who fall into this category. These are the trades where million dollar deals can be sealed over the telephone and where trust is a hallmark of the relationships between business partners. The reliability of the information provided through this network is ascertained by the transparency of the network and the need for all members to maintain their good reputation (Granovetter 1985). Contrary to the assumption by neoclassic economists, Uzzi (1997) in his study of New York textile manufacturers' network found that embedded relationships indeed are rational through positive effects like trust, fine grained information transfer and joint problem solving arrangements. He asserts that: "embeddedness creates economic opportunities that are difficult to replicate via markets, contracts, or vertical integration." (p. 37). He also shows how trust promotes access to "privileged and difficult to price resources that enhance competitiveness but are difficult to exchange in arm's length ties" (p. 43). Based on this train of thought we will assert that firms with limited resources, and that trade through trusted network members, both directly and indirectly access information that is embedded in the network. This information is not necessarily explicit, rather the trust embedded in the network relations may act as a proxy to unpronounced market information. The cost of checking the reliability of the information thus provided has to be traded off against the risks of not collecting additional information (Stigler 1968).

The downside of close relationship with one's network partners is the risk of being entangled in relations that represent technologies / organizational solutions that become obsolete. For

smaller firms this risk is possibly higher as they have limited resources to develop alternative sources of information, or in the words of Granovetter (1973) to develop weak ties. The relatively higher uncertainty of export markets calls for personal relationships based on trust opening up for the risk of getting locked in with a partner that lacks relevant knowledge to develop the market further for the exporter. The main information problem with trusting a partner is that "... all links between the customer and supplier activities make it more difficult for both parties to establish alternative links and ties as the companies becomes embedded into specific others" (c.f. Håkansson and Snehota 2000, p. 81). The more a firm is engrained in a network, and the more this network represents a set of beliefs or a paradigm that are challenged by the development in competing networks, the more the firm risks to lose out in the future.

A special case of network relationships is represented by the diaspora of ethnic networks. The best examples may be found among Jewish tradesmen who for centuries have been spread out in almost any corner of the world. Migrations of Pakistanis, Chinese, Turks and Indians have during the last half of 20<sup>th</sup> century also opened up new trading routes. It has for example been maintained that a large part of the Chinese trade surplus with the USA is due to the Chinese diaspora on the US West coast (Kotkin 1992). The underlying hypothesis is that the cultural closeness and the built-in loyalty and trust to people of the same ethnicity reduce the uncertainty normally surrounding business transactions and that it is easier to build relations based on this kind of common denominator. For a Norwegian it is easier to develop business relations with another Norwegian domiciled in Egypt, than with an Egyptian. A case in point may be the Norwegian fish trader who wanted to expand in East Europe. Through friends in Norway he got in contact with a Norwegian businessman married to a Romanian woman and settled in Bucuresti. His local compatriot carried out some investigation and

made the link for him with Romanian importers. He visited the market and selected his local representative in Romania who eventually appeared to be a reliable and invaluable a business partner.

#### The international firm

Firms in this cell have developed dense international business network relations and carry out international market research, both to acquire information about new opportunities and to control their on-going business operations. These firms are supposedly (large) multinationals. They will *per force* need to control a variety of aspects of their international marketing activities: competitors, customer satisfaction and loyalty, sales people attitudes at the distributor level, buyer preferences etc. and need to recur to dedicated market research in order to unveil potential opportunities and flaws in their operations. Some of this information will supposedly be readily transferred through informal discussions with network members. Schlegelmich et al (1993) found a positive relationship between effectiveness of international promotion and use of international market research but not with other marketing mix elements). They also found that international sales ratio and number of markets served is positively linked to export market research. On this background we suggest that this research in the main is carried out by large, multinational firms in order to provide them with information relevant to develop, control and monitor the promotional activities of the firm. Also, the setting up of a comprehensive and formal market intelligence system including both ad hoc market analysis and continuous market surveillance is expected to be observed in this group of firms (Benito et al 1993), possibly along the lines suggested by Kotler (1994) consisting of marketing intelligence, marketing research, internal records and marketing decision support systems. Kotler (1994) describes in this context Hewlett-Packard's Market Research and Information Center with some 30 professionals, also using outside research

supplier partners, and carrying out a number of different tasks. These consist of providing background information on industries, markets and competition and carrying out in-house ad hoc research both centrally and locally in order to identify opportunities, test proposals and track results. However, even though he illustrates how a marketing information system may be set up, Kotler's (1994) description is limited to the internal *supply* of information services, and not how different levels and functions inside HP's organisation take part in the dissemination and usage of the information. This is the hallmark of Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Narver and Slater (1990) in their analyses of market oriented firms.

### Conclusions

This paper has discussed two main sources of information for decisions in international markets, one based on objective market research, the other on information provided through networks. It may shine through that the latter source is preferred by this author. However, such a conclusion would be quite remarkable coming from a marketing scholar. Rather the conclusion is that the usefulness of marketing research is contingent on the ability of the firm to 1) define the issues to be researched properly and 2) its skills in carrying out the research and use its results as such. It has been alleged in this paper that the first contingency may in part hinge on the firm's network in international markets. Another point made is that firms without any satisfactory network tying it up with international markets, and with limited skills in market research will have great problems in getting properly started on their internationalisation process. It may rather happen in a fortuitous way (Wiedersheim Paul and Welch 1979) and *may* be positive for the firm if – given appropriate advice by for instance governmental export promotion agencies - it is fortunate enough to find the right partner in its first export endeavour.

A number of research questions may flow from this model:

1. How do firms in the different cells of the model make decisions? For instance, will the small export beginner make more short cuts to export marketing decisions (given limited information base) than firms in the other cells, or will they more actively than other firms seek advice from external export promotion agencies? To what extent does “information shortcutting” lead them into ill-defined strategies?
2. Is there a particular pattern of development toward the upper right cell?
3. What network relations – primary, secondary or tertiary - are most frequently used by firms in the four different cells? Does the effect on the firms’ ability to make sound export decision vary with the three different kinds of network?
4. Given that information leads to successful exporting (Gripsrud et al 2000), are firms in the “international firm” cell more successful than those in the other cells? And are firms in the “small beginner” cell the least successful?
5. Do firms in the network-oriented cell operate in industries that are more stable and more foreseeable, reducing the need to supplement information provided through the network in order to get “second opinions”?
6. Do international network relations enhance exporters’ ability to properly define international market research projects? To what extent do firms use focus groups when they enter new and unknown international markets?

As far as we know, these research questions remain unanswered and open the up a plethora of new research to be engaged in concerning international information behaviour of firms.

## References

- Baker, Wayne E., 1992, "The Network Organization in Theory and Practice", in Nohria, Nitin and Robert Eccles (eds), *Networks and Organizations*, Boston Massachusetts, Harvard Business School Press.
- Benito, Gabriel R. G., Carl Arthur Solberg, Lawrence Welch, 1993, "Exploration of Information Behaviour of Norwegian Exporters", *International Journal of Information Management*, 13, p.
- Bilkey, Warren and George Tesar, 1977, "The Export Behavior of Smaller-Sized Wisconsin Based Manufacturing Firms", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 8,
- Burt, Roland S., 1992, "The Social Structure of Competition", in Nohria, Nitin and Robert Eccles (eds), *Networks and Organizations*, Boston Massachusetts, Harvard Business School Press.
- Caplan, N., A. Morrison and R. J. Stambaugh, , 1975, *The Use of Social Science Knowledge in Public Policy Decisions at the National Level*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Institute for Social Research.
- Cavusgil, S. Tamer, 1984, "Differences Among Exporting Firms Based on their Degree of Internationalization", *Journal of Business Research*, 12.
- Cooper, R. G., 1988, The New Product Process: A decision Guide for Managers", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol 3. Spring, 238-55.
- Deshpandé, Rohit and Gerald Zaltman, "Factors Affecting the Use of Market Research Information: A Path Analysis", *Journal of Marketing Research*, 19 (February), 14-31.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1984, "A Comparison of Factors Affecting Researcher and Manager Perceptions of Market Research Use", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol 21 (February), 32-38.
- Diamantopoulos, Adamantios, Bodo B. Schlegelmilch, C. Allpress, 1990, "aExport Marketing Research in Practice: A Comparison of Users and Non Users", *Journal of Marketing Management*, 6 (3), 257-273.
- Diamantopoulos, Adamantios and Anne L. Souchon, 1999, "Measuring Export Information Use: Scale Development and Validation", *Journal of Business Research*, 46, 1-14.
- Douglas, Susan P. and C. S. Craig, 1983, *International Market Research*, Prentice Hall.
- Granovetter, Mark, 1973, "The Strength of Weak Ties", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 78 (6), p. 1360-80.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1982, "A Network Theory Revisited", *Sociological Theory* 1.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1985, "Economic action and Social Structure: the Problem of Embeddedness", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 91 (3), p. 481-510.
- Gripsrud, Geir, Carl Arthur Solberg and Arne Morten Ulvnes, 2000, "The Role of Trust in Shaping Information Behavior of Norwegian Exporters", in Hagedoorn, J. (ed), EIBA Annual Conference, December, Maastricht, Netherlands.
- Håkansson, H. and Snehota I.,
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2000. "The IMP-Perspective", in Sheth, J.N. and Parvatiar, A. (eds.), *Handbook of Relationship Marketing*, Sage.
- Hart, Susan and Adamantios Diamantopoulos, 1993, "Marketing Research Activity and Company Performance: Evidence from Manufacturing Industry", *European Journal of Marketing*, 25 (5), 54-72.
- Hart, Susan, Webb, J. R. and W. V. Jones, 1994, "Export Marketing Research and the Effect of Export Experience in Industrial SMEs", *International Marketing Review*, 11(6), 4-22.

- Hill, N., 1990, "Commodity Products and Stalemate Industries: Is There a Role for Marketing?", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 5, Spring, 259-82.
- Jaffe, Eugene D., 1979, "Multinational Marketing Intelligence: An Information Requirements Model", *Management International Review*, 19 (2), 53-60.
- Johanson, Jan and Lars Gunnar Mattson, 1988, "International Marketing and Internationalisation Processes – A Network Approach", in Peter W. Turnbull and Stan J. Paliwoda (eds), *Research in International Marketing*, Croom Helm, London, UK.
- Johanson, Jan and Jan-Erik Vahlne, 1977, "The Internationalization Process of the Firm – A Model of Knowledge Development and Increasing Foreign Commitments", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 8 (2).
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1990, "Mechanisms of Internationalization", *International Marketing Review*, Fall.
- Keegan, Warren J, 1974, "Multinational Scanning: A Study of the Information Sources Utilized by Headquarters Executives in Multinational Companies", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 9, 411-421.
- Kleinschmidt, E. J. and R. E. Ross, 1984, "Export Performance and Foreign Market Information: Relationships for Small High Technology Firms", *Canadian Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*, 2(4), 8-23.
- Koh, A. C., 1991, "An Evaluation of International Marketing Research Planning in United States Export Firms", *Journal of Global Marketing*, 4 (3), 7-25.
- Kohli, Ajay and Bernard J. Jaworski, 1990, "Market Orientation: the Construct, Research Propositions and Managerial Implications", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol 54 (April), p. 1-18.
- Kotkin, Joel, 1992, *Tribes. How race, religion and identity determine success in the new global economy*, Random House, New York.
- Kotler, Philip, 1994, *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning Implementation and Control*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.
- Martilla, J. A. and D. W. Carvey, 1975, "Four Subtle Sins in Marketing Research", *Journal of Marketing*, 39 (January), 8-15.
- McAuley, A, 1993, "The Perceived Usefulness of Export Information Sources", *European Journal of Marketing*, 27, 52-64.
- Morgan, Robert M. & Hunt, Shelby D. (1994) "The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, 58 (July) 20-38.
- Moorman, Christine, 1995, "Organizational Market Information Processes: Cultural Antecedents and New Product Outcomes", *Journal of Marketing research*, 32 (August), 318-335.
- Narver, John, and Stan F. Slater, 1990, "The Effects of a Market Orientation on Business Profitability", *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 54 (October), p. 20-35.
- Rangan, S., 1998, "The Problem of Search and Deliberation in International Exchange: Exploring Multinationals' Network Advantages", Working paper, INSEAD, Fontainebleau, France.
- Ricks, David A., 1983, *Big Blunders in International Business: Mistakes in Multinational Marketing*, Dow Jones – Irwin, Homewood, Illinois.
- Schlegelmilch, Bodo, B. Adamantios Diamantopoulos, and K Tse, 1993, "Determinants of Export Marketing Research Usage: Testing some Hypotheses on UK Exporters", in *Perspectives on Marketing Management III*, Michael J. Baker (ed), J. Wiley and Sons, New York.

Selnes, Fred and Haldor Hårvik, 1991, "Stort behov for markedsorientering i norske bedrifter", *Praktisk Økonomi og Ledelse*, nr. 3.

Seringhaus, F. H. and Philip J. Rosson, 1990, *Government Export Promotion*, Routledge.

Sinkula, J. M., 1994, "Market Information Processing and Organizational Learning", *Journal of Marketing*, 58 (19), 35-45.

Solberg, Carl Arthur, 1988, "Markedsorientering i norske rederibedrifter: En vurdering av forholdet mellom markedsinformasjon, strategisk planlegging og risiko", Working Paper 1988/30, Norwegian School of Management BI.

Solberg, Carl Arthur and Bjørn H. Andersen, 1991, "Informasjonsadferd i norske eksportbedrifter", PM, Norwegian School of Management BI, Sandvika, Norway.

Stigler, George, 1968, *The Organization of Industry*, Homewood, IL, Richard D. Irwin.

Thorelli, Hans,

Uzzi, Brian, 1997, "Social Structure and Competition in Interfirm Networks: The Paradox of Embeddedness", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42: 35-67.

Wiederheim-Paul Finn and Lawrence S. Welch, 1979, "Initial Exports: A Marketing Failure?", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 17 (4),

Zucker, Lynne, 1986, "Production of Trust: Institutional Sources of Economic Structure, 1840-1920" in L. L. Cummings and Barry Stein, eds, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, vol. 8, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, pp. 53-112.