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THE EFFECTS OF INFORMATION UTILIZATION ON CORPORATE DECISION-MAKING AND EXPORT PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

THE EFFECTS OF INFORMATION UTILIZATION ON CORPORATE DECISION-MAKING AND EXPORT PERFORMANCE

This study investigates if companies that actively use export information have higher export growth rates or greater satisfaction with export performance measures than non-users. Organizational communication structures relating to information flow to decision makers is investigated to provide further insight into the role of export information. The study is based upon the knowledge utilization theory which states company/user characteristics are as important to information utilization as the characteristics of the specific piece of information.

Bivariate analysis does not indicate a direct relationship between information use and reported higher export growth rates over the past four years. However, there are indications of divergence in how information users and non-users view and utilize information.

One critical finding is that information users have a statistically significant relationship toward symbolic utilization of export information. Additional differences were observed in third-party information use versus monitoring world news to evaluate export operations. The study investigates company characteristics against the three components of knowledge utilization (instrumental, conceptual and symbolic use) and the five components of information use (competitive advantage, information acquisition/need, influence of information on decision-making, organizational learning and organizational knowledge/information processing).

Trond Breien Peersen

October 24, 2002

Keywords: Export information, international business, decision-making,
knowledge utilization, communication

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THE EFFECTS OF INFORMATION UTILIZATION ON CORPORATE
DECISION-MAKING AND EXPORT PERFORMANCE

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THESIS

Trond Breien Peersen

The Graduate School
University of Kentucky

2002

THE EFFECTS OF INFORMATION UTILIZATION ON CORPORATE
DECISION-MAKING AND EXPORT PERFORMANCE

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for a degree of Master of Arts
in the College of Communications and Information Studies
at the University of Kentucky

By

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2002

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Dedicated to the few who believe in the power of
humanity to overcome the chains of political, economic
and religious indifference that serve as an excuse for inaction.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Background

The number of nations, and the percentage of these nations economies that is dependent on the global marketplace have grown at a phenomenal pace over the past 30 years. The rate of integration has previously never been witnessed as nearly all components of national economies are being inexorably linked to the global economy. This period of economic transformation has not been without political and social ramifications. For example, social, political or economic crisis in one market can have repercussions in markets across the globe. Yet, the economic transformation of the world also opens the door to countless opportunities, as everyone's access to new markets grows and economic expansion is fostered. In this era of economic transformation, international business is undergoing fundamental changes. As the barriers to trade are eroded, the advantages of multi-national companies over small- and medium-sized organizations is becoming less of a factor. Communications and information technologies are underwriting cost-effective international business operations and the drive to open markets. The forces of globalization are spurring national economies to optimize production, specializing in those markets where local industries, and by extension local society, can generate competitive advantage. For example, the textile industry has disappeared from the United States to countries with cheaper labor forces. Yet, the United States has offset the potential negative economic impact by developing new high technology sectors, such as computer chip manufacturing and the biochemistry sector.

For the U.S. market the numbers are staggering. In 1997 exports of manufactured products and services accounted for slightly more than 10 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP). Achieving the 10 percent export level may not seem like much, until you consider that by the fall of 2002 the U.S. economy represented one-third of the global economy. Between 1984 and 1994, U.S. exports rose by 112 percent, while GNP grew only 25 percent. During this time, exports generated an estimated 5 million new jobs (Ryen & Zelle, 1997, p. 7). For every billion dollars of export growth, the U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that 20,000 new jobs are created (Fram & Ajami, 1994, p. 33). The U.S. portion of the global economy is twice that of its

nearest competitor, Germany. The U.S. exported more than \$700 billion in 1997, and imported more than \$900 billion in that same year (Ferrier, 2002).

In the 1990s, the strong U.S. position in the global economy underwrote the longest economic expansion in the nations history. The strength of the U.S. economy allowed for the expansion, irrespective of a dropping overall share of world trade. In 1975, the U.S. share of world trade was 15.4 percent. This declined to 12.3 percent in 1988 and 12.2 percent in 1991 (Javalgi, White & Lee, 2000, p. 217). As other nations expanded their involvement in the global economy by selling to the U.S., continued purchase by the U.S. consumer lead to an ever-increasing trade deficit. Today the trade deficit is estimated to be around \$300 billion a year. Throughout the 1990s the deficit was offset by record amounts of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) entering the U.S. market as foreign individuals and companies invested in the strong American economy.

In the past two years, U.S. incoming FDI has been in a steady decline, which was subsequently accelerated by the burst of the Internet stock market bubble. No longer can FDI be depended upon to offset the continuing trade deficit. As a result, the U.S. economy has to find other means to alleviate the macro economic risks of running a trade deficit. Exporting is the natural tool to offset such risks. The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates there are 18,000 U.S. companies that have the potential to export, but for a myriad of reasons, are not exporting (Wood & Goolsby, 1987, p. 43). This translates to 85 percent of U.S. manufacturers not exporting at a time when global markets for manufactured goods are projected to see a twenty-year growth cycle as the forces of globalization initiates worldwide economic expansion (Pagell & Cronin., 1994, p. 53; Javalgi et al., 2000, pp. 217-218). Furthermore, there are no reliable numbers in regards to what degree current exporters are meeting their market potential overseas. Most exporters remain happy exporting to a limited number of markets, often being in those markets for personal reasons of the decision makers within the organization, as opposed to reasons based upon market opportunity. In both cases of non-exporting or under-exporting, the effect upon the national U.S. economy is one of limiting the national productivity capacity. Transformation of non-exporting companies into exporters and expansion of under-exporters to meet foreign market demand can have a dramatic effect on balancing the trade imbalance of the U.S. national market and spur further economic expansion domestically and overseas.

The trade imbalance and the preceding figures reflecting the importance of international trade to the U.S. economy are two issues which have caused public policy makers and academicians to pay considerable attention to the export component of the economy. Furthermore, a resultant variety of export related studies have provided the basis for an expansion in export promotion over the past three decades (Dosoglu-Guner, 1999, pp. 45-46). A driving export factor for the individual company is research indicating that exporting raises productivity rates 30 to 50 percent above non-exporting rates. Data also suggests that exporters benefit from annual growth rates that are 3 to 11 percent higher than non-exporters (Tell, 1996, p. 3). Being an exporter does not require the advantage of size. The U.S. Department of Commerce has found that 96 percent of all U.S. exporters have less than 500 employees.

While the number of U.S. exporters grew during the expansion of the 1990s, the pace did not keep the trade deficit in check. During economic expansion, would-be-exporters often choose to concentrate on the productive home market rather than venturing overseas. The decision not to go overseas further eroded the position of U.S. manufacturers in the global market, as foreign competitors gained foreign sales territory and threatened U.S. companies within the national market. Despite intense scrutiny into why, when and how companies export, the question still remains one of how to entice more potential exporters to begin exporting.

Foreign market information has been identified as a key determinant of a company's success in developing international business. In fact, the U.S. Department of Commerce asserts that "accurate, timely knowledge" is a principal requirement for a successful export program (Belich & Dubinsky, 1995, p. 1). Despite empirical data stressing the importance of information to the exporter, only a fraction of export research has investigated aspects of how organizations respond to and process export information. The majority of studies have investigated information acquisition as opposed to information utilization. Of the research into information utilization and the effect upon corporate communication structures and influence upon decision-making, the majority of work has been conducted in Europe and North America.

Research Questions and Prior Constructs

Germane to the investigation of organizational processing of export information is the need to combine theories from the academic disciplines of communications and business. Information science, a specialty within the field of communication, offers a bountiful background into how individuals and organizations interact with information. Simultaneously, the business field of marketing has an extensive array of research into the process of international business. Research that seeks to go beyond the investigation of acquisition of export information has to take into account relevant theories from both of the previously mentioned academic disciplines. Central to research in this project is the knowledge utilization theory, which simply states that company/user characteristics are as important to information utilization as the characteristics of the specific piece of information (Menon & Varadarajan., 1992: Backer, 1993).

This study is based on the hypothesis that active users of export information will perform better in export profitability or exhibit higher satisfaction levels toward their international business operations than companies that do not use these information sources. The research also seeks to provide insight into the organizational characteristics that causes some companies to successfully use export information in their decision-making where others do not rely on third-party export information.

Previous research has shown that the role of export information upon company decision-making to be complex. A sizable portion of previous related research has been limited in scope to measures of the attitudes exhibited by export managers toward various sources of export information. These studies have neglected to investigate the organizational ramifications of third-party information use. Since the mid-1990s, work in the area of export information has begun on branch beyond information acquisition, to inquire how information is processed within the organization and the resultant influences upon organizational behavior. This emerging line of inquiry is built upon knowledge utilization theory.

Methods

The majority of previous research into export information has been conducted via survey instruments. A limited number of studies have employed interview strategies to provide further insight and to augment a survey instrument. There are very few longitudinal studies, but an increasing realization that the topic of exporting and information use does require observing organizational behavior over a longer period of time.

In this study the survey instrument is selected for its ability to sample a relatively large number of companies in a time sensitive manner. An aggregate picture of the effects of export information use and further insight into how organizations process information are the primary goals of the study. The survey instrument provides for efficient comparison between independent variables of company characteristics and dependent variables of attitudes toward information use. Furthermore, the survey instrument provides the tools to manage the great number of factors play a role in perceptions of export information. For example, manufacturing versus service organizations have different needs. The needs of new exporters and those who have exported for a number of years differ. Company size plays a factor. Smaller companies are more restricted in terms of the availability of expertise within their organizations and may rely more on instrumental use of information as compared to larger companies that can afford to hire people with international business education and experience. Geographical dispersion plays a factor in the availability of staff with needed expertise. Companies located in coastal regions have greater access to international shipping lanes than inland companies. Additionally, companies located in rural areas or secondary cities suffer from a lack of international business expertise, whereas urban companies benefit from a larger number of organizations in attracting experienced workers.

Chapter 2

Literature Review & Research Questions

Information Acquisition and Need

Previous research into the information needs of exporters has concentrated on one of two areas – information acquisition or information use. Information acquisition studies have looked at what types of information exporters tend to favor (i.e., political, economic, cultural), the values placed on various information sources and the awareness level of information sources. More recent investigation has begun to look at information use, the forces that lead organizations acquire information, how they process the information and what influence information has upon organizational change. These studies have attempted to provide empirically based guidelines on how to best manage export information acquisition on the part of the company and information dissemination on the part of the information provider (Souchon & Diamantopoulos, 1999). The underlying assumption of the information provider is that a sizable amount of the corporate export information need can be fulfilled from the existing realm of readily available information sources. In essence, it makes the proposition that the missing component in increasing usage of export information, and by extension increasing export volume, is a comprehensive understanding of the role information utilization plays within the organizational structure of the exporter or potential exporter.

Since the early 1970s, academic research into exporting has increased steadily. This interest in exporting has been fueled by the increasing importance the global economy is playing in national markets. Companies in industrialized nations outstripped the demand of their local market, thus being forced to expand to foreign markets. More recently the costs associated with introducing a new product or the negative competitive advantage costs of not having a worldwide rollout of a new product, has driven companies to become global suppliers. As corporations have entered international markets in ever more sophisticated ways, researchers have discovered new variations of the theories that underline export activity. Javalgi notes some areas of overlap between the export studies, namely: obstacles or barriers to exporting, factors influencing export performance, organizational structure and export profiles, pre-identification criteria for potential

exporters, the development of a series of stages of export involvement and marketing mix issues of exporting firms (Javalgi, Lawson, Gross & White, 1998, p. 522).

While researchers in academia have found new ways to research the causes and effects of exporting, a service industry of export consulting has developed to help companies overcome the challenges of exporting. The available export services are abundant, but even in the U.S., less than 20% of small- and medium-sized companies that have the capacity to export chose to do so. The vast majority of the surveys and export assistance has focused on what has previously worked in getting non-exporting companies to become successful exporters. Very little effort has been devoted to understanding the organizational behavioral factors that cause some companies to forgo exporting, despite the knowledge that entering foreign markets will represent new profit centers. The simple answer is that some organizations see benefit in being of a certain size. These organizations like the intimacy between the staff and customers that is only seen in smaller companies. A more complex answer lies in the study of organizational behavior, centered on how organizations acquire, process and use information.

While there is a substantial literature relating to the awareness of, attitudes towards and participation in export assistance programs, most studies have investigated issues relating to the information needs and preferences of exporters, the sources used, types of research undertaken and the differences between users and non-users of export information (Diamantopoulos & Horncastle, 1997, pp. 247-248). In 1997, Leonidou found that 14 studies, starting in the early 1980s, specifically provided empirical investigation relating to the issue of export information sources (Leonidou & Katsikeas, 1997, p. 66). From his review, he notes that in making their key decisions, firms place a heavy reliance on primary data from the market, as opposed to secondary and/or institutional sources. Only companies that are new to exporting or facing specific export problems are more likely to consult secondary and/or institutional sources.

The information sources consulted by companies have been found to be dependent upon the company's size and its stage of internationalization. The early stages of the internationalization process, fulfilling orders from overseas, have been found to require little in the way of export information (Hart, Webb & Jones, 1994, p. 7), although this is the time when firms are the most

receptive to external assistance to augment business planning. The intermediate stages of internationalization, when companies are purposefully trying to plan overseas expansion, are the most receptive toward the use of export information. As companies become more seasoned exporters, intuition increasingly plays a larger role in decision-making, leading to less reliance upon formal information sources.

Situational factors, such as the type of business, firm characteristics, and experience with foreign countries have been proven to play a large role in the perceived information need by companies (vanBirgelen, de Ruyter & Wetzels, 2000, p. 385). In cases where non-exporters top management have traveled overseas for leisure, and are enthusiastic about international news or in some other way have an international perspective, the perception is that intuition will outrank the formal use of information sources. Service companies are less likely to rely upon export information, but more likely to realize the need to culturally attune their services to the needs of foreign buyers. There is evidence that small- to medium-sized companies find quantitative methodologies too costly or complex to use, hence they tend to rely more on intuition (Papadopoulos & Denis, 1988, p. 4).

Souchon (et al., 1999) supports the contention that the literature on export information acquisition has tended to focus on two stages: 1) the identification of information needs and sources (which types (s) of information tend to be collected, and from where), and 2) the process of information acquisition (how such information will be collected). Most studies in this area have been carried out using a single variable measure, such as how successful are exporters using a specific information source as opposed those who do not use the source in question. The export reveals the existence of three main export information acquisition modes: export assistance, export market research and export market intelligence. In this framework, export assistance incorporates efforts by export promotion organizations to disseminate information, whereas export market research and intelligence stems from efforts of corporate users to lessen the uncertainty of international business.

While improved assessment of information seeking behavior will undoubtedly aid in the development of more effective delivery systems, the issue of export information need,

acquisition and utilization is a complex topic that extends beyond the confines of information delivery. Saunders argues that communications researchers have failed to consider the manner in which decision-makers use acquired information (Saunders & Jones, 1990, p. 29). In regards to the exporters and would-be-exporters, two factors cloud the issue of export information delivery and subsequent use, namely a lack of awareness of the need for information and a lack of awareness of available information sources. These factors are underscored in findings that indicate the majority of firms depend upon first-hand information for decision making as opposed to engaging in a systematic planning approach that analyzes all available information sources (Leonidou et al., 1997, p. 66).

Research into corporate decision-making indicates that a lack of planning is one contributor to low usage of export information. Often the process of asking for information and justifying decisions in terms of information is more important than the outcomes that are produced. In effect, it is socially acceptable for decision makers to seek information sources in order to provide the appearance that the resulting decisions are based upon sound logic. Within the field of information science studies indicate that users place a higher value on personal information sources as opposed to more distant sources, such as information gathered through the research process. Because of the reliance upon personal trust, the decision maker often places higher emphasis upon the advice of close confidants or intuition, over that of externally sourced information. The realm of decision-making is an arena for exercising social values, displaying authority and displaying proper behavior in order to legitimize the decision-making process (Feldman & March, 1981, pp. 177-178). The concept of intelligence choice further underscores a Western cultural belief that more information characterizes a better decision, resulting in a strong socio-political pull to appear to base decisions on information.

Despite social forces that call for decisions to be based upon information, there is not a summons toward increased usage of third-party information sources. The decision-making process is interactive whereby the interrelationships between decisions and communication activities are critical to understanding the information processing in organizations (Saunders et al., 1990, p. 30). This further underscores the need to look beyond patterns of export information acquisition and investigate information utilization. Lee and Brasch associated the lack of consulting experts

or collecting information with a lack of sophisticated information planning and control systems within companies (McAuley, 1993, p. 53). This indicates that intra-organizational communication structures lack the sophistication to alert decision makers to the full set of available export information sources. Whereas the decision maker may suspect the necessary information is available somewhere, the costs associated with circumventing the corporate communication structure prevents him/her from seeking additional decision input.

Through his research, Diamantopoulos has discovered distinct differences in information acquisition and utilization. Organizations tend to “gather more information and don’t use it, ask for more and ignore it, make decisions first and look for the relevant information afterwards” (Diamantopoulos et al., 1997, p. 246). Organizations may encounter third-party export information, but do not possess the communication structures to channel the information to decision makers. In many ways, information acquisition and utilization by organizations mirrors information seeking and use behavior exhibited by individuals. This is characterized by a lack of planning in regards to the acquisition process and an inability to focus on end objectives in utilizing found information. In terms of the information resource life cycle, individuals and organizations tend to initially over plan and thus over estimate information needs. The result is a disorganized approach toward fulfilling the research need and accomplishing the decision on hand.

Research into corporate information use further indicates a frustration on the part of the corporate user in regards to available third party export information sources. The user reports feeling that the export information is not relevant to their corporate situation and the material is either too dated, too vague or lacks relevance to be acted upon (Souchon & Diamantopoulos, 1997, p. 136). These perceptions have an impact in terms of how organizations seek and apply export information. The measure of whether or not export information is of tangible use to an organization is dependent upon the organizational characteristics and situation, but findings of negative perceptions toward export information underscore the challenges faced in delivering and facilitating the use of export information. Individuals within the organization often have preconceived notions about the applicability of export information that may or may not be congruent with the reality of the information sources. This provides an additional explanation as

to why the majority of organizations do not apply third-party information sources in their decision-making structure.

The information resource life cycle can be broken into five phases: planning, acquisition, stewardship (storage, organization and maintenance of inventoried information), exploitation (such as writing a report or paper) and finally disposal of information (Witzel, 1987, p. 10; Souchon et al., 1999, p. 143). This paper primarily looks at the acquisition and exploitation phases of the life cycle to determine if organizations, which actively seek and use export information, perform better in foreign markets than their non-user counterparts. In answering this question, it is necessary to take an overarching view and not simply look at whether or not an organization is a user of export information and investigate related measure of export performance. The framework has to take into account how information interacts within the organization and specifically in the decision-making structure of the organization. It is well known that information lessens the unknown elements of international business, but how organizations apply export information to their planning and problems at hand is less well known. A better understanding of the social role export information plays can lead to improved information dissemination and international business training programs.

The acquisition of information has been defined as the information flow from the provider through to the user of the information, or the process by which information is obtained (Souchon et al., 1997, p. 135). In regards to export information, a number of export assistance organizations provide access to the information sources. The U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) generates the largest amount of firsthand information. While the DOC provides free access to its information sources, a cadre of export promotion organizations serve as information brokers for exporting companies. The export promotion organization may simply assist companies in locating information or they may serve in a consultancy role where trade specialists produce targeted reports for corporate clients. The information product is often viewed as either objective or experiential information (Seringhous, 1987, p. 27; Li & Cavusgil, 2000, p. 59), where objective information refers to primary or secondary sources. Export promotion organizations provide readily available objective information such as third-party reports and government statistics. Objective information sources have proved to be especially helpful in

early export efforts and/or in market selection. Experiential information refers to that acquired by experiencing situations and events, such as market learning activities. By definition, experiential information is much more costly to acquire, an important dimension when considering small or medium sized companies in the international setting. With various degrees of success, trade specialists in export promotion organizations are able to provide corporate clients with experiential information that is tailored to the clients needs.

Within the United States there are a number of different entities involved in export promotion via export information dissemination. The most general and serving a greatly varied audience are government sponsored information delivery systems. Foremost among export promotion organizations is the DOC, which generates a vast amount of information from the Washington, DC headquarters. The DOC bureaucracy operates more than 100 branch offices in the United States and has staff assigned to every U.S. Embassy and Consulate in the world. Export information generated by the DOC is delivered through the National Trade Data Bank – now a web site, previously a monthly release of two data CDs. All other players in information delivery, both in the U.S. and abroad, rely heavily on the data provided from the DOC. Simultaneously, the U.S. Department of Agriculture serves as an equivalent to the DOC for agricultural exports from the US. Today, all of the 50 states operate export promotion programs to market manufacturing and agricultural sectors through trade missions, overseas offices and via programs designed to encourage non-exporting firms to become involved in international business. Local entities in larger cities complete the government level export promotion efforts. A notable example is the New York-New Jersey Port Authority, which owned the Twin Towers and created the World Trade Centers Association. Both the state and local efforts operate information delivery systems that are modeled after and work heavily in conjunction with the DOC efforts.

More specific information delivery systems are operated by such entities as banks, freight forwarders, chambers of commerce and World Trade Centers (WTC). These tend to be related to government information systems in that they attempt to either provide a better interface to the same source of information or provide additional services by analyzing information for companies. Banks and freight forwarders contribute to export information promotion in an effort

to increase their own business or decrease the number of costly mistakes on the part of the exporting company. Local chambers of commerce and WTC entities often operate export promotion efforts directly as for-profit centers.

Information Points of Contact

Organizations and individuals come in contact with information in a number of different manners. Formalized sources, such as the library or export assistance centers are the most obvious sources for export information. Yet studies have shown that regular exposure to media outlets that provide coverage of international events, such as newspapers, periodicals, and trade publications may result in the accumulation of extensive foreign market information (Reid, 1984, p. 143). The knowledge conveyed via the media is often enough to see a company through the initial stages of exporting, where export enthusiasm by the top management can be more important than a formal international business expertise.

Companies in the initial stages of exporting use a range of information sources, such as business acquaintances, banks, trade associations, chambers of commerce, trade press and libraries. As these companies become more experienced exporters, the information emphasis of the companies shifts to first-hand investigation of foreign markets and increased interaction with foreign representatives (Reid, 1984, p. 143). Companies also become increasingly more selective of the sources of information as they become more experienced exporters. Companies that are in advanced stages of export readiness require increasingly more specific information (McAuley, 1993, p. 55). These companies have potential markets targeted and require specific information needs that require local market expertise. As a result, the organization may send their own staff to scout the potential market or hire “native” consultants who are qualified to provide the information in question. These findings underscore the results of a number of studies, that first-hand sources of information are the information source preferred by companies (Serinhaus, 1987, p. 27; McAuley, 1993, p. 60; Ren, 1999).

Irrespective of how companies fulfill their information needs, information is critical in lessening the uncertainty of competing in foreign markets. Societal and cultural nuances of foreign markets effect how business is conducted, the type of formal and information requirements

placed upon products and services and a myriad of less subtle changes from the domestic U.S. market. McAuley finds that companies that are more prolific in collecting information will be more likely to withstand export setbacks created by entering markets with different cultural norms (McAuley, 1993, p. 54). He argues that earlier studies have proven that a planned information-based approach to international business is an important ingredient of export success.

Types of Export Information

Much research has been completed on the issue of the types of export information that is valued by organizations. Perhaps not surprisingly, companies are most interested in information regarding foreign market characteristics. Specifically, this means information related to market demand, competition in the market and government restrictions on foreign companies (Wood et al., 1987, p. 50). Users less often cite a need for information regarding political, economic, legal and cultural characteristics. This may well be due to the specific requirements that raise the need for these information types. Political and economic realities of the foreign market are most useful when conducting foreign market selection or in times of turmoil. Also, companies only engaged in exporting to distributors are making less of an investment in the foreign market, hence showing less interest in the social forces of the foreign market. Cultural considerations are routinely indicated as the least desirable type of export information. While cultural elements are important, most exporters are more likely to conduct business with countries that are culturally similar to the home market. The relevance of cultural information has been found to be of interest when the initial questions of market selection have been answered (Wood & Robertson, 2000). Culture is critical when making market selections, and then again if the company develops their international business to the point where it becomes financially and operationally feasible to initiate foreign based operations.

To summarize, the various types of export information that key information users are searching for includes (Robertson & Wood, 2001, pp. 366-370):

- 1) Market potential: Does the market in question have the potential to purchase the imported product in question? Opportunities, now and in the future, adaptation costs, and internal and external competition.

- 2) Economic dimension: The current broad economic performance measures of the export market's development. The strengths of the market and product consumption.
- 3) Political dimension: Is the political climate favorable toward international business? The degree of political stability, how centralized is the political power, and to what degree does the population support the government. Relations between the foreign government and home government in relation to trade. The foreign governments actions and attitudes toward private business.
- 4) Legal environment: Tariff and taxes, non-tariff barriers (such as local content rules), the degree to which business activities are regulated.
- 5) Infrastructure dimension: The nature of the market's distribution and communications infrastructures. Realities of the geography and climatic conditions of the market.
- 6) Culture dimension: The degree of cultural unity and national integration versus the extent of ethnic and cultural differences. The cultural differences and similarities between the export and home markets.

Export Market Assistance

The effectiveness of export assistance organizations in meeting the information needs of exporters is a matter of debate. Most empirical studies that attempt to measure the effectiveness of export promotion programs do not provide a measurement of the impact on the company level. Instead they provide a measure of the attitudes toward such programs by export managers (Wilkinson, 1999, p. 173). Furthermore, most studies that have investigated the effectiveness of export assistance have been carried out by the assistance organizations themselves. This raises questions about the validity, integrity and applicability of the findings. The export promotion organizations tout that there is a direct link between their efforts and any improvement in macro export economic indicators of their geographical areas. State and local export promotion organizations rely heavily on such stipulations in their struggle to retain or enhance their funding levels. In reality, the stated goal of the DOC and others is to target export information programs toward the vast number of small and medium sized-companies that do not export (Mehran & Moini, 1999, p. 88). Given the time lapse of several years between initial interest in exporting and shipping product or services overseas on a regular basis, doubt is raised on the short-term impact export promotion programs have on the aggregate exports for a state or region.

Wilkinson asserts that no previous study has empirically demonstrated a relationship between state government export promotion organizations and export success (Wilkinson & Brouters, 2000, p. 229). One finding of the Tesar study was that exporters have in the past 20 years required little assistance from various export promotion programs. However, exporters do require updated export information about the markets in which they compete. Much of export decision-making is influenced by intuition, yet organizations have to develop that intuition and intuition cannot be 100% accurate. This leaves the question open as to drawing a conclusion that companies are not meeting their market potentials because of an inability to acquire needed export information or export information not containing the requested information. Another conclusion is that the DOC's National Trade Databank meets all these current information needs (Tesar, 1998, pp. 308-309), thus leading to the assumption that companies instinctively consult the web accessible National Trade Databank.

Export marketing assistance is identified as standardized and customized market information and guidance on exporting provided by government and semi-official organizations (Souchon et al., 1997, pp. 135-137). The guidance can range from comprehensive programs designed to help companies enter specific foreign market goals, trade missions and trade fairs to a range of basic market data. Often these programs are employed in an aggregate manner, where an industry grouping deemed important to a region (i.e., automobile industry in Kentucky) or a specific foreign market is targeted by the export promotion organization. The assistance is mostly provided in the form of generalized information or industry customized information. The generalized information is readily available from free sources, such as the DOC's National Trade Data Bank. Customized information is information acquired through expert assistance or programs such as trade missions and trade fairs (Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch & Tse, 1993, p. 7).

Information obtained from export marketing assistance tends to be less utilized because exporters often see the information as ineffectual or because of a lack of awareness of assistance programs (Chaudhry & Crick., 1999, p. 121; Souchon et al., 1999, p. 146). Less than one-third of respondents in one study were aware that government information is available in multiple

formats at local depository libraries at no cost (Ren & Au, 1999, p. 453). Not only are managers inclined to make export decisions based on intuition (Leonidou & Adams-Florou, 1999, p. 42), but the fast paced atmosphere of the modern workplace does not lend itself to accessing information delivery systems that have become convoluted by the sheer information volume. Five years ago, the National Trade Databank was distributed on two compact discs. The move to Web based access was partly in response to capacity limitations of the two discs. Another problem faced by export promotion organizations is that they have so far failed to prove the quality and usefulness of their services (Leonidou et al., 1997, p. 84). The business establishment remains unconvinced that the information services of export assistance organizations cannot be acquired elsewhere and that these organizations are to a degree providing convenient access to the information. A leading number of authors suggest that procuring, sharing and guaranteeing the accuracy of information is one of the most important functions trade promotion organizations can offer in support of international business (Ryen et al., 1997, p. 10).

New information delivery systems are also problematic when it comes to disseminating export information. Based mostly on the Internet, these systems are wonderful in delivering a great amount of information, but do not take the user into account. Export-related decisions tend to be made by senior executives in organizations. However, executives over the age of 45 tend to have a fewer Internet skills as well as lower frequency of Internet use (Ren, 1999, p. 290). This generational gap is only temporary, but is expected to be a phenomenon until 2015. Furthermore, the lack of Internet expertise is an example of the unanticipated costs associated with embracing new technologies without fully measuring the impact to the user of the information product. Through the higher volume of exporters in urban areas, companies in these settings tend to have more ready access to the programs of export promotion organizations as opposed to their rural counterparts. Unfortunately, the rural companies do not only have less access to export promotion programs, but also tend to have less reliable access to the Internet. Thus, while the transition of government export promotion information to the Internet has in theory made information dissemination more universal, the potential users who might need this information the most are still not being adequately served.

Small companies have been found to have the lowest acquisition of government export information services (Reid, 1984, p. 141). These organizations often lack the expertise necessary to compete in foreign markets. Yet, it has also been found that company characteristics, such as age, size and performance have little effect on how organizations utilize government export information (Ren et al., 1999, p. 455). The expertise organizations use in applying export information tends to remain constant irrespective of descriptive characteristics of the organization. One characteristic, industry competitiveness, has proven to be a factor in government information usage (Ren et al., 1999, p. 455). Organizations that perceive a low rate of competitive advantage over the competition tend to increase their information acquisition efforts in order to enhance their position in the market. Additionally, in industries marked by a high level of competitiveness, the individual players are in a constant struggle to acquire information that has the potential to enhance their competitive advantage.

Export Market Research

Companies engage in export market research in order to develop business plans, support the decision-making process and to lessen the element of uncertainty. While similar processes are employed in regards to domestic business, non-exporters tend to overestimate the costs and time commitments of foreign market research. This reason is often cited as a deciding factor for non-exporters to choose not to engage in international business. In reality, studies indicate that only about one in two exporters carry out export market research (Diamantopoulos, 1997, p. 264; Souchon et al., 1999, p. 146). The majority of exporters chose to base their export decisions upon intuition, using information to support decisions already made and tend to disregard information that runs counter to previous decisions. Furthermore, the perceived cost factors associated with market research limits its usage almost exclusively to larger companies (Hart & Diamantopoulos, 1993, p. 61). Whereas a vast amount of export information is available, small- and medium-sized companies lack the resources to locate even instrumental information and also often lack the expertise to act upon the information when it is found. Organizations with limited experience in export market research tend to be protectionist by internalizing information gathering when the conditions of their foreign markets are not well understood or their products are either highly complex or in the early stages of their life cycles (Belich et al., 1995, p. 7). Such internalized functions make it difficult for export assistance organizations to understand or

fulfill the information needs of the company. Another reason for the lack of export market research is a general lack of planning and systematic approach to exporting. Companies have been found to conduct less sophisticated research on foreign markets as opposed to the domestic market (Bodur & Cavusgil, 1985, p. 15; Souchon et al., 1999, p. 146). It is unclear why this situation is created, but cultural imperialism may play a factor. Executives in a first-world nation like the U.S. may simply assume that their products, standards and customs are superior to that of other nations. This leads to the false assumption that people across the world will naturally prefer to buy their products as opposed to products produced by a local competitor.

Conducting export market research does not automatically insure that an organization is completing the research process in an effective and efficient manner. For this group of companies, studies attribute the lack of a formal or systematic nature of the research to: 1) a lack of sensitivity to customer tastes, habits and preferences in foreign markets, 2) a limited appreciation of different marketing norms abroad, 3) unfamiliarity with national and international data sources, and an inability to properly use the information when obtained, and, 4) a tendency to use actual business experience in foreign markets as a substitute for organized marketing research (Leonidou et al., 1999, p. 31). Organizations have a tendency to assume the world behaves in a predictable manner and by a similar set of social rules as that dictated by the organizations' internal cultural orientation. Despite the often-unorthodox nature of conducting export market research, the literature overwhelmingly supports the notion that marketing research is positively related to company performance (Hart et al., 1993, p. 69). Even organizations that are inefficient in their export market research have been shown to perform better in the international marketplace than their counterparts that do not invest in research. Some researchers have argued that increasing the amount of information gathered will increase satisfaction with decisions made (Souchon et al., 1994, p. 143). It might be further postulated that through the action of carrying out export market research, managers are empowered to approach export activities from a level of higher confidence. This confidence in doing things right may translate into a competitive advantage in the marketplace, hence increasing the company's favorable position in the market. The mere act of officially embarking on export market research may empower the organization to develop more efficient communication

structures, which in turn are more efficient in transmitting needed information to the decision-makers.

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Export Market Intelligence

Secondary information from export market research and/or export assistance sources may have been pivotal in supporting the decision to move into a foreign market, but studies indicate that companies feel primary data through export market intelligence is necessary to determine how to compete overseas. Investigation reinforces the contention that once a company embarks on an export program, reliance upon personal contact with on the ground players is critical in gathering information on the foreign market (Hart et al., 1994, p. 20). The organizations progression from novice exporter to developing internal export expertise goes hand-in-hand with increased dependence upon organizational intuition. As the company internalizes export intuition; information channels can either be of a formal nature, such as company expatriate staff, or informal, such as contacts at trade fairs or through foreign visits (Reid, 1984, p. 144; Souchon et al., 1999, p. 146). In either case, the organization is developing internal expertise to supplant the information needs that may earlier have been filled through export assistance. Simultaneously, the costs of primary information and the specificity of the needed information have both risen. This additional cost marks a strong commitment to international business on the part of the exporter.

Export promotion organizations are largely ill equipped to assist companies when it comes to export market intelligence. The DOC provides aggregate market economic indicators on a monthly basis for most national markets, but this narrow breath of information is of limited usefulness to exporters. Small- and medium-sized companies can sometimes find assistance through organizations such as the WTC, whose interest lies in providing assistance to both sides of the international business coin, namely exports and imports. For a nominal fee, organizations such as the WTC will conduct routine market intelligence for member companies in the WTC Association network. Ultimately, these measures are not a replacement for investing in primary information communication structures to transmit vital market information to the home office. Research results suggest that successful exporters make frequent visits to export markets and explore new export possibilities firsthand (Moini, 1995, p. 18). Export market intelligence can

simultaneously provide a company with valuable international expertise and lead to an over reliance upon intuition. So while development of export expertise is critical to success, the reliance on expertise rather than export market research or available export information can lead to a detrimental situation of not meeting export market potential.

Information Source Awareness

Awareness of export information sources is an area that has only recently come under academic scrutiny. One study has found that a lack of export information source awareness is an important barrier to non-exporting and passive-exporting companies (McAuley, 1993, p. 54). Such findings are congruent with the export literature, which cites a critical need for external information sources in the early stages of export activity. Without the knowledge of export information sources, organizations face difficulties in expanding beyond the initial levels of international activity. Furthermore, non-exporting companies run the risk of developing perceptions of international business as being too costly, too complex and/or too risky (Moni, 1991, p. 15). The non-exporter thus refrains from even superficial investigation of foreign markets, not realizing that extensive export assistance is available. The old adage that bad news travels faster than good news is applicable here. Small talk at trade association social events often includes stories about international business blunders, further underscoring the difficulties that exporting can at times entail, without providing insights into information sources that can circumnavigate such difficulties.

While export assistance organizations have suffered from an inability to advertise their services, users themselves are often equally responsible for the lack of awareness of available information services. Research starting in the 1960s acknowledges that under-utilization or non-use of government information is a lack of public awareness (Ren et al., 1999, p. 455). The naiveté of the general public as to the availability of information sources coupled with perceptions of government information not serving the needs of the user becomes evident in companies' reluctance to utilize export information. Part of the worldwide success of the WTCA is the almost universal mistrust of government on the part of business entities. Government is often seen as a regulator and enforcer, not as a partner in business expansion. Hence, trade assistance organizations such as the WTCA are able to act as brokers of government information to the

export community. Export promotion organizations can enhance their dissemination of export information by gaining a better knowledge of the factors that influence the users and generates information need. Once this is achieved, more effective outreach programs can be developed to increase awareness of information systems.

Information Utilization

The simple definition of information utilization in the export setting is one of providing a measurement of the extent to which information influences decision-making within a company (Souchon et al., 1997, p. 135). As opposed to information need or acquisition, which is influenced by both external forces and internal requirements, information utilization is a completely internal function of the company. Organizational factors, such as corporate and national culture, market orientation and organizational structure play a critical role in how a company processes the information obtained in the information acquisition stage of the information life cycle. Organizational forces at play within the company influences and are a determinant of information usage, non-usage and overload. Identification of these forces, or identification of company characteristics that lend themselves to export success, can be an invaluable tool in developing improved information dissemination systems.

In the face of a lack of knowledge of the exact nature of export information use within companies, it is necessary to look toward a growing number of studies into international marketing. To a degree, export information and international marketing are closely related. Export information is utilized in carrying out international marketing, while international marketing can also influence what export information is gathered and used. Within the academic environment, two different camps have approached these two areas. International marketing is almost entirely composed of authors from business marketing; the study of export information has drawn researchers from business, communications and information science. In regards to providing a more comprehensive picture of export information use, international marketing provides explanations from organizational behavior and the contributing factors to decision making.

The export literature has tended to focus on information acquisition rather than information use. As a result, insight into how companies utilize export information is not well documented (Diamantopolos, 1999, p. 1). Marketing research has investigated organizational knowledge or how the individual contributes to the repository of information that an organization processes. According to this line of thinking, decision makers do not entirely rely upon their own knowledge or that of their immediate colleagues. The decision-making process is guided by organizational knowledge or information that has accumulated since the inception of the organization. Organizational knowledge can further be hypothesized to be a guiding force of organizational culture, which in itself is a determinant of how the organization approaches new markets.

In terms of the availability of export information and its contribution toward competitive advantage, the same information tends to be available to all competitors at about the same time (Diamantopolos, 1999, p. 1). The organization actively involved in export market research and/or intelligence may identify information before competitors who do not have an active communication structure. The availability of information may further explain why managers are observed to rely upon intuition as opposed to export information sources. Deshpande has identified five sets of variables that are important in affecting information utilization: (1) organizational structure of the company, (2) technical quality of the research, (3) surprise and counter intuitiveness of the results, (4) ability to take action based on findings and (5) extent of manager-researcher interaction (Deshpande & Zaltman, 1984, p. 32). Companies that are consciously communicating information from sources to the decision makers are then more likely to utilize export information.

Organizational

Companies are increasingly making information acquisition a managerial administrative function with a place in the organization's overall strategy (Weitzel, 1987, p. 9). This is in part an admission on the part of organizations that information and the proper administration of information is a critical component of success in the market. Whereas in the past, information management was seen as the domain of the information systems department, corporate library and/or records management, a faster pace of business has necessitated an organization-wide

approach to communication structures. Policies must take into account such aspects as information inflow (need and research), intra-organizational information flow (communication between departments and functional areas) and information outflow (public relations, investor relations, and compliance with regulations). Durkheim is quoted as saying that organizational information systems offer “collective ways of acting or thinking (that) have a reality outside of the individuals who... conform to it” (Moorman, 1995, p. 319). The individual contributes to the overall organizational knowledge base and culture that forms and dictates rules of engagement of the communication structure. Without formalized guidance to govern the acquisition, dissemination and utilization of information, the decision makers cannot be adequately empowered to make the decisions they indeed must make.

The nature of information within organizations is not as altruistic as might be expected. Feldman concluded that often information is produced in order to persuade someone to do something (Feldman et al., 1981, p. 176). She concludes that most information generated and processed within an organization is subject to misrepresentation. This correlates with the export market research indicating that information that runs counter to decisions already made is highly likely to be suppressed and that corporate researchers tend to seek information that meets corporate expectations. In this light, the decision maker is robbed of decision inputs that he/she needs to adequately fulfill the decision role. In order to gain a better view of how export information delivery systems can be improved, it is then imperative to investigate how information is used within organizations and what organizational forces influence the intra-company flow of information.

Organizational Culture

Similar forces to those that create national culture, a group belief structure, also create organizational culture. Although company founders tend to set the tone of organizational culture, it is a pattern of shared values and beliefs that provides the individuals composing an organization meaning and provides a set of behavioral rules (Dosoglu-Guner, 1999, p. 48). Once set, cultural shifts are as intransigent for organizations as they are for nations to undertake. Organizational culture can be viewed as a subset of national culture. Knowledge of German national culture gives exporters a basis of expectations when it comes to dealing with a German

company. This is of course not always true, just as individuals may not fully exhibit their broader national cultural traits, so organizations may not either. Small- and medium-sized U.S. manufacturers, who have wholeheartedly adopted Japanese manufacturing management practices, may to a German exhibit more Japanese traits than the expected traits based upon the wider U.S. culture.

The literature identifies four dimensions of organizational culture (Dosoglu-Guner, 1999, p. 48):

- 1) Market oriented culture: Emphasis is placed on competitive advantage and responsiveness to market forces. Company effectiveness is measured with productivity achieved through market mechanisms.
- 2) Adhocracy culture: An adaptive culture that emphasizes innovation, tolerance, flexibility, profitability and growth. Company effectiveness is measured in terms of new market entry and new growth directions.
- 3) Hierarchical culture: Strict adherence to the bureaucratic structure with an emphasis on orders, rules and uniformity in order to generate stability, predictability and smooth operations. Company effectiveness is met when clearly stated goals are achieved.
- 4) Clan culture: Emphasis is placed on internal cohesiveness, maintenance and morale. Company effectiveness is more a measure of cohesiveness and personal satisfaction than the organization's financial performance.

Organizational culture can be seen along two dimensions, organic or mechanistic. Organic cultures stress flexibility and spontaneity, such as market oriented or adhocracy cultures. Mechanistic cultures stress control, stability and order, such as hierarchical and clan cultures. The literature indicates that organic cultures are associated with greater organizational success (Dosoglu-Guner, 1999, p. 48). Within the realm of international business, the organic cultures could be expected to be more adaptive to the conflicting demands of exporting. Due to their belief structures, market-oriented and adhocracy-oriented organizations have been found to create an "export friendly" organizational infrastructure that increases the likelihood of these companies being involved in exports (Dosoglu-Guner, 1999, p. 48).

Knowledge Utilization

Neoclassical economic theory states that organizational competence of production is measured by ownership of labor, land and capital. However, as illustrated in the literature, neoclassical theory has since the early 1970s become less applicable and is being replaced by the knowledge-based theory of the company (Li et al., 2000, p. 58). Knowledge is usually inferred to be more refined and have some pre-tested “value,” as compared to information (Backer, 1993, p. 217). Scholars are in disagreement of the exact differences between information and knowledge. Within the realm of export data, country market and industry sector reports illustrate a knowledge source. These documents have clearly been refined and compiled from numerous other sources. Export data, such as the dollar value of exports broken down by specific HTC (Harmonized Tariff Code) categories, represent a source of more linear information. To the user, documents that can be classified as knowledge documents, lend themselves more readily toward instrumental use. Linear information sources require a higher level of expertise on the part of the user. Ultimately, it is the information or knowledge a company is able to process and implement that is a determinant of business success.

Knowledge utilization has been conceptualized as the extent to which information guides behavior and decision making and leads to the reduction of uncertainty. The literature conceptualizes knowledge/information utilization in three different measures (Menon et al., 1992, pp. 54-55):

- 1) Instrumental use: The direct application of findings and conclusions to a problem. For example, at the opening of Disney World Europe, the company attempted a transplant of theme park operations from the U.S. The only changes were seen in language and foods offered for sale within the park.
- 2) Conceptual use: The use of findings that are not directly applicable to the problem, via making inferences. For example, after disappointing attendance, Walt Disney Company completely overhauled its operations in France. Taking what they had learned about French culture, the company no longer charged admissions to the theme park to appeal to the European consumer that felt they should be free to see the park prior to paying for rides.

- 3) Symbolic use: Instrumental and conceptual use imply using findings fairly straightforwardly. Symbolic use distorts the findings beyond their intended use to apply a more figurative meaning. In the example above, Walt Disney Company learned a lot about the importance of culture in marketing a product in Europe. This knowledge was put to use when it came to developing a new theme park in Japan. No longer did the company assume that the Asian consumer wanted a taste of America in their theme park experiences.

Most of the research work dealing with knowledge utilization has focused on instrumental use applications (Diamantopolos, 1999, p. 2). Whereas most studies on export information utilization have attempted quantitative measurement of the effectiveness of a source, as opposed to classifying the methods used in applying the information to a problem. Primary data is highly valued by exporters and by its nature lends itself to instrumental use, such as consumer preferences or the price breaks of equal or comparable products in the market. Information utilization and information user behavior research have not addressed the question of changes of people's knowledge structure (Todd, 1999, p. 864). Very limited data has been collected in regards to conceptual or symbolic use of export information. The very fact that companies rely heavily on intuition is an indicator of a higher level of usage of from the original information. Conceptual and symbolic use of information occurs in the process of exporting, but is harder for the user to identify as such. Because higher-level information uses happen at a later date and are perhaps not directly tied to the formal acquisition/utilization phase, most individuals see this application of information as second nature or routine. It is thus a much harder element to measure, but never the less important in terms of developing theories of how organizations react to and process export information.

Emerging research in the area of knowledge utilization is the theory that, although the characteristics of the specific piece of information are important to utilization, the characteristics of the company and/or user are equally important (Menon et al., 1992, p. 68). Not only does a user or organization need the requisite skills to successfully process information, they require the framework to place the information in context with their environment. Export assistance programs that disseminate large amounts of otherwise unrelated information may, in the

framework of knowledge utilization, not be effectively serving the goal of helping companies succeed in foreign markets and increasing the aggregate amount of regional exports. If, on the organizational or individual level within a company, the staff has difficulties placing the information in a conceptual manner, it is irrelevant if the user identifies and fulfills the information need. Without the ability to implement the information, the organization will not be able to add value to its knowledge base or then, increase its success overseas.

Diamantopoluos has found that organizations that have learned to react to information possess a better understanding of their markets (Diamantopolos, 1999, p.1). Other researchers make the argument that it is more seasoned exporters who have gained the skills necessary to achieve conceptual and symbolic use of export information. That export knowledge is first divided at the external environment level, where macro-economic, social, cultural, physical and political aspects influence export management. The other part of export knowledge is internal elements, such as business policies, internal communication structures, organizational culture and expertise. All these elements are within the control of the company and are required for successful export (Aaby & Slater, 1989, pp. 7-8). In the early stages of internationalization, organizations under appreciate the complexities involved in competing overseas. Novice exporters tend to be too naive in their approach and utilize export information in an instrumental manner, not realizing the complexity of the external environment or the limits of their own internal elements. It is perhaps experience, at the company level, that triggers the addition of intuition to the organizational knowledge reservoir; in turn creating a sustainable competitive advantage that is likely to lead to enhanced market performance.

Organizational Learning

The average company acquires vast amounts of information relating to exporting, either through export market research/intelligence or third-party sources. Not all of the information is applicable to the current situation or used directly in an instrumental manner. Organizations store some information, otherwise known as organizational learning, for future use either instrumentally or to influence conceptual/symbolic use. Organizational learning is the means by which information is either preserved so users other than the knowledge originator can use it (Sinkula, 1994), p. 36) or the process of improving actions through better understanding (Fiol &

Lyles, 1985, p. 803). Companies must first realize a need for information, then acquire and utilize the information. This process will by its nature yield a vast amount of information where only some is utilized at the present time, whereas a large amount is desirable to be stored for future use.

Individual learning is a requirement of the organization, although, individual learning may or may not result in organizational learning. Organizational learning, like individual learning, is a function of age and experience (Sinkula, 1994, p. 36). Companies in the early stages of exporting will view the supply of information as inadequate. What information is gathered will be treated as precious and be subject to a wide distribution and more of the information is likely to be stored in organizational memory (Sinkula, 1994). With age, the company will use its organizational knowledge as a filter for new information, resulting in the company distributing, interpreting and storing less of the newly acquired information (Sinkula, 1994, p. 42). Export information studies have shown that interest in export information is a function of export experience. The longer a company is involved in exporting or the more markets a company serves, the less interested the organization becomes in external information sources. In effect, the collective knowledge of the organization becomes an information source, causing a move away from the role as a consumer of information.

The nature of organizational learning development is linked to organizational culture, where organic cultures such as market oriented and adhocracy cultures are more adaptive to create effective information filtering systems. However, disagreement exists in relation to what effect organizational learning plays in influencing organizational culture. Organizations have cognitive systems and memories and, as in individuals, organizations develop personalities, beliefs, worldviews and ideologies over time. Members of the organization change, but organizations preserve certain cultural traits over time (Fiol et al., 1985, p. 804). In the same token, organizational learning can influence transformation of organizational culture. The literature indicates that as companies internationalize, they tend to change their focus to a point where the domestic market is re-evaluated according to principles learned from foreign markets.

The frustration witnessed in the efforts of export assistance organization is partly explained by organizational learning theory. Initially, companies reach a point where they are highly appreciative of export information, acquiring and utilizing information at a rapid pace. As the companies become more seasoned exporters, there is a marked drop off of their interest in or acquisition of information. Export promotion professionals are often frustrated at this seeming lack of interest in what by all accounts is valuable export information, especially since these companies have well developed export processes that require little expansion effort to take advantage of new opportunities. The frustration may be rooted in the fact that internally the company in question has begun to filter export information through what it already knows about the international market place. As this process continues, organizations gain expertise and are more confident of themselves, more secure in existing efforts and less interested in export information that arrives from a source that is not part of its organizational structure. Managers may selectively screen out other sources of potential export opportunities simply in a strong belief in their own intuition and the knowledge base acquired through organizational learning.

Export Market Orientation

An element of international business success is the degree to which an organization is export market oriented or the degree to which export operations influence corporate policy. Operating in a more competitive environment has been proven to increase the export market orientation of a company (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993, p. 57). Out of necessity, organizations in highly competitive markets develop export market intelligence and strong internal communications structures to support the creation of competitive advantage. In regards to export information utilization, market orientation is important in three factors: 1) the marketing literature illustrates that effective use of information is a source of competitive advantage and a prerequisite for market orientation (Diamantopoulos et al., 1997, p. 245), 2) a company that is highly market oriented is more likely to have its information needs fulfilled via export intelligence, hence, less likely to rely on export assistance, 3) promoters of export assistance programs need to fully understand the forces export market orientation is placing upon client companies. Market oriented organizations still have information needs, but the need is highly specific and closely tied to events in the marketplace. If export promotion programs can be tailored to answer the specific needs of exporters, companies are more likely to partake in their services.

Export market orientation is composed of three behavioral components (Jaworski et al., 1993, p. 54; Cadogan, Diamantopoulos & Pahud, 1999, p. 690; Rose & Shoham, 2002, p. 218):

- 1) organization-wide orientation toward export intelligence
- 2) organization-wide dissemination of export information
- 3) organization-wide responsiveness to market information via response design and response implementation.

The literature suggests that three organizational components are related to export market orientation, namely: top management, interdepartmental factors and organizational systems (Jaworski et al., 1993, p.54). The decision to focus on the export market is related to the important role top management plays in guiding export operations and has been found to play a critical role in export performance. Without an overall commitment to exporting, companies cannot develop the internal inertia to fully support initial exporting or internationalization. Export market orientation is basically innovative behavior in response to market conditions (Jaworski et al., 1993). As such, companies exhibiting market oriented and adhocracy organizational cultures are more likely to be export market oriented than hierarchical or clan type organizational cultures.

At first glance, it appears that export market orientation has a link to the previous discussion of novice exporters, where information is seen as highly valuable and is distributed widely within the organization. While companies can be export market oriented at any state of internationalization, it is more probable that the emphasis on the market has come about as a response to environmental demands. Market orientation has proved to provide a means of assessing customer and market focus of an organization. Companies that are focused on the market are better at responding to international challenges and opportunities presented by their environment (Rose et al., 2002, p. 217). It is then an effect of internationalization that can create the conditions for export market orientation. For people outside of the organization, the resulting orientation can be viewed as an exclusionary system, where the company is fully focused on export market intelligence. This provides further insight into the waning interests in export information as companies develop toward higher levels of internationalization.

Export market orientation does not however, always occur as a company becomes more involved in foreign markets. The complexity of the export environment increases in information requirements and the well-documented problems associated with the quality of export information can all be obstacles to the company developing an export market orientation (Cadogan et al., 1999, p. 690). A rigid top management that is adverse to risk and intolerant of failure is less likely to focus on the market or the customer (Jaworski et al., 1993, p. 55). Such companies are likely to have limited export success and be uninfluenced by export market assistance programs. There exists no study that attempts to classify companies in terms of organizational culture. Yet it is probable that a fair amount of the 80% of small- and medium-sized companies that are classified as non-exporters, also fall into the category of having organizational cultures that are not readily adaptive to create an export market orientation. Thus, it is not as much a question of reaching all potential exporters through export promotion programs, as it is identifying the organizational traits that have the capability to lead toward effective use of export information, the creation of export market orientation and a high potential of export success.

Export Measures

Most research studies regarding export information use have tried to gauge the effects of utilization via single variable measures associated with export performance. Some of these variables include: exporters vs. non-exporters, export growth, rate of new market entry, employment linked to export activities, stages of internationalization, company size in terms of employees or revenue, company age and organizational characteristics. These variables have been compared along the lines of users and non-users of export information. A number of authors have questioned the reliance on single variable measures, arguing that such efforts do not reflect the true nature of export information use (Moini, 1995, p. 9).

Since the early 1990s, studies have tended to use multi-dimensional measures of export performance (Souchon et al., 1997, p. 141). These studies have not only included the measures of export sales, growth and profitability, but have sought to add a competitive measure in relation to competitors' performance and/or company objectives (Souchon et al., 1997, p. 141).

Export information use is by its nature a difficult issue to study. A number of factors such as organizational culture, export orientation, export intelligence and organizational knowledge play a factor in whether or not a company uses export information. Furthermore, even if a company acquires export information, how those sources are actually processed and how they influence the organization is a matter of great debate. One author has called for moving away from attempts to establish a direct link between the conduct of research and company performance. She suggests instead that such factors as the formulation of problems within the organization, the motives and constraints of information seeking, and the organizational use and control of export market information would provide a better picture of the influence of export information (Hart et al., 1993, p. 56). Perhaps, the issue is not one of measuring how effective export information is, but studying the role of information within the company.

In terms of studies looking specifically at the use versus non-use of export information, Diamantopoulos et al. discovered that half of the non-users reported achieving the same proportion of sales and profitability as information users (Hart et al., 1994, p. 8). The literature indicates that this discovery is in-line with other studies, which all cast an element of uncertainty in regards to the importance of export assistance. Results indicate that export assistance does help those who partake of this information source, while simultaneously; it is not a necessary ingredient for exporting. Successful export performance has been directly linked to the management's positive expectations in terms of opportunities and profitability (Moini, 1995, p. 11). Other factors such as product design and quality, distribution efficiency, ownership of patents, innovation and unique features of the product, have all been found to impact export performance (Moini, 1995, p. 11).

Company Size and Age

Two variables have received the most attention in terms of determining export behavior, namely the size and age of a company. Exporting companies are not only significantly older than non-exporting companies, but studies have shown that as age increases, the propensity to export increases (Javalgi et al., 1998, p. 528). However it has also been concluded that younger companies tend to be better exporters, attributed to the management of those companies more aggressively seeking export market information (Aaby et al., 1989, p. 19). It may be that as

companies age (especially manufacturers), they tend to grow in size, finally reaching a point where their size becomes the determinant to exporting. It may also be that the age phenomenon is a determinant of company strategy. Younger companies that export have a determined strategy and seek very specific goals. By their nature, these young companies seek external information sources to augment recognized internal deficiencies in expertise.

Size is an important determinant in terms of whether or not a company can afford to establish internal export support structures. One study found that companies with sales of under \$5 million are less likely to be exporters, while 50% of companies above that figure are likely to be exporters (Javalgi et al., 1998, p. 530). Larger companies enjoy the benefit of greater resources and an ability to enter foreign markets with an advantage of economies of scale, thus gaining a cost advantage by bringing down the per unit cost attributable to export operations. There is a positive relationship between the size of a company and the number of markets served (Calof, 1984, p. 384). Even when international involvement is limited to only exporting, larger companies tend to look at regional arrangements, as opposed to approaching one or two targeted foreign markets at a time.

Research suggests that company size and age are not a great variant in explaining export behavior (Calof, 1984, p. 384). Specific items, such as the exporter or non-exporter, become more defined the older and/or larger a company is, in both of these cases the more likely the company is to be involved in exporting. In behavioral terms, the larger a company is, the more resources it can be expected to devote toward exporting operations. At this level, the company is more likely to actively employ export market research and export intelligence to actively enhance expertise and the organizational knowledge base. These organizations can also be expected to be more supportive of export assistance efforts, even if they do not take advantage of export promotion programs. This is due to the fact that larger companies are more likely to reap benefits associated with their smaller suppliers taking an active role in international business. For example, suppliers who source raw materials worldwide or sell components on a larger scale, will then lower the per unit cost of their products. Globalization has been a reality for large companies since the 1970s and they often have been sourcing raw materials and goods from overseas longer than they have been involved in exporting.

Summary of Literature Review

Previous research has shown that the role of export information upon company decision-making is complex. A sizable portion of the export related studies have only measured the attitudes of export managers toward export promotion efforts, without further investigation into organizational effects of export information. Recent investigation has begun to focus on information acquisition within the organization, how the information is processed and the resultant influences upon organizational behavior. To date, the research in the realm of export information can be grouped into information acquisition and information use. Increasingly, the focus is on the effects information has within the exporting organization.

Information acquisition research indicates that companies are most likely to seek export information in the intermediate stage of exporting. It has been shown that companies that are more prolific in collecting information will be more likely to withstand export setbacks created by entering markets with different cultural norms. As these organizations become more seasoned exporters, they tend to focus on intuition to guide their export decision-making and become increasingly selective in their internal and external information gathering. Ultimately, companies engage in export market research in order to develop business plans, to support the decision-making process and to lessen the element of uncertainty.

Non-exporters perceive exporting as being too costly, too complex and/or too risky. Export information is seen as too costly to acquire and, in terms of internal expertise, to act upon. Yet studies have shown that regular exposure to media outlets that cover international events may result in the accumulation of extensive foreign market knowledge. This indicates that this source of export information, which is readily available and free, is not enticing the non-exporter to investigate foreign markets. Recent research into company characteristics and organizational behavior has begun to uncover the underlying forces that keeps some potential exporters from going overseas and current exporters from fulfilling their market potential. The results indicate that organizations that have ineffectual communication structures are unable to develop the information processing capabilities that enable decision makers to effectively navigate the

complexities of international business. Hence, this group of companies is unable to develop export market orientation or the importance of market intelligence.

Information use is largely determined by organizational culture, where flexible organic cultures of adhocracy and hierarchical have been found to be more adaptable to information flow than mechanistic hierarchical and clan cultures. Organic cultures have been shown to employ effective management over information inflow, intra-organizational flow and outflow. These organizations have adopted the information resource lifecycle of planning, acquisition, stewardship, exploitation and disposal at all levels of the company. Adhocracy and hierarchical organizations are more likely to be export market oriented where their internal efficiency of processing information leads to superior creation of competitive advantage through reliance upon intelligence as opposed to traditional export assistance.

Knowledge utilization theory proposes that company/user characteristics are as important to information utilization as the characteristics of the specific piece of information (Menon et al., 1992; Backer, 1993). The theory measures information use as instrumental, conceptual or symbolic in nature. Whereas researchers have called for export information to be instrumental in nature and thus readily applicable by the exporter, most export information is seen as requiring conceptual and symbolic skills to apply to export operations. Information users have been seen to go beyond direct implementation of information and conceptual development, to utilizing export information in symbolic ways.

Research Questions

This investigation into export information was designed to see if companies that actively use export information sources perform better, or perceive their performance as better, than information non-users. The literature suggests that information users are likely to have an organic, adhocracy or hierarchical organizational culture and therefore are more likely to develop a market orientation. These organizations should be better equipped to handle the challenges of the international marketplace and have robust business plans to support the decision-making process. Previous studies indicate that users of export information should be expected to

perform better in foreign markets than their contemporaries that do not actively use these information sources.

A additional goal of the study was to investigate characteristics of export information users, such as how information is applied to the decision-making process. Conventional studies have not investigated the internal effects of export information usage upon the organization. Greater knowledge as to the reasons for information acquisition and organizational processing of information is invaluable in developing effective dissemination systems.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research Design Selection

The majority of previous studies into exporting in general, and export information use specifically, have been conducted via survey instruments. A limited number of studies have augmented the survey with interview strategies. Unfortunately, there have been very few longitudinal studies, but there is an increasing realization that the topic of exporting and information use does require observing organizational behavior over a longer time period.

For this study the survey instrument was selected for its ability to provide for efficient polling of a large sample population. An aggregate picture of the effects of export information use and further insight into how organizations process information were the primary goals of the study. The survey instrument allows for easy comparison between independent variables of company characteristics and dependent variables of attitudes toward information use. A great number of factors play a role in perceptions of export information, for example manufacturing versus service organizations have different needs. The needs of novice exporters and seasoned exporters differ. Company size also plays a factor. Smaller companies are more restricted in terms of the expertise of their staff and may rely more on instrumental use of information as compared to larger companies that can afford to hire people with international business education and experience. Furthermore, geographical dispersion plays a role in the availability of staff with needed expertise. Companies located in coastal regions have greater access to international shipping lanes than inland companies. Additionally, companies located in rural areas or secondary cities suffer from a lack of staff with international business expertise, whereas urban companies benefit from a larger number of organizations in attracting knowledge workers. All these factors add layers of complexity when investigating the role export information plays within organizations.

Because a number of independent variables are a factor in perceptions of export information, research into the role of export information within the company lends itself to measurement via a survey instrument. For this project, statement questions relating to information perception were

based upon measures from a number of previous studies. A large number of measures were derived from the work of European communications researchers, who have carried out the majority of research into information use and its effects upon exports, whereas, U.S. marketing and business academics have conducted investigation into export organizational behavior. In order to expand beyond previous single variable studies, the decision was made to bridge the theories that have been developed in communications and business. Once the survey structure and potential measures were decided upon, a pilot study was distributed to two colleagues at the U.S. Department of Commerce, three associates managing aspects of international business for U.S.-based companies, and four individuals involved in export promotion efforts. Feedback from these individuals enabled refinement of the questions and resulted in the final survey instrument.

Sample Population

Generating a viable list of exporting companies can be difficult. There are a number of public and private sources for company information, such as various state government publications of manufacturers or the Dunn & Bradstreet Million Dollar Directory. The challenge is that these sources either do not or are notoriously inaccurate in reporting who is and who is not an exporter. Therefore, it was decided the best source of current exporters is from export assistance organizations such as local offices of the Department of Commerce, state trade promotion organizations, private trade organizations such as the World Trade Centers Association or industry specific trade associations. While trade promotion organizations have information on exporters, they also tend to guard this proprietary data from each other and from third parties. For this study, 21 export assistance organizations were faxed a copy of the survey and contacted via phone in regards to taking part in the survey. Most of these organizations opted not to participate, citing reasons such as existing studies they were undertaking or a lack of interest in the survey topic. It does stand to reason that export assistance organizations may feel threatened by research into export information use, as they all base their information delivery services on the U.S. Department of Commerce trade information offerings. Being a trade specialist has largely become a role of presenting a collage of information from various sources under the banner of your own organization. Research that may in some way upset the balance within the export assistance industry could be viewed as irrelevant or upsetting.

The sample population was ultimately drawn from six-export assistance organizations. These were the Kentucky World Trade Center, World Trade Center Baltimore, Maryland World Trade Center, Delaware World Trade Center Club, the Virginia State Export Office and the Georgia State Promotion Office. It was assumed that most of the companies appearing on these rosters would be at least minimally involved in international business. The selection of the export assistance organizations was also designed to provide a geographical spread between urban and rural companies.

The export assistance organization listings were further refined by removing service providers whose membership is one of providing services to the exporters, but in and within themselves do not offer services in foreign markets. These included law firms, banks, foreign consulates and business consultants. Additionally, companies with fewer than 25 employees were removed; given the unlikelihood that these small organizations would have the internal resources or expertise to use export information extensively. At the conclusion of this process, the final sample population numbered 446 companies.

Data Collection and Analysis

A number of factors went into the decision to administer the survey via the Internet:

- 1) Paramount was appealing to companies that have grown wary of the large number of surveys in which they are asked to participate. There was a need to distinguish this survey as an academic survey from the more routine export surveys administered by export promotion agencies. Many companies are hesitant to participate in export promotion surveys because the aim is to quantify the total exports of a state or region. The subject of exporting has become a pet project of politicians and policy makers who often administer surveys in support of an agenda.
- 2) The Internet offered an easy alternative for international business people who may be spending considerable time on overseas travel.
- 3) Previously web-based surveys administered by University faculty have proven to produce favorable return rates as compared to similar surveys administered via mail.
- 4) Web-based surveys provide yet another degree of anonymity for the survey participant.

A Canadian company that specializes in administering survey instruments hosted the web-based survey (InfoPoll, www.infopoll.com). To add another level of anonymity to the participants, InfoPoll was selected over hosting the survey instrument on a University server. Additionally, InfoPoll offers a turnkey service, where they provide the software necessary to construct the survey and then seamless transfer to their web servers. Throughout the data collection process and upon conclusion of the survey, InfoPoll offers limited, but valuable analysis tools built into their software. This survey instrument¹ was posted on the Internet for a total of four weeks, the start of which coincided with the first e-mail distributed to the sample population.

The survey population was solicited at three different intervals:

- 1) An initial e-mail sent the day the web-based survey went online.
- 2) A personalized letter addressed to the identified international business contact within the company. The letter was mailed three days after the survey went online so arrival would be one week after the initial e-mail solicitation.
- 3) A follow-up e-mail, thanking those who had already participated in the survey, sent two weeks after the survey went online.

The e-mails and letters soliciting participation stressed the fact that this was an academic survey investigating the role of export information within companies. It was explained that the survey was web-administered in order to ensure the anonymity of survey participants. Participants were instructed to visit the web page that provided them access to the survey instrument. A time estimate of 8 to 15 minutes to complete the survey was provided.

During the 30 days that the survey instrument was live on the World Wide Web, InfoPoll's server collected the responses and provided researcher web access for continuous monitoring of response progress. At the conclusion of data collection, a results file was downloaded from the InfoPoll server for analysis beyond the descriptive data provided by InfoPoll's proprietary software.

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¹ See [Appendix A: Survey Instrument](#)

The survey instrument was separated into five sections:

1. “General information”: independent variables such as the type of company, number of employees, gross revenue and title of respondent.
2. “Your exporting activities”: independent variables such as export revenue, which regions exported to, how many foreign markets exported to, how many years the company has exported, export growth over the past four years, four export satisfaction variables, ranking of competitive position (Likert scale), utilization of export information and monitoring of world news to evaluate export operations (Likert scale).
3. “How you use information”: 14 statements relating to information use, measured on a Likert scale of 1 being “strongly disagree” to 5 being “strongly agree.” The statements were designed to provide several different measures of respondents’ attitudes toward the role export information plays in their company.
4. “Different types of information”: ranked six different types of export information (political, market potential, economic conditions, cultural, physical infrastructure and legal environment), across three different stages of exporting (initial planning, entering a new market and market development). The variables were measured via a Likert scale of 1 being “of little importance” to 5 being “of critical importance.”
5. “Thank you” with the opportunity to submit comments.

Upon conclusion of the data gathering, the survey response data was entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software program for further analysis. Descriptive statistics relating to the independent variables of company characteristics were generated to provide an overall picture of the survey response population. Key indicators of the company characteristics, such as the variable measuring information use or non-use, were further analyzed against a set of export performance satisfaction variables, four-year export growth and statements pertaining to information use.

The statements pertaining to information use were grouped to provide the following index constructs and information use dimensions:²

- 1) Index constructs:
 - a. Competitive advantage
 - b. Information acquisition
 - c. Decision making
 - d. Organizational learning
 - e. Information processing
- 2) Information use dimensions:
 - a. Instrumental use
 - b. Conceptual use
 - c. Symbolic use

Bivariate Measures

The index constructs and information use dimensions were combined to provide one measure of mean values. These measures were then recoded to provide binomial measures, with Likert scale ranking of 1 to 3 being assigned to “strongly disagree” and 4 to 5 being “strongly agree.” The same process of recoding the measures was applied to the Likert scales measuring export performance satisfaction (1 to 2 being “unsatisfied and 3 to 5 being “very satisfied), competitive position ranking (1 to 2 being “low” and 3 to 5 being “high”) and monitoring of world news to evaluate exports (1 to 3 being “not at all” and 4 to 5 being “extensively”).

Independent variables of company characteristics were similarly grouped to provide binomial measures:

- 1) Business activity of company was measured only between manufacturers and service provider, leaving out 4% of respondents who were agricultural companies.
- 2) Gross revenue of the company was recoded to \$1 to \$60 million and \$61+ million
- 3) Job title of respondents was recoded to export staff and company officer. This process left out some respondents who cited themselves as administrative staff.
- 4) The number of foreign markets served was recoded to 1-10 markets and 21+ markets.

² See [Appendix B](#): Constructs Leading to Indices

- 5) The number of years the company has been involved in exporting was recoded to 1-10 years and 11+ years.
- 6) Export market growth over the past four years saw 80% of respondents fall into one of two groupings, “more than 10%” and “negative growth.”
- 7) Use of third-party export information was already a binomial measure of “yes” or “no”

Recoding the variables to binomial measures allowed for analysis of relationships of significance via Pearson’s Chi-Square, $X = \sum [(E-O)^2 \div E]$. The independent variables of company characteristics were then compared against export satisfaction, competitive position, index constructs and information use dimensions.

Chapter 4

Results

The survey had a response of 46 companies out of a survey population of 446, resulting in a response rate of 10.31%. Four respondents did not answer the entire questionnaire, and a further four either provided comments and/or requested survey results. In addition, 32, or 7.1%, of correspondence to the sample population was returned as undeliverable. It was assumed that these were companies that had either moved or gone out of business. No pattern was found in regards to a higher number of returns stemming from any one specific source list. The low response rate limits the applicability of the research findings. Several hypotheses are extended in discussion of the low response rate:

- 1) Recognized wariness on the part of companies to partake in export surveys.
- 2) The moderately high number of survey questions was initially a cause of concern. A subsequent review of InfoPoll records showed that every participant that visited the survey web site completed the survey.
- 3) Negative perceptions on the part of corporate decision makers in relation to the survey topic of export information. The literature has shown that decision makers do not place high value on third party export information. Hence, potential survey participants may have felt that their participation was unwarranted.
- 4) A longer sampling time frame could have been employed. In corresponding with staff that may or may not be actively traveling throughout the world, it may have been that they did not receive word of the survey in time. Communication via e-mail was designed to circumvent any such problems. Additionally, since the close of the sampling time frame no potential participants have contacted the researcher about not being able to partake in the survey.

Company Characteristics

A review of company characteristics offers a snapshot of the response pool. Overall, respondents are small manufacturers exporting to less than 20 markets, with less than ten years of export experience. In terms of size, the companies employ fewer than 250 and have revenues not exceeding \$60 million. Slightly more than half of the respondents actively utilize third-party

export information and/or monitor world news to evaluate their export operations. This is a surprising finding, as it was not expected that such a high number would report using export information. The results may have been skewed by respondents answering what they felt was politically correct. Half of the respondents report a four-year export market growth rate of more than 10%, while a full one-third report negative growth.

Table 1:

Descriptive Statistics of Key Company Characteristics

Main business activity of the company:	Manufacturing 28.6%	Service 71.4%
Company size in terms of number of employees:	0 – 250 87.1%	250+ 12.9%
Company size in terms of gross revenue:	\$1 - \$60 million 68.4%	\$61+ million 31.6%
Respondents job title (export staff vs. officer):	Export staff 42.1%	Officer 57.9%
How many foreign markets exported to:	1 – 20 markets 65%	21+ markets 35%
Years company has been exporting:	1 – 10 years 61.9%	10+ years 38.1%
Four year export market growth:	More than 10% 47.6%	Negative 33.3%
Utilize third-party export information:	Yes 63.6%	No 36.4%
Monitor world news to evaluate export operations:	Not at all 57.1%	Extensively 42.9%

Export surveys of this type do suffer from a bias brought about by organizational size and perhaps human nature. Smaller companies, with smaller management chains are more likely to respond to direct solicitation surveys. Perhaps management in these companies have an easier time relating to the topic of a survey, feel they have more time to respond or feel more of a

personal responsibility to respond to surveys as opposed to what is witnessed in a larger and more impersonal organization. Never the less, studies devoted to aspects of export information use seek to understand the small- to medium-sized organization, since within the U.S., 80% of companies of this size that could export do not export.

Slightly over half of the respondents report being manufacturers (52.2%), while one-third reported being involved in the service sector. Interestingly, 13% report being of “other” business type; the assumption is drawn that this group most likely consists of hybrid companies that are involved in both manufacturing of products and provide services in some way related to their manufactured products. In terms of analyzing the data, this group of “other” companies was viewed as manufacturers, as their core initial business enterprise is most likely to be manufacturing.

The majority of respondents, 78%, report exporting directly overseas. This is an indicator that these organizations have moved beyond the initial stages of exporting, where companies are only fulfilling orders from overseas or selling overseas through a domestic distributor or a specialized export trading company. The exported product/service is being distributed throughout the world, with the Indian sub-continent and the CIS having the lowest reported interest, both at about one-third of respondents. Interestingly, 83% report exporting to Asia. This is important considering that companies in the sample population were all located in the eastern part of the U.S. Such a finding indicates that at least with this group of respondents, national culture has not been a major deterrence toward exporting to these markets. Previous research indicates that companies are more likely to export to countries that are similar in national culture to the home market. The United States and Asian cultures are almost at the opposite ends of both Hofsted’s and Schwartz’s cultural frameworksⁱ, which makes it fascinating that the Asian markets received the highest percentage in the regional measure of where the response group is exporting to.

Nearly half of the respondents report having exported for 6 to 10 years, with another 23% reporting upwards of 15 years. The relative new to exporting, 83% of the respondents having exported no more than 15 years, indicate that their export activities may be spurred on by globalization, which has been expanding in the years since the mid-1980s. No longer is

international business solely the venue of large multi-national companies. Increasingly small- and medium-sized companies are finding markets for their products overseas and/or finding foreign competitors encroaching on their home market.

In terms of actively utilizing third party information sources, such as that disseminated by the U.S. Department of Commerce, state export offices, or World Trade Centers, 64% of respondents reported that they do indeed consult these sources. These companies are the target group for export assistance organizations and the results indicate that the assistance is reaching the targeted audience. Although, the point should be raised that this result does not directly say anything about the intra-company processing of export information.

The mean of the export performance satisfaction variables indicate that respondents are neutral in their rating along the dimensions of export sales volume, export profitability, export market share and rate of new market entry. There was a slight leaning toward unsatisfied on export market share satisfaction. While respondents are not overly satisfied with their export operations, they report having a slightly more than favorable competitive position in overseas markets. Part of the explanation of these mixed numbers might be the use of a five point Likert scale, which does have a tendency to draw respondents into the middle range of the scale.

Table 2:

Means of Satisfaction Variables

Measure	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
<u>Satisfaction measures:</u>			
1= unsatisfied to 5=very satisfied			
Export sales volume satisfaction	42	2.760	1.165
Export profitability satisfaction	42	3.000	1.210
Export market share satisfaction	40	2.350	1.122
Rate of new market entry satisfaction	40	2.550	1.085
<i>Mean of satisfaction measures</i>			
Competitive position in foreign markets	44	2.730	1.188
Monitor world news to evaluate export operations	44	3.410	1.207

The respondents rank the information use statements concerning the value of information higher than average, while giving lower scores to statements indicating a lack of value placed in information (Steenkamp, 2001, pp. 31 & 33). Here there is the possibility that survey participants may have responded in a manner they perceived as being politically correct. Their responses could reflect a cultural or social bias toward recognizing the importance information can play in organizational planning and business execution, but show a reluctance to admit that within their own organizations information does not play a significant role.

The constructs (combined statement variables) from the information use statements followed a similar pattern to the statements themselves in regards to the means. Most notable were statements leading to a construct for competitive advantage, which measured a mean of 4.083. This is interesting in light of the single variable Likert scale question that measured the perceived competitive position in foreign markets with a mean of 2.730. The results show that respondents have a tendency to focus on information that can lead toward an enhanced competitive position in foreign markets, while not ranking their actual competitive position in these markets highly. Obviously the respondents recognizes information that can lead to competitive advantage, but also recognize the constant struggle to gain that advantage in the marketplace.

Table 3:

Average Ranking of Constructs of Information Use Statements

Measure	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
<u>Perceptions of information indexes:</u>			
1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree			
Competitive advantage	44	4.083	0.810
Information acquisition	44	3.023	0.785
Decision making	44	3.500	0.555
Organizational learning	44	3.500	1.210
Information processing	44	3.171	0.617
<u>Dimensions of information utilization indexes:</u>			
1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree			
Instrumental use	44	3.354	0.445
Conceptual use	44	3.966	0.662
Symbolic use	44	3.030	0.666

The final section of the survey measured six different information types in three different stages of exporting. The results show only slight changes in the average ranking over the three different export stages¹. For each information type, an average was calculated across the stages of exporting in order to provide a picture and ranking of how exporters perceive each type. The results, shown in Chart 1, indicate economic and market potential information most favorably sought after. This is followed by information on the legal environment, the physical infrastructure of foreign markets and the political environment. In line with previous research, cultural aspects show the lowest ranking.

¹ See [Appendix D](#): Mean Scores of Information Types Across Stages of Exporting

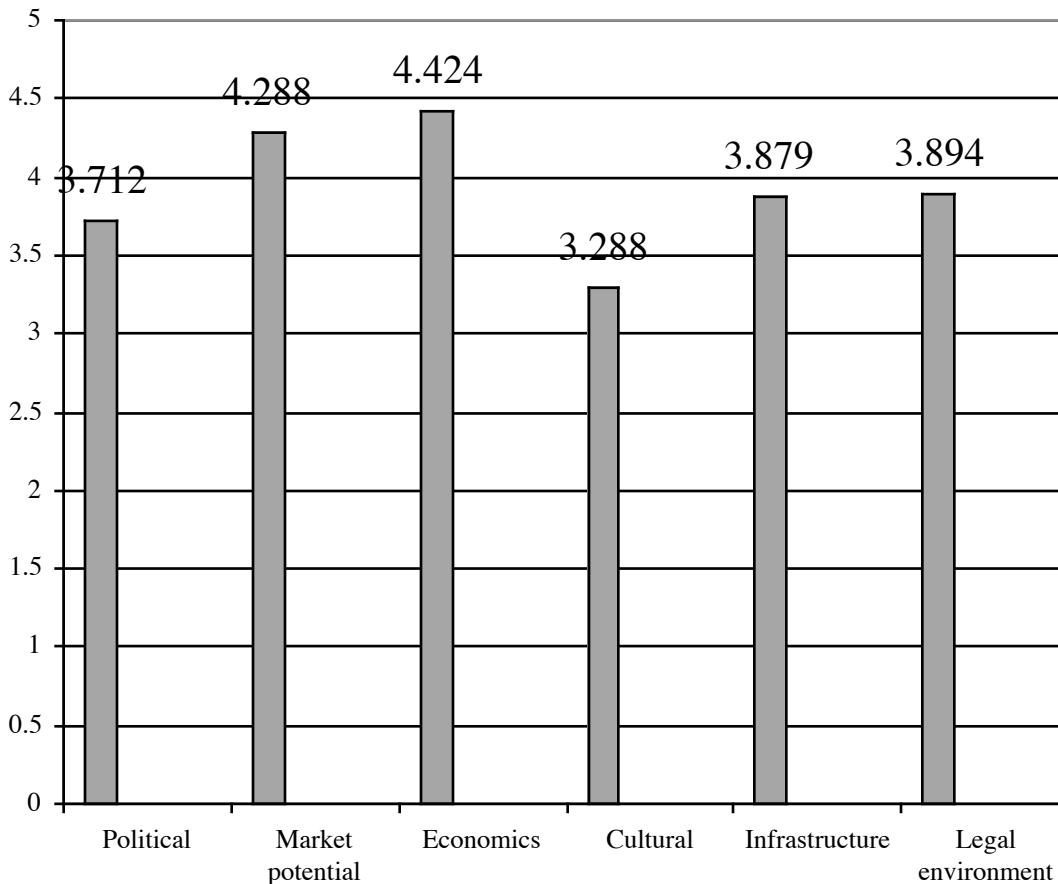


Figure 1. Likert scale mean rankings of information types

Bivariate Results

This study was designed to see if companies that actively use export information sources perform better, or perceive their performance as improved over non-users of the information source. Furthermore, the study sought to investigate if there are characteristics of export information users, such as how they apply information or company characteristics that provides evidence of a link between efficient intra-company communication structures and success in foreign markets.

The bivariate results did not indicate a direct relationship between information use and reported higher export growth rates over the past four years. The data does however indicate several divergences in how information users and non-users view and process information. These findings provide evidence as to why non-users of information may encounter more difficulties in foreign markets. Another finding is the differences exhibited in the measure for export information use versus the measure for employing world news in order to evaluate export

operations. The two variables were intended to measure different types of information usage, one formal and one informal, with the expectation that their significances would mirror each other. Yet the results show an unexpected shift in terms of the measure for world news, which indicates a correlation to a number of the export satisfaction variables.

Export information use was operationalized directly in a “yes” or “no” question asking respondents if their company, “on an ongoing basis, utilized third party export or foreign market information sources.” Whereas, a second question measured the respondents’ monitoring of world news sources in order to evaluate export operations, via the use of a five-point Likert scale ranking from “not at all” to “extensively.” A Pearson’s chi-square measure of significance of these two variables was employed against: (1) company characteristics of business activity, gross revenue, respondents title, number of foreign markets exported to, years involved in exporting, export market growth over the past four years, the performance satisfaction variables and competitive position; (2) the five constructs for perceptions of information; (3) the three dimensions of information utilization; and (4) the aggregate scores of the six information types.

[Appendix E](#) provides a table of all the significant Pearson’s chi-squares found in the survey variables.² Of note are the areas of significance between export information use and world news evaluation. The majority of significant relationships involving export information were found in the constructs for perceptions of information, dimensions of information utilization and information types. When looking at evaluation of world news sources, significances were seen in company characteristics, specifically amongst the export satisfaction variables. A review of the breakdown between the two variables indicates that two-thirds of both information users and non-users were tilted toward “not at all” regarding use of world news to evaluate export operations. This observation may indicate that companies that utilize world news to evaluate export operations may be seeking confirmation of previous decisions or an element of comfort in their export choices. On the other hand, users of export information seek sources that assist in planning and decision making efforts.

² For a more detailed view, see [Appendix F: Crosstab Tables of Significant Pearson’s Chi-Squares](#)

Information Use Versus Non-use

Review of the chi-square analysis of information use versus non-use in regards to the three dimensions of information utilization shows another interesting result. Within the dimensions of how companies process information, only symbolic use of information was found to have a significant relationship to information use, $\chi^2(1, N=44)=16.219$, $p<.000$. While the other two dimensions were not found to be statistically significant, Table 4 shows that information users range from strongly disagreeing to instrumental use statements to strongly agreeing to symbolic use statements. Simultaneously information non-users remain more or less constant in their responses to the information use statements. The data indicate that users of third-party export information have a propensity to use information in sophisticated ways – symbolically as opposed to instrumentally. This is a critical finding because the export literature stresses the increased complexity of doing business overseas, brought on by attributes associated with culture and society. Hence, if users of export information show a significant relationship toward symbolic use of information, this finding indicates that information users in the study are using information to overcome the challenges of international business. Furthermore, in small- and medium-sized companies of finite means and expertise, the use of export information sources may be critical in mastering the nuances of international business and, by extension, in becoming a successful exporter.

Table 4:

Information Use Versus Non-Use in Dimensions of Information Utilization

		Strongly disagree	Strongly agree
Instrumental use	Information use	26	2
	Information non-use	12	4
Conceptual use	Information use	12	16
	Information non-use	10	6
Symbolic use	Information use	4	24
	Information non-use	12	4

The current study corresponds to McAuley (1993) and Hart (et al., 1994). Both studies found that the longer a company has been exporting, the less likely it is to be using export information.

A twist is found in the current study, where a chi-square analysis indicates that exporters with less than 10 years of experience are three times more likely to be information users than non-users, $\chi^2(1, N=44)=4.849$, $p<.028$. Whereas, exporters with more than 10 years exporting experience are evenly split between information use and non-use. These findings support the contention that new to exporting companies are more likely to be export information users.

Further statistically significant relationships were found between information use and the information perception constructs, namely competitive advantage, information acquisition and construct for information processing. The data illustrates a split between information users and non-users in their perception of the role of information within the organization. In terms of information processing, a significant relationship was found in non-users agreeing with the statements regarding export information being rejected, ignored, not being specific enough, or internal first-hand information being highly important, $\chi^2(1, N=44)=4.243$, $p<.039$. Information users were found to lean toward disagreeing with such statements.

Competitive advantage statements such as information being a critical component in gaining a competitive advantage, information leading to increased export volume and being important to becoming a successful exporter, were shown to have a significant relationship to information users, $\chi^2(1, N=44)=16.219$, $p<.000$. While 24 out of 28 information users agreed with the statements, 12 out of 16 non-users disagreed with the statements. A similar split was found in information acquisition (see Table 5), where information users agree with the statements that their company acquires more information than it uses and that additional information is always needed, $\chi^2(1, N=44)=25.143$, $p<.000$. In contrast, all of the non-users strongly disagreed with these two statements.

Table 5:

Information Use Versus Index for Information Acquisition Statements

<u>Crosstab</u>	<u>Info. acquisition:</u>		Total
	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	
Information user	6	22	28
% of Total	13.6%	50%	63.6%
Information non-user	16		16
% of Total	36.4%		36.4%
Total Count	22	22	44
% of Total	50%	50%	

The relationships between information use and the constructs for information perceptions, illustrate that users of information have a tendency to consider information sources as valuable and to identify with statements that cast information as a valuable component of their export planning and operations. Whereas, the opposite is seen in companies that are not active users of export information. Previous literature stresses the importance of a solid internal communication structure to enable decision makers to make informed choices. In regards to their views toward information, results of this study indicate that non-users of export information may not have well developed communication structures.

The importance respondents gave to each information source during the three different stages of exporting was measured via a five point Likert scale. In order to employ in bivariate analysis, the mean for each information type was calculated across the three export stages. The resulting mean was then recoded in SPSS to provide a binary ranking relating to, “of little importance” and “of critical importance.” Through this process, significant relationships were found to exist between information use and several information types; namely, political information on foreign markets, $\chi^2(1,N=44)=6.286$, $p<.012$, market potential estimates, $\chi^2(1,N=44)=8.852$, $p<.003$, economic conditions of foreign markets, $\chi^2(1,N=44)=4.849$, $p<.028$ and physical infrastructure of foreign markets, $\chi^2(1,N=44)=4.848$, $p<.028$. In these four, out of a total of six chi-square analyses of information types, users of export information ranked information types higher than

non- users. Furthermore, three-fourths of non-users consistently ranked all six information types of little importance.

These findings are important not only because of what they says about export information users discernment of differing information types, but also for the indications of how entrenched non-users are in using intuition to guide their overseas ventures. In regards to responding to the six information types across three different stages of exporting, non-users of information do not exhibit any tendency toward political correctness. These results are startling because they indicate that non-users of information disregard export information in favor of their internal expertise and intuition. The assumption is that non-users of export information are much more likely to rely on first-hand information or experienced based intuition in planning and executing export operations. This raises the question of whether users of export information actually export to more markets, in larger volumes, and/or go through the steps of becoming “internationalized” more quickly? The literature provides some indication that export information use does have benefits in making organizations more robust to handle the challenges of competing in foreign markets. A review of the data for this survey indicates that two-thirds of information users indicate export growth of 10 percent or more, while non-users are split half-and-half when it comes to export growth. Other company characteristic variables are inconclusive and will require future study to determine the exact ramifications of active use of export information.

Monitoring World News to Evaluate Export Operations

Companies that report using world news in order to evaluate export operations show several significant relationships with the measures of export satisfaction. The expected observation of a similarity of results between information use and world news evaluation was not proven to hold true in analysis of the export satisfaction variables. Whereas use of export information has been seen to strengthen the internal communication structure, by extension it enhances the information flow to decision makers. The reliance upon world news evaluation appears to bolster the respondents’ confidence in their decision-making, by extension underwriting their intuition and evaluation of their international business expertise. The chi-square analysis offers an image of the respondent who employs world news in order to evaluate export operations.

Only one out of six manufacturers is likely to use world news to evaluate export operations, as opposed to a 50-50 split measured by service providers, $\chi^2(1, N=42)=5.815$, $p<.016$. It is generally accepted that due to the nature of their business, service providers are more susceptible to social and political forces of foreign countries and, are thus only able to extend a short-term commitment to a market. Manufacturers, on the other hand, have a long-term investment in export operations and their products. This may explain why manufacturers are shown to be less interested in the day-to-day reporting of world news, knowing that small changes in their market do not have much impact upon their long-term view of export planning and execution.

Similar splits between manufacturers and service providers are seen in chi-square analysis of revenue and number of markets served. Four out of five large companies do not use world news, $\chi^2(1, N=38)=4.656$, $p<.031$. Whereas companies exporting to fewer markets are more likely to use world news extensively, $\chi^2(1, N=42)=7.000$, $p<.008$. These results are expected, as larger companies are more likely to devote more energy and funds into formal export planning, thus being less swayed by on-the-ground events reported by the press. The literature indicates that companies competing in fewer foreign markets are either new to exporting or consider export operations secondary to serving the domestic market. In either case, this group has fewer markets to monitor and may not yet have an extensive investment in exporting; hence they are more likely to take an interest in market information communicated through world news sources.

The most startling results involving the use of world news to evaluate export operations was measured in the variables for export satisfaction. In three out of four measures of export satisfaction, and again in the aggregate for these measures, respondents who reported using world news extensively to evaluate export operations also reported a higher degree of satisfaction in the export satisfaction variables. The relationship is illustrated in Table 6, illustrating several factors: a) that two-thirds of respondents who reported being very satisfied with their level of export profitability also reported using world news extensively to evaluate export operations, $\chi^2(1, N=42)=12.963$, $p<.000$; b) market share satisfaction, $\chi^2(1, N=40)=6.667$, $p<.010$; c) rate of new market entry, $\chi^2(1, N=40)=3.889$, $p<.049$; and d) average of satisfaction statements, $\chi^2(1, N=42)=8.145$, $p<.004$.

Table 6:

World News Evaluation Versus Export Profitability Satisfaction

<u>Crosstab</u>	<u>Export profitability:</u>		Total
	Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	
<u>World news: Not at all</u>	16	8	24
% of Total	38.1%	19%	57.1%
<u>Extensively</u>	2	16	18
% of Total	4.8%	38.1%	42.9%
<u>Total Count</u>	18	24	42
% of Total	42.9%	57.1%	

The use of world news to evaluate export operations is most often employed by service providers and companies exporting to a smaller number of foreign markets. The respondents' causation for an interest in world news may differ, but it appears that using world news as a source of information on foreign markets has the result of making respondents look more favorably upon their own international achievements. The global media spotlight tends to shine on areas of strife, hence giving the perception of a world in constant turmoil. With such a worldview, exporters who use world news to evaluate their export operations are likely to be satisfied with their export operations. This theory is further underscored if these same companies do not actively use export information, and hence are not influenced by an objective third party influence that may affect their satisfaction perception.

The respondents who indicated extensive use of world news, also had a significant relationship with the statements regarding information's influence on and necessity for decision making, $\chi^2(1, N=44)=25.385, p<.000$. This is a surprising finding, especially in light of the fact that the majority of respondents who do not use world news as an information source strongly disagreed with the decision-making statements. It may be a different dimension of the observed export satisfaction relationship, indicating that respondents who monitor world news not only use the information to bolster their estimation of the company's performance overseas, but also actively attempt to integrate the information into the decision-making structure. This would be valid for

new exporters who are not users of export information. It may also be valid for more seasoned exporters who have turned away from export information toward a greater reliance upon intuition. Professionals in this grouping may be unaware to what extent world news influences their decision-making. Whereas the individual may assume that decisions are based upon his or her expertise, an unmeasured factor may be attributable to knowledge gained through the global media.

Other Significant Relationships

There is a divergence in regards to the statements on information processing that consisted of a) rejecting or ignoring export information, b) the information not being specific enough and c) a leaning toward reliance on internal first-hand information. A chi-square analysis indicates a divergence between companies under \$60 million and their larger counterparts when it comes to statements on information processing, $\chi^2(1, N=38)=12.229$, $p<.000$. These findings support Sinkula (1990) discoveries that showed that smaller companies are more likely to question the relevance of export information to their operational needs. Part of the problem may be that smaller companies are either unaware of information sources or do not have the in-house expertise to apply the available export information. The data from this study shows a tendency by smaller companies to reject outright the importance of export information to their own challenges of exporting.

The survey section of company characteristics measured export growth over four years, where the results naturally divided into two groups of “negative growth” and “more than 10% growth.” A chi-square analysis indicates that five out of six companies reporting negative growth strongly disagree with the statements stressing the importance of information acquisition, $\chi^2(1, N=34)=7.105$, $p<.008$, indicating a possible causation for negative export growth, which may be a lack of organizational efforts to acquire process export information in support of decision-making.

A common perception of exporters is to see foreign countries as corrupt and favoring local or regional suppliers over international competitors. A chi-square analysis of the results shows that three out of four respondents that perceived their competitive position in foreign markets as low

also view political information to be of critical importance, $\chi^2(1, N=44)=6.286$, $p<.012$. No similar correlation was found to exist between the competitive position variable and any of the other five information types variables. This finding indicates that the respondents may attribute a lack of competitive position to the political situation of the host country.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Conclusions

Contributions

This research project investigated the role played by export information in the decision-making functions of companies. Specifically, the study evaluated if the active use of export information has a positive effect upon export growth over a four-year time period and the respondents satisfaction of export performance, when compared against non-users of these information sources. Furthermore, the work sought to provide insight into the area of organizational information processing. Identifying organizational characteristics, which causes some companies to effectively use export information where others do not. The practical outcomes of this line of research are to teach companies how to more effectively use export information and to increase the effectiveness of export assistance organizations.

The bivariate results do not indicate a direct relationship between information use and reported higher export growth rates over a four-year period. Companies engage in export market research in order to develop business plans, to support the decision-making process and to lessen the element of uncertainty. Previous studies have shown that companies that are more prolific in collecting information will be more likely to withstand export setbacks. The hypothesis is that information users will be rewarded for their careful planning and execution of international operations via the use of export information with enhanced profitability in their foreign ventures. However, with the small response rate, it is not conclusive to say there is no relationship. Previous studies have indeed indicated a relationship between the utilization of export information and export success. Future work in this area needs to replicate the current study to acquire a larger data sample in order to draw a more conclusive result.

The binary measure for information use when compared to the Likert scale measure for reliance upon world news to evaluate export operations indicate a divergence in the bivariate measures. The two measures were intended to evaluate two different types of information usage, one formal and one informal. Hence, the expectation was that their significances would to a large degree mirror each other. Upon analysis, the results show an unexpected shift, where the

measure for world news exhibits a statistically significant link to export satisfaction variables. The findings indicate that executives who monitor the global media in order to evaluate export operations have greater satisfaction perception in terms of export performance than respondents who use export information. Previous studies indicate that regular exposure to media outlets that provide coverage of international news can result in the accumulation of extensive foreign market knowledge. In this study, the results indicate that the monitoring of world news to evaluate export markets has the result of making exporters more confident in their export decisions.

Users of export information were found not to have a significant relationship to any of the five export performance measures, but were found to apply information in more sophisticated ways. Along the measures of knowledge utilization, information users were found more likely to apply export information in symbolic ways. Moving in a progression from low nominal use, medium conceptual use, to high symbolic use. Whereas, non-users of export information were found to relate more strongly to instrumental application of information. This finding adds validity to the knowledge utilization theory, which states that company/user characteristics are as important to utilization as the characteristics of the specific piece of information. The current study indicates that users of third-party export information enhance their internal processes to take advantage of information in more sophisticated ways. In effect, these organizations are strengthening their internal communication structures and expanding their knowledge base in order to more effectively process incoming information.

Exporters who reported having negative export growth, being non-users of third-party export information or did not use international news to evaluate their export operations were found not to agree with the statements measuring symbolic use of information. The global marketplace is more complex and subtle than the domestic U.S. market. The negative export growth may well be attributable to the organizations lacking the expertise to apply export information in a symbolic manner. A 1977 study found that in general research is used only in conceptual ways, not in direct instrumental ways (Lee, Acito & Day, 1987, p. 189). Lee takes the findings of that study to argue that export information needs to be changed in order to be readily applicable to export situations, calling upon export assistance organizations disseminate instrumental

information. The finding of this study contradicts Lee's conclusions. The current study finds that companies that use export information apply this knowledge in sophisticated ways. Such application is necessary because, (1) with the large amount of export information available, finding information that can be acted upon is at best difficult, and (2) the complexity of international business, brought about by different legal, political, economic, cultural and social structures, requires the ability of exporters to assemble subtle pieces of information into a comprehensive picture. As a result, the call is not for instrumental information, but one of teaching companies the skills necessary to apply information symbolically. Export assistance organizations should target companies that exhibit eagerness to learn how, or already possess the expertise, to apply information to their planning and decision-making. The complexity of international business calls for efforts to empower companies with the expertise to effectively enter and succeed in foreign markets.

The study confirms earlier investigation in regards to the types of export information companies have the most interest. In ranked order, the respondents of this study were most interested in economic, market potential, legal, infrastructure, political and cultural information types. Information users were found to have a statistically significant relationship with political, market potential and economic information types. The present study found that respondents focused on information that could lead toward an enhanced competitive advantage. In this regard, information users were shown to have a significant relationship with constructs measuring competitive advantage, importance of information to exporting and information leading to increased exports. This further underscores the expertise found in companies that use export information in regards to their approach to foreign markets.

Limitations

The main limitation of this investigation is the size of the response pool that also exhibits a similarity of characteristics. The results were based upon responses from only 46 participants. Furthermore, the data set is skewed toward manufacturing companies of under 250 employees, having under \$60 million in revenue, serving less than 20 markets and having been exporting less than 10 years.

The respondents ranked the information use statements concerning the value of information higher than average, while giving lower scores to statements indicating a lack of value of information. There is the possibility that survey participants responded in a perceived politically correct fashion. Therefore, reflecting a social bias toward recognizing the importance information can play in organizational planning and business execution, but having a reluctance to admit that within their own organizations information does not play an important role in decision-making.

The use of the survey instrument is a limitation, in that the nuances of inter-organizational communication are perhaps more adequately measured through the use of more intimate research methods. First and foremost would be the use of one-on-one interview strategies. Additionally, group discussion settings of either staff from one organization or from a number of different companies may provide additional insight into the role of export information.

Implications For Researchers

Further investigation has to be conducted into the prevailing view that calls for an increase in the availability of instrumental export information. In terms of knowledge utilization, this study indicates that users of export information are likely to apply knowledge in symbolic ways. With the complexity of planning and execution of international business, it seems that a shift in effort should be made to teach symbolic use of information, as being preferable to calling upon export assistance organizations to disseminate information that can be applied instrumentally. Further research needs to be conducted into the organizational processing of export information to understand the true implications on decision-making. Through such efforts, researchers can begin to help export assistance organizations develop programs geared toward effective information use for the international marketplace.

Results from this study indicate that researchers need to be weary of confusing export satisfaction with objective measures of export success. The majority of studies in the area of export information has focused on managers' perceptions, thus not providing an objective measure of the true success of the company. This study shows that having an interest in international news, something that is easy to instill in staff working with or international markets, will alter

their perceptions of the companies success. While the verifiability of self-reported sales or profits is questionable, such objective measures do provide more concrete basis for the development of new theories into the effectiveness and role of export information.

Implications For Practitioners

Export promotion agencies need to focus their efforts on the exporters that are most likely to provide a beneficial return on their efforts. Specifically, they should seek to rank companies by organizational culture, focusing on market oriented and adhocracy cultures that have proven to be more adaptive to the demands of exporting. Efforts should focus less on delivering raw data, in favor of an emphasis on training. Specifically, this study concludes that policy makers should focus on training companies how to apply their export knowledge in symbolic ways. This will assist companies in seeing the nuances of international business and make better decisions.

Emphasis should be placed on increasing export totals for existing exporters, rather than enticing non-exporters to enter foreign markets. This study concludes that companies that rely on monitoring of world news to evaluate their export operations exhibit higher satisfaction toward export performance than companies that do not rely on this resource. This finding raises the question that satisfaction with export operations is perhaps a false feeling of security. Companies may not know the full potential of their exports in foreign markets and as a result not meeting the potential of the global marketplace. Such a situation raises the risk that competitors will develop competitive advantages that over time will negate the advantages of the company. Globalization theory states that each market specializes in the industries where it is most cost effective. Thus, for the national economy, under performance of exporters is detrimental because domestic production is not being fully maximized, giving advantage to other countries to fill the shortfall. Over time this can result in production specialization being shifted away from the domestic market to new more specialized economies elsewhere.

While the statistics show that 80 percent of potential exporters do not export, there are reasons for this situation. It may be that the organizational cultures of a large number of non-exporters do not lend itself to supporting export activities. Having access to export information is increasingly not an issue, but organizational expertise to take advantage of the resources

continues to be a barrier to greater participation in exporting. Funds devoted toward export promotion should seek to assist those companies that are most likely to become profitable exporters and offer training for staff to develop the necessary expertise to navigate international business. Above all, the practitioner needs to pay greater attention to the internal communication structure of the company. Open companies will have greater success overseas than organizations where management does not receive input from across the organization.

For the active exporter, the results indicate a need to evaluate the utilization of export information. Evaluation should revolve around acquisition and use of information, gauging what type of information is sought and how the results are employed on an organizational level. Measures should be implemented to focus the organization toward being export market focused, placing a high emphasis on the role of export information within the entire organization. Export operations should be approached as an organization-wide effort, not left largely up to one department devoted to international business.

Future Research

A similar study to the current one should be carried out with a larger sample population to investigate if there is a relationship between export information utilization and export performance. This study raises a number of new questions, such as whether information users export to more markets, in larger volumes and/or proceed through the steps of becoming “internationalized” quicker? Vice versa, non-users of export information may not be fully aware of the full market potential for their product, but still remain satisfied with their exports. Further investigation needs to be conducted to see how large a discrepancy there is between export performance satisfaction and export market potential.

A series of longitudinal studies is needed to fully investigate the knowledge utilization theory. Ideally this should involve a targeted selection process of upward of 1,000 exporters. The participating companies would agree to participate in both survey and interview strategies. Through such an effort, a base line of data can be collected to provide a more complete picture of the export environment. The impact of company characteristics upon information utilization needs further attention and may best be studied in the context of a longitudinal study. It is well

known that information lessens the unknown elements of international business, but how organizations apply export information to their planning and problem solving is less well known. A better understanding of the role export information plays can lead to improved information dissemination and international business training programs.

Interview research methods are better suited for investigation of the psychological and sociological reasons for or against the use of export information. These elements are critical to truly understanding the flow of information across the communication structure to the decision-maker. The survey instrument does not allow for as precise measurements of such phenomenon. Key to future research in the area of export information is enhanced understanding of the interaction of information on organizational processes. As such, it is recommended that interview methods are employed in a longitudinal study.

The results indicate that executives who monitor the global media in order to evaluate export operations have greater satisfaction with export performance than those who use export information. These two groups are not mutually exclusive. Further research needs to be done to isolate information users versus companies that rely on world news to evaluate their export operations. The hypothesis is that users of export information should perform better in foreign markets than their contemporaries who rely upon the global media as an information source.

Previous research and the current study have focused on the company as the primary institution of investigation. A study focusing on providers of export assistance may yield additional insights into the issue of export information. These organizations are staffed with personnel who interact with exporters on a daily basis. Interview strategies of this professional group may provide a different view angle than what has up to now been investigated.

EXPORT INFORMATION USAGE SURVEY

This survey has been designed to provide data on how organizations utilize export information in their international business activities. The goal is to shed light on the actual usage of information in exporting of products and services. Your participation will lead to the development of theories as to how export information can be tailored to better serve the needs of the corporate user.

Unlike other international business surveys, it does not seek to quantify the value of exports or how many jobs can be attributed to exports. Questions that may be viewed as invasive have been extremely limited. For example, to rank companies by size, the survey only seeks broad categories of total company employment.

To further guarantee anonymity, the survey has been designed on the Infopoll Designer 7.0 engine and is hosted on the Infopoll server in Canada. It was felt that retaining a third party for these services, as opposed to hosting the survey on a University of Kentucky server, will further insure the anonymity of you, the respondent, and the integrity of the survey.

The average respondent should require 7 to 10 minutes to complete this survey.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

General Information

This is a six question section designed to allow the information usage data to be analyzed from different perspectives, such as private versus public companies or company size dependent upon the number of employees.

1.1. What is the main business activity of your company?

Manufacturing Service (including financial and insurance) Agriculture Other



1.2. What best describes the ownership of the company?

Private Public Government entity Other



1.3. Which markets do you primarily serve?

Component/parts supplier for manufacturing or agricultural processing

Consumer market

Government or large institution supplier of end products

Other



1.4. In terms of total number of employees at your location, what is your company size?

...

...

0 - 250

251 - 500

501 - 1,000

1,001 - 2,500

2,501 - 5,000

5,001 - 10,000

10,001+



1.5. As the person filling out this survey, what best describes your job title or duties?

...

...

Administrative

Plant management

Export operations

Export management

Vice President

Officer of the company

Third party entity, such as an export management company



1.6. Do you currently ship products to foreign markets outside the United States?

Yes No



Exporting activities

This section includes ten questions relating to your current exporting activities. The information is general in nature and will be used for further analysis of what role information plays in exporting activities.

2.1. Do you sell directly overseas, through domestic distributors, or via the use of an export management company?

Directly overseas (to entities in native to the foreign market)

Through domestic U.S. distributors (who re-sell products to overseas entities)

Through an export management company (located in the U.S.)



2.2. How many foreign markets (countries) do you export products or services to?

...

...

1 - 5

6 - 10

11 - 20

21 - 40

41 - 60

61+



2.3. Do you fill orders that arrive from overseas buyers or actively work on developing foreign markets?

Fill orders from overseas buyers

Develop foreign markets (through your own in-house or foreign sales force)

A mix of both



2.4. How many staff members, both at your location and on overseas assignment, contribute 75% or more of their time in support of your export operations?

...

- 1 - 5
- 6 - 10
- 11 - 20
- 21 - 40
- 41 - 60
- 61 - 80
- 81+



2.5. How many years has your company been involved in exporting or working in foreign markets?

...

- 1 - 2 years
- 3 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 15 years
- 16 - 20 years
- 21+ years



2.6. Over the past three years (1998 to present), how would you quantify your export market growth?

Please exclude any sharp negative turns which have occurred in the past six months and are attributable to the global economic downturn.

...

- 0 - 1%
- 1 - 2%
- 2 - 3%
- 3 - 5%
- 5 - 7%
- 7 - 10%
- more than 10%
- Negative growth



2.7. Overall, how satisfied are you with your export performance along the following dimensions:

With 1 = unsatisfied to 5 = very satisfied

	1	2	3	4	5
Export sales volume	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Export profitability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Export market share	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rate of new market entry	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



2.8. How would you rank your overall competitive position in foreign markets?

1 = low to 5 = high

1 2 3 4 5



2.9. Overall, how profitable are your export sales in relation to sales in the domestic U.S. market?

1 = much less profitable to 5 = much more profitable

1 2 3 4 5



2.10. Does your company, on an ongoing basis, utilize third party export or foreign market information sources? (i.e.: domestic or foreign market research firms, U.S. Department of Commerce, World Trade Center, Dunn & Bradstreet, foreign government information sources.)

Yes No



2.11. To what degree do you monitor global economic information to evaluate export operations?

1 = not at all to 5 = extensively

1 2 3 4 5



Information usage

This section contains nineteen statements pertaining to usage of information in the export decision making structure of your organization. There is no right or wrong answers to these statements, only responses that correlate with your real world experience.

3.1. Information is a critical component in gaining a competitive advantage over the competition

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

1 2 3 4 5



3.2. Active integration of information in entering and developing markets translates into enhanced organizational performance
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

j_n 1 j_n 2 j_n 3 j_n 4 j_n 5



3.3. Active integration of information in entering and developing markets translates into increased export volume and profits
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

j_n 1 j_n 2 j_n 3 j_n 4 j_n 5



3.4. Active integration of information in entering and developing markets assists in the creation of superior customer value and the identification of sustain able competitive advantage

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

j_n 1 j_n 2 j_n 3 j_n 4 j_n 5



3.5. Our company acquires more export information than it uses
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

j_n 1 j_n 2 j_n 3 j_n 4 j_n 5



3.6. Regardless of the export information available at any one time, additional information is often requested
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

j_n 1 j_n 2 j_n 3 j_n 4 j_n 5



3.7. Decisions are most often based upon available export information
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

j_n 1 j_n 2 j_n 3 j_n 4 j_n 5



3.8. Newly revealed export information will cause previous decisions to be changed accordingly

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

j_n 1 j_n 2 j_n 3 j_n 4 j_n 5



3.9. Most export information is gathered for immediate use in making a decision
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

j_n 1 j_n 2 j_n 3 j_n 4 j_n 5



3.10. Most export information is gathered for future use and stored in a database of company library

1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

j_n 1 j_n 2 j_n 3 j_n 4 j_n 5



3.11. Most export information is considered and then rejected
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

jñ 1 jñ 2 jñ 3 jñ 4 jñ 5



3.12. Most export information is ignored
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

jñ 1 jñ 2 jñ 3 jñ 4 jñ 5



3.13. Most export information is not specific enough to be utilized for business decisions
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

jñ 1 jñ 2 jñ 3 jñ 4 jñ 5



3.14. Government generated export information sources are valuable tools in decisions for export operations
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

jñ 1 jñ 2 jñ 3 jñ 4 jñ 5



3.15. Internally generated export information based upon staff experience are valuable tools in decisions for export operations
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

jñ 1 jñ 2 jñ 3 jñ 4 jñ 5



3.16. Third party export market studies are valuable tools in decisions for export operations
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

jñ 1 jñ 2 jñ 3 jñ 4 jñ 5



3.17. Most export information is used to confirm decisions already made
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

jñ 1 jñ 2 jñ 3 jñ 4 jñ 5



3.18. Active gathering and usage of export information translates directly into increased sales
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

jñ 1 jñ 2 jñ 3 jñ 4 jñ 5



3.19. Export information is a critical component of becoming a successful exporter
1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

jñ 1 jñ 2 jñ 3 jñ 4 jñ 5



Information sources

The following three matrix questions pertain to different types of export market information in relation to levels of foreign market development. At each level, please indicate the importance you place in each information form.

- 4.1. The initially planning stages and preparation for exporting - the investigative stage to ascertain if exporting a product or service will be profitable.
1 = of little importance to 5 = of critical importance

	1	2	3	4	5
Political information on foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Market potential estimates	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Economic conditions of foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Cultural aspects of foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Physical infrastructure of markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Legal environment of foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn



- 4.2. Entering a new foreign market for the first time
1 = of little importance to 5 = of critical importance

	1	2	3	4	5
Political information on foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Market potential estimates	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Economic conditions of foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Cultural aspects of foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Physical infrastructure of markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Legal environment of foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn



- 4.3. Market development or seeking ongoing information on foreign markets you are engaged in
1 = of little importance to 5 = of critical importance

	1	2	3	4	5
Political information on foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Market potential estimates	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Economic conditions of foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Cultural aspects of foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Physical infrastructure of markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn
Legal environment of foreign markets	jn	jn	jn	jn	jn



Comments

5.1. Please include any comments you may have about this survey or other aspects of export information usage as it relates to your organization.

Submit form

Clear form

This form was built with [Infopoll Designer](#).

Appendix B
Constructs Leading to Indices

Statements leading to index construction

Competitive Advantage:

- Information is a critical component in gaining a competitive advantage over the competition (3.1)
- Active integration of information in entering and developing markets translates into increased export volume and profits (3.2)
- Export information is a critical component of becoming a successful exporter (3.14)

Information Acquisition:

- Our company acquires more export information than it uses (3.3)
- Regardless of the export information available at any one time, additional information is often requested (3.4)

Decision Making:

- Decisions are most often based upon available information (3.5)
- Newly revealed export information will cause previous decisions to be changed accordingly (3.6)
- Most export information is gathered for immediate use in making a decision (3.7)
- Most export information is used to confirm decisions already made (3.13)

Organizational Learning:

- Most export information is gathered for future use (3.8)

Information Processing:

- Most export information is considered and then rejected (3.9)
- Most export information is ignored (3.10)
- Most export information is not specific enough to be utilized for business decisions (3.11)
- Internal first-hand information based upon staff experience are valuable tools in decisions for export operations (3.12)

Information use dimensions

Instrumental Use: the direct application of findings and conclusions to a problem.

- Information is a critical component in gaining a competitive advantage over the competition (3.1)
- Active integration of information in entering and developing markets translates into increased export volume and profits (3.2)
- Decisions are most often based upon available information (3.5)
- Most export information is gathered for immediate use in making a decision (3.7)
- Most export information is considered and then rejected (3.9)
- Most export information is ignored (3.10)
- Most export information is not specific enough to be utilized for business decisions (3.11)

Conceptual Use: the use of findings that are not directly applicable to the problem, via making inferences.

- Newly revealed export information will cause previous decisions to be changed accordingly (3.6)
- Most export information is gathered for future use (3.8)
- Internal first-hand information based upon staff experience are valuable tools in decisions for export operations (3.12)
- Export information is a critical component of becoming a successful exporter (3.14)

Symbolic Use: Symbolic use distorts the findings beyond their intended use and applies a more figurative meaning.

- Our company acquires more export information than it uses (3.3)
- Regardless of the export information available at any one time, additional information is often requested (3.4)
- Most export information is used to confirm decisions already made (3.13)

Appendix C

Mean Values for Information Use Statements, Constructs and Information Types

Table 7:

Average Ranking of Information Use Statements

Measure	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Information use statements: 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree			
Information is a critical component in gaining a competitive advantage	44	4.182	0.947
Active integration of information in entering and developing markets translates into increased export volume and profits	42	4.000	0.988
Our company acquires more export information than it uses	44	2.860	1.069
Regardless of the export information available at any one time, additional information is often requested	44	3.180	1.206
Decisions are most often based upon available information	44	4.000	0.747
Newly revealed export information will cause previous decisions to be changed accordingly	44	3.680	1.029
Most export information is gathered for immediate use in making a decision	44	3.270	1.020
Most export information is gathered for future use	44	3.500	1.210
Most export information is considered and then rejected	42	2.430	0.668
Most export information is ignored	42	2.430	1.107
Most export information is not specific enough to be utilized for business decisions	44	3.000	1.364
Internal first-hand information based upon staff experience are valuable tools in decisions for export operations	44	4.640	0.650
Most export information is used to confirm decisions already made	44	3.050	0.834
Export information is a critical component of becoming a successful exporter	44	4.050	0.939

Table 8:

Average Ranking of Constructs of Information Use Statements

Measure	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
<u>Perceptions of information indexes:</u> 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree			
Competitive advantage	44	4.083	0.810
Information acquisition	44	3.023	0.785
Decision making	44	3.500	0.555
Organizational learning	44	3.500	1.210
Information processing	44	3.171	0.617
<u>Dimensions of information utilization indexes:</u> 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree			
Instrumental use	44	3.354	0.445
Conceptual use	44	3.966	0.662
Symbolic use	44	3.030	0.666

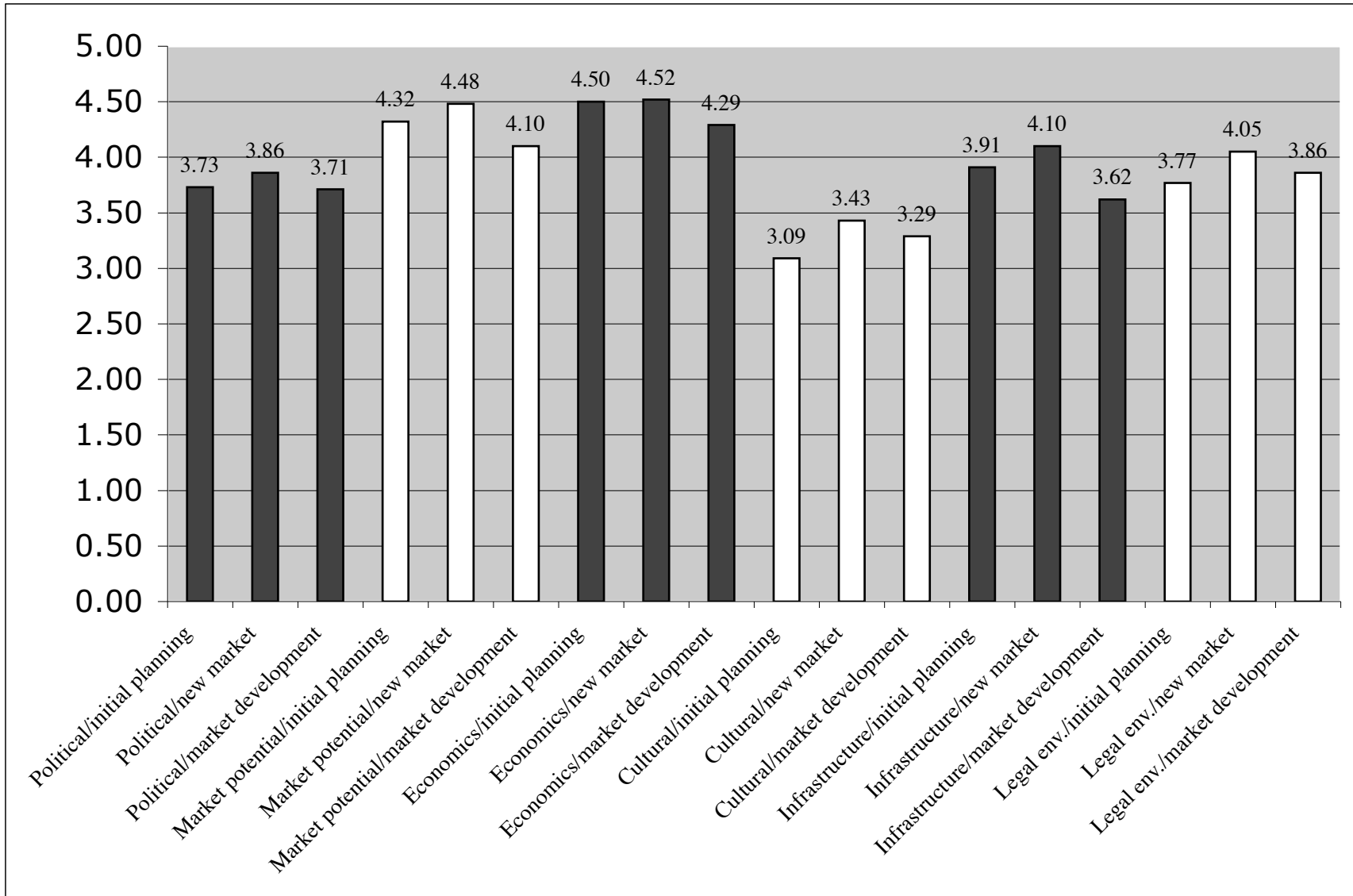
Table 9:

Average Ranking of Information Types

<u>Mean of information types:</u> 1=of little importance to 5=of critical importance			
Political information on foreign markets	44	3.712	1.038
Market potential estimates	44	4.288	0.756
Economic conditions of foreign markets	44	4.424	0.668
Cultural aspects of foreign markets	44	3.288	1.043
Physical infrastructure of foreign markets	44	3.879	0.823
Legal environment of foreign markets	44	3.894	0.894

Appendix D

Figure 2. Mean scores of information types across stages of exporting



Appendix E
Significant Pearson's Chi-Square

Table 10:

Significant Pearson's Chi-Squares

	Export information use	World news evaluation	Mfg./ Service	Revenue: \$0 - \$60/ \$61+	Export staff/ Officer	Number markets: 1-20 /21+	Years exporting 1-10/11+	Growth: 10%+ / negative	Competitive position
Manufacturer/ Service		p<.05							
Revenue: \$0 - \$60/ \$61+		p<.05					p<.05		
Export staff/ Company officer				p<.05					
Number mkts: 1-20 / 21+		p<.01	p<.01						
Years exporting: 1-10 / 11+	p<.05		p<.001						
4 year growth 10%+ / negative					p<.05				
Competitive position					p<.05			p<.01	
Export sales vol. satisfaction					p<.05			p<.001	p<.001
Export profit. satisfaction		p<.001			p<.001				p<.001
Export mkt share satisfaction		p<.01						p<.01	p<.001
Rate new market entry satisfaction		p<.05		p<.01	p<.001	p<.05		p<.001	p<.001
Mean: satisfaction statements		p<.01						p<.01	p<.001

Appendix E (cont.)

Table 10 (cont.):

Significant Pearson's Chi-Squares

Indexes from statements	Export information use	World news evaluation	Mfg. Service	Revenue: \$0 - \$60/ \$61+	Export staff/ Officer	Number markets: 1-20 /21+	Years exporting 1-10/11+	Growth: 10%+ / negative	Competitive position
Competitive Advantage	p<.001								
Information Acquisition	p<.001					p<.05		p<.01	
Decision Making		p<.001		p<.05	p<.05				p<.01
Organizational Learning				p<.001					
Information Processing	p<.05			p<.001					
Instrumental Use									
Conceptual Use				p<.001					
Symbolic Use	p<.001		p<.05						

Appendix E (cont):

Table 10 (cont.):

Significant Pearson's Chi-Squares

Information Types	Export information use	World news evaluation	Mfg. Service	Revenue: \$0 - \$60/ \$61+	Export staff/ Officer	Number markets: 1-20 /21+	Years exporting 1-10/11+	Growth: 10%+ / negative	Competitive position
Political information	p<.05					p<.01			p<.05
Market potential information	p<.01					p<.05			
Economic condition	p<.05								
Cultural aspects							p<.05		p<.05
Physical infrastructure	p<.05	p<.05							
Legal environment								p<.001	

Appendix F

Crosstab Tables of Significant Pearson's Chi-Squares

Table 11:
Information Use Versus Years Exporting

Crosstab	<u>Years exporting:</u> 1 – 10 years	11+ years	Total
Information user	20	8	28
% of Total	45.5%	18.2%	63.6%
Information non-user	6	10	16
% of Total	13.6%	22.7%	36.4%
Total Count	26	18	44
% of Total	59.1%	40.9%	
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.849	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.028

Table 12:
Information Use Versus Index for Competitive Advantage Statements

Crosstab	Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
Information user	4	24	28
% of Total	9.1%	54.5%	63.6%
Information non-user	12	4	16
% of Total	27.3%	9.1%	36.4%
Total Count	16	28	44
% of Total	36.4%	63.6%	
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 16.219	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 13:
Information Use Versus Index for Information Acquisition Statements

Crosstab	<u>Info. acquisition:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
Information user	6	22	28
% of Total	13.6%	50%	63.6%
Information non-user	16		16
% of Total	36.4%		36.4%
Total Count	22	22	44
% of Total	50%	50%	
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 25.143	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 14:

Information Use Versus Index for Information Processing Statements

Crosstab	<u>Info. Processing:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
Information user % of Total	16 36.4%	12 27.3%	28 63.6%
Information non-user % of Total	4 9.1%	12 27.3%	16 36.4%
Total Count % of Total	20 45.5%	24 54.5%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.243	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.039

Table 15:

Information Use Versus Index for Symbolic Use Statements

Crosstab	<u>Symbolic use:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
Information user % of Total	4 9.1%	24 54.5%	28 63.6%
Information non-user % of Total	12 27.3%	4 9.1%	16 36.4%
Total Count % of Total	16 36.4%	28 63.6%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 16.219	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 16:

Information Use Versus Political Information on Foreign Markets

Crosstab	<u>Political information:</u> Of little importance	Of critical importance	Total
Information user % of Total	10 22.7%	18 40.9%	28 63.6%
Information non-user % of Total	12 27.3%	4 9.1%	16 36.4%
Total Count % of Total	22 50%	22 50%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 6.286	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.012

Table 17:
Information Use Versus Information on Market Potential

Crosstab	<u>Market potential:</u> Of little importance	Of critical importance	Total
Information user % of Total	8 18.2%	20 45.5%	28 63.6%
Information non-user % of Total	12 27.3%	4 9.1%	16 36.4%
Total Count % of Total	20 45.5%	24 54.5%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 8.852	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.003

Table 18:
Information Use Versus Economic Condition of Foreign Markets

Crosstab	<u>Economic condition:</u> Of little importance	Of critical importance	Total
Information user % of Total	8 18.2%	20 13.6%	28 63.6%
Information non-user % of Total	10 22.7%	6 13.6%	16 36.4%
Total Count % of Total	18 40.9%	26 59.1%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.849	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.028

Table 19:
Information Use Versus Information on the Physical Infrastructure of Foreign Markets

Crosstab	<u>Physical infrastructure</u> Of little importance	Of critical importance	Total
Information user % of Total	8 18.2%	20 45.5%	28 63.6%
Information non-user % of Total	10 22.7%	6 13.6%	16 36.4%
Total Count % of Total	18 40.9%	26 59.1%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.849	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.028

Table 20:
World News Evaluation Versus Company Type

Crosstab	<u>Company type:</u> Manufacturing	Service	Total
<u>World news:</u> Not at all % of Total	22 52.4%	4 9.5%	26 61.9%
Extensively % of Total	8 19%	8 19%	16 38.1%
Total Count % of Total	30 71.4%	12 28.6%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 5.815	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.016

Table 21:
World News Evaluation Versus Gross Revenue

Crosstab	<u>Gross revenue:</u> \$1 - \$60 million	\$61+ million	Total
<u>World news:</u> Not at all % of Total	12 31.6%	10 26.3%	22 57.9%
Extensively % of Total	14 36.8%	2 5.3%	16 42.1%
Total Count % of Total	26 68.4%	12 31.6%	38
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.656	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.031

Table 22:
World News Evaluation Versus Number of Foreign Markets Exported To

Crosstab	<u>Number of markets:</u> 1-20 markets	21+ markets	Total
<u>World news:</u> Not at all % of Total	12 28.6%	12 28.6%	24 57.1%
Extensively % of Total	16 38.1%	2 4.8%	18 42.9%
Total Count % of Total	28 66.7%	14 33.3%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 7.000	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.008

Table 23:

World News Evaluation Versus Export Profitability Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>Export profitability:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
World news: Not at all % of Total	16 38.1%	8 19%	24 57.1%
Extensively % of Total	2 4.8%	16 38.1%	18 42.9%
Total Count % of Total	18 42.9%	24 57.1%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 12.963	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 24:

World News Evaluation Versus Export Market Share Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>Market share:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
World news: Not at all % of Total	16 40%	8 20%	24 60%
Extensively % of Total	4 10%	12 30%	16 40%
Total Count % of Total	20 50%	20 50%	40
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 6.667	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.010

Table 25:

World News Evaluation Versus Rate of New Market Entry

Crosstab	<u>New market entry:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
World news: Not at all % of Total	10 25%	14 35%	24 60%
Extensively % of Total	2 5%	14 35%	16 40%
Total Count % of Total	12 30%	28 70%	40
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 3.889	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.049

Table 26:

World News Evaluation Versus Mean of Satisfaction Statements

Crosstab	<u>Satisfaction statem.:</u> Unsatisfied	Very Satisfied	Total
<u>World news:</u> Not at all % of Total	16 38.1%	8 19%	24 57.1%
Extensively % of Total	4 9.5%	14 33.3%	18 42.9%
Total Count % of Total	20 47.6%	22 52.4%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 8.145	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.004

Table 27:

World News Evaluation Versus Construct for Decision Making

Crosstab	<u>Decision making:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
<u>World News:</u> Not at all % of Total	20 45.5%	6 13.6%	26 59.1%
Extensively % of Total		18 40.9%	18 40.9%
Total Count % of Total	20 45.5%	24 54.5%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 25.385	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 28:

World News Evaluation Versus Information of Physical Infrastructure of Foreign Markets

Crosstab	<u>Physical infrastructure</u> Of little importance	Of critical importance	Total
<u>World news:</u> Not at all % of Total	14 31.8%	12 27.3%	26 59.1%
Extensively % of Total	4 9.1%	14 31.8%	18 40.9%
Total Count % of Total	18 40.9%	26 59.1%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.400	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.036

Table 29:
Manufacturer Versus Gross Revenue

Crosstab	<u>Gross revenue:</u> \$1 - \$60 million	\$61+ million	Total
Manufacturer % of Total	16 44.4%	10 27.8%	26 72.2%
Service % of Total	10 27.8%		27.8%
Total Count % of Total	26 72.2%	20 27.8%	36
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 5.325	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.021

Table 30:
Manufacturer Versus Number of Foreign Markets Exported To

Crosstab	<u>Foreign markets:</u> 1-20	21+	Total
Manufacturer % of Total	16 40%	14 35%	30 75%
Service % of Total	10 25%		10 25%
Total Count % of Total	26 65%	14 35%	40
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 7.179	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.007

Table 31:
Manufacturer Versus Number of Years Exporting

Crosstab	<u>Years exporting:</u> 1 – 10	10+	Total
Manufacturer % of Total	14 33.3%	16 38.1%	30 71.4%
Service % of Total	12 28.6%		12 28.6%
Total Count % of Total	26 61.9%	16 38.1%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 10.338	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.001

Table 32:

Manufacturer Versus Construct for Symbolic Use of Information

Crosstab	<u>Symbolic use:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
Manufacturer % of Total	8 19%	22 52.4%	30 71.4%
Service % of Total	8 19%	4 9.5%	12 28.6%
Total Count % of Total	16 38.1%	26 61.9%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 5.815	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.016

Table 33:

Gross Revenue Versus Title of Respondent

Crosstab	<u>Respondent title:</u> Export staff	Company officer	Total
<u>Revenue:</u> \$1-\$60 million % of Total	8 21.1%	18 47.4%	26 68.4%
\$61+ million % of Total	8 21.1%	4 10.5%	12 31.6%
Total Count % of Total	16 42.1%	22 57.9%	38
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.340	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.037

Table 34:

Gross Revenue Versus Rate of New Market Entry

Crosstab	<u>New market:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Revenue:</u> \$1-\$60 million % of Total	2 5.6%	22 61.1%	24 66.7%
\$61+ million % of Total	6 16.7%	6 16.7%	12 33.3%
Total Count % of Total	8 22.2%	28 77.8%	36
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 8.036	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.005

Table 35:
Gross Revenue Versus Construct for Decision-Making

Crosstab	<u>Decision making:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
<u>Revenue: \$1 - \$60 million</u> % of Total	8 21.1%	18 47.4%	26 68.4%
\$61+ millon % of Total	8 21.1%	4 10.5%	12 31.6%
Total Count % of Total	16 42.1%	22 57.9%	38
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.340	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.037

Table 36:
Gross Revenue Versus Construct for Organizational Learning

Crosstab	<u>Organizational learn:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
<u>Revenue: \$1 - \$60 million</u> % of Total	14 36.8%	12 31.6%	26 68.4%
\$61+ millon % of Total	%	12 31.6%	12 31.6%
Total Count % of Total	14 36.8%	24 63.2%	38
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 10.231	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.001

Table 37:
Gross Revenue Versus Construct for Information Processing

Crosstab	<u>Info. Processing:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
<u>Revenue: \$1 - \$60 million</u> % of Total	6 15.8%	20 52.6%	26 68.4%
\$61+ millon % of Total	10 26.3%	2 5.3%	12 31.6%
Total Count % of Total	16 42.1%	22 57.9%	38
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 12.229	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 38:
Gross Revenue Versus Construct for Conceptual Use

Crosstab	<u>Conceptual use:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
<u>Revenue:</u> \$1 - \$60 million % of Total	18 47.4%	8 21.1%	26 68.4%
\$61+ million % of Total		12 31.6%	12 31.6%
Total Count % of Total	18 47.4%	20 52.6%	38
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 15.785	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 39:
Title of Respondent Versus Four-Year Export Growth Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>Growth:</u> More than 10%	Negative growth	Total
<u>Title:</u> Export staff % of Total	6 17.6%	14 41.2%	20 58.8%
Company officer % of Total	10 29.4%	4 11.8%	14 41.2%
Total Count % of Total	16 47.1%	18 52.9%	34
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 5.673	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.017

Table 40:
Title of Respondent Versus Competitive Position

Crosstab	<u>Competitive position:</u> Low	High	Total
<u>Title:</u> Export staff % of Total	12 27.3%	10 22.7%	22 50%
Company officer % of Total	4 9.1%	18 40.9%	22 50%
Total Count % of Total	16 36.4%	28 63.6%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 6.286	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) .012

Table 41:

Title of Respondent Versus Export Sales Volume Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>Sales volume:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Title: Export staff</u> % of Total	12 28.6%	8 19%	20 47.6%
Company officer % of Total	6 14.3%	16 38.1%	22 52.4%
Total Count % of Total	18 42.9%	24 57.1%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.582	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.032

Table 42:

Title of Respondent Versus Export Profitability Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>Export profitability:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Title: Export staff</u> % of Total	14 33.3%	6 14.3%	20 47.6%
Company officer % of Total	4 9.5%	18 42.9%	22 52.4%
Total Count % of Total	18 42.9%	24 57.1%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 11.486	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.001

Table 43:

Title of Respondent Versus Rate of New Market Entry Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>New market:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Title: Export staff</u> % of Total	10 25%	8 20%	18 45%
Company officer % of Total	2 5%	20 50%	22 55%
Total Count % of Total	12 30%	28 70%	40
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 10.178	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.001

Table 44:

Title of Respondent Versus Construct for Decision Making

Crosstab	<u>Decision making:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
<u>Title: Export staff</u> % of Total	14 31.8%	8 18.2%	22 50%
Company officer % of Total	6 13.6%	16 36.4%	22 50%
Total Count % of Total	20 45.5%	24 54.5%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 5.867	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.015

Table 45:

Number of Foreign Markets Exported To Versus Rate of New Market Entry Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>New market:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Foreign markets: 1 - 20</u> % of Total	4 10.5%	22 57.9%	26 68.4%
21+ markets % of Total	6 15.8%	6 15.8%	12 31.6%
Total Count % of Total	10 26.3%	28 73.7%	38
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 5.074	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.024

Table 46:

Number of Foreign Markets Exported To Versus Construct for Information Acquisition

Crosstab	<u>Info. acquisition:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
<u>Foreign markets: 1 - 20</u> % of Total	10 23.8%	18 42.9%	28 66.7%
21+ markets % of Total	10 23.8%	4 9.5%	14 33.3%
Total Count % of Total	20 47.6%	22 52.4%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.773	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.029

Table 47:

Number of Foreign Markets Exported to Versus Political Information on Foreign Markets

Crosstab	<u>Political information:</u> Of little importance	Of critical importance	Total
<u>Foreign markets: 1 - 20</u> % of Total	10 23.8%	18 42.9%	28 66.7%
21+ markets % of Total	12 28.6%	2 4.8%	14 33.3%
Total Count % of Total	22 52.4%	20 47.6%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 9.355	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.002

Table 48:

Number of Foreign Markets Exported to Versus Market Potential Estimates Information

Crosstab	<u>Market potential:</u> Of little importance	Of critical importance	Total
<u>Foreign markets: 1 - 20</u> % of Total	10 23.8%	18 42.9%	28 66.7%
21+ markets % of Total	10 23.8%	4 9.5%	14 33.3%
Total Count % of Total	20 47.6%	22 52.4%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.773	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.029

Table 49:

Years Exporting Versus Gross Revenue

Crosstab	<u>Gross revenue:</u> \$1 - \$60 million	\$61+ million	Total
<u>Years exporting: 1-10 years</u> % of Total	18 47.4%	4 10.5%	22 57.9%
10+ years % of Total	8 21.1%	8 21.1%	16 42.1%
Total Count % of Total	26 68.4%	12 31.6%	38
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.340	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.037

Table 50:
Years Exporting Versus Cultural Type Information

Crosstab	<u>Cultural information:</u> Of little importance	Of critical importance	Total
<u>Years exporting:</u> 1-10 years % of Total	6 13.6%	20 45.5%	26 59.1%
10+ years % of Total	10 22.7%	8 18.2%	18 40.9%
Total Count % of Total	16 36.4%	28 63.6%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 4.849	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.028

Table 51:
Four-Year Export Market Growth Versus Competitive Position in Foreign Markets

Crosstab	<u>Competitive position:</u> Low	High	Total
<u>Growth:</u> more than 10% % of Total	2 5.9%	18 52.9%	20 58.8%
Negative growth % of Total	8 23.5%	6 17.6%	14 41.2%
Total Count % of Total	10 29.4%	24 70.6%	34
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 8.816	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.003

Table 52:
Four-Year Export Market Growth Versus Export Sales Volume Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>Sales volume:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Growth:</u> more than 10% % of Total	2 5.9%	18 52.9%	20 58.8%
Negative growth % of Total	12 35.3%	2 5.9%	14 41.2%
Total Count % of Total	14 41.2%	20 58.8%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 19.491	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 53:

Four-Year Export Market Growth Versus Export Market Share Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>Market share:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Growth</u> : more than 10% % of Total	6 18.8%	14 43.8%	20 62.5%
Negative growth % of Total	10 31.3%	2 6.3%	12 37.5%
Total Count % of Total	16 50%	16 50%	32
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 8.533	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.003

Table 54:

Four-Year Export Market Growth Versus Rate of New Market Entry Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>New market:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Growth</u> : more than 10% % of Total		20 62.5%	20 62.5%
Negative growth % of Total	8 25%	4 12.5%	12 37.5%
Total Count % of Total	8 25%	24 75%	32
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 17.778	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 55:

Four-Year Export Market Growth Versus Mean of Satisfaction Statements

Crosstab	<u>Satisfaction statem.:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Growth</u> : more than 10% % of Total	6 17.6%	14 41.2%	20 58.8%
Negative growth % of Total	10 29.4%	4 11.8%	14 41.2%
Total Count % of Total	16 47.1%	18 52.9%	34
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 5.673	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.017

Table 56:

Four-Year Export Market Growth Versus Construct for Information Acquisition

Crosstab	Info. acquisition: Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
<u>Growth</u> : more than 10%	8	12	20
% of Total	23.5%	35.3%	58.8%
Negative growth	12	2	14
% of Total	35.3%	5.9%	41.2%
Total Count	20	14	34
% of Total	58.8%	41.2%	
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 7.105	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.008

Table 57:

Competitive Position in Foreign Markets Versus Export Sales Volume Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>Sales volume</u> : Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Competitive position</u> : Low	12	4	16
% of Total	28.6%	9.5%	38.1%
High	6	20	26
% of Total	14.3%	47.6%	61.9%
Total Count	18	24	42
% of Total	42.9%	57.1%	
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 10.904	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.001

Table 58:

Competitive Position in Foreign Markets Versus Export Profitability Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>Export profitability</u> : Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Competitive position</u> : Low	14	2	16
% of Total	33.3%	4.8%	38.1%
High	4	22	26
% of Total	9.5%	52.4%	61.9%
Total Count	18	24	42
% of Total	42.9%	57.1%	
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 21.034	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 59:

Competitive Position in Foreign Markets Versus Export Market Share Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>Market share:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Competitive position:</u> Low % of Total	14 35%	2 5%	16 40%
High % of Total	6 15%	18 45%	24 60%
Total Count % of Total	20 50%	20 50%	40
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 15.000	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 60:

Competitive Position in Foreign Markets Versus Rate of New Market Entry Satisfaction

Crosstab	<u>New market:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Competitive position:</u> Low % of Total	10 25%	6 15%	16 40%
High % of Total	2 5%	22 44%	24 60%
Total Count % of Total	12 30%	28 70%	40
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 13.413	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 61:

Competitive Position in Foreign Markets Versus Mean of Satisfaction Statements

Crosstab	<u>Mean satisfaction:</u> Unsatisfied	Very satisfied	Total
<u>Competitive position:</u> Low % of Total	14 33.3%	2 4.8%	16 38.1%
High % of Total	6 14.3%	20 47.6%	26 61.9%
Total Count % of Total	20 47.6%	22 52.4%	42
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 16.481	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.000

Table 62:

Competitive Position in Foreign Markets Versus Construct for Decision Making

Crosstab	<u>Decision making:</u> Strongly disagree	Strongly agree	Total
<u>Competitive position:</u> Low % of Total	12 27.3%	4 9.1%	16 36.4%
High % of Total	8 18.2%	20 45.5%	28 63.6%
Total Count % of Total	20 45.5%	24 54.5%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 8.852	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.003

Table 63:

Competitive Position in Foreign Markets Versus Political Information on Foreign Markets

Crosstab	<u>Political information:</u> Of little importance	Of critical importance	Total
<u>Competitive position:</u> Low % of Total	4 9.1%	12 27.3%	16 36.4%
High % of Total	18 40.9%	10 22.7%	28 62.6%
Total Count % of Total	22 50%	22 50%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 6.286	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.012

Table 64:

Competitive Position in Foreign Markets Versus Cultural Aspects of Foreign Markets

Crosstab	<u>Cultural aspects:</u> Of little importance	Of critical importance	Total
<u>Competitive position:</u> Low % of Total	2 4.5%	14 31.8%	16 36.4%
High % of Total	14 31.8%	14 31.8%	28 63.6%
Total Count % of Total	16 36.4%	28 31.8%	44
Pearson Chi-Square	Value 6.188	df 1	Asymp. Sig. (2 sided) 0.013

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