

# GUEST EDITORIAL

## *International Marketing Review* (Special Issue)

### **Emerging Challenges in International Marketing Knowledge Management**

This *International Marketing Review* special volume carries on the identification of knowledge management processes as triggers for internationalization, foreign market operations, and global competitiveness of firms. Basically, previous research highlighted knowledge management processes and information technology-based knowledge management systems as a principal impulse on internal venturing and innovation (Del Giudice & Della Peruta, 2016). By approaching the international strategy studies, Cadogan (2012) stated that firms' international competition has an ambivalent sign: on the one hand, it can be considered as a threat because the internationalization exposes firms to more intense competition, thus drastically reducing the "protection" drivers coming from the local market. On the other hand, it offers firms the opportunity to rapidly expand the business volume and acquire a foreign international position. From this perspective, managers need to keep on learning about the knowledge of other cultures and indicate how to efficiently leverage a firm's competitiveness by merging the two dimensions of "local" and "global" (Bethon et al., 2012).

In international business, knowledge-intensive firms leverage strategic agility to achieve competitive advantage, especially in turbulent markets. Overall, strategic agility is a key driver for firms operating in international markets; it can be defined as the ability to continuously adapt the firm's strategy in international contexts aiming at facing emerging challenges and at developing innovative and sustainable strategies. Moreover, in the current globalized and digital market, a dynamic environment enforces firms to exploit the knowledge management system to face international market challenges, thus pointing at how knowledge management can improve firms' innovation capacity (Santoro et al., 2018). In fact, an international scenario redefines the knowledge-intensive organizational structures, thus forcing managers to reconsider the firms' business model and strategies.

Knowledge management systems in international marketing highlight peculiar abilities of firms, including ambidexterity, i.e., the ability to exploit existing resources efficiently through known processes and, at the same time, to explore new ways to combine and recombine potential resources to create new capabilities and opportunities (Vrontis et al., 2017). Actually, despite the rising interests in knowledge management systems, innovative literature is increasingly exploring the role of knowledge management in international market challenges. In these terms, marketing knowledge management is considered one of the most relevant sources of competitive success (Hanvanich et al., 2003). Marketing knowledge management occurs by involving business intelligence and management source systems to allow firms to succeed in the markets (Del Giudice & Maggioni, 2014). Yet, knowledge-intensive firms can compete in the international market by leveraging the marketing knowledge management system through concrete networking skills.

Indeed, firms' innovative activities are triggered by an efficient international organizational structure due to a strong networking capability (Boso et al., 2013). A network system can enhance firms' readiness for the internationalization processes. In this sense, by exploiting knowledge management systems and network capabilities, international managers involve disruptive technologies to collect information on market, customer, and socio-economic data about foreign countries (Zahra et al., 2000; Gold et al., 2001; Del Giudice & Straub, 2011). Eventually, research on the relationship between international marketing and knowledge management is attempting to unveil innovative strategies on global markets to face international challenges.

In this special volume, we collected 14 original papers thus covering a wide range of research topics on emerging challenges in international marketing knowledge management. All the papers presented in this special issue are focused on peculiar aspects of the international marketing knowledge management research stream. Starting from the aim to extend the knowledge-based view theory, Hoque et al. (2022) discuss the key role of dynamic marketing capabilities and knowledge absorption processes of firms in internationalization strategies, especially focusing on the export market. Based on 315 questionnaires referring to Bangladeshi manufacturing firms exporting to the USA and Europe, the authors found a significant and positive relation between export ambidextrous firms' internationalization absorption strategies and export performance. Moreover, the research highlights a mediator variable, i.e., dynamic marketing capabilities, between export market exploitation and export performance. Theoretical contributions and practical recommendations are involved to the desire to unveil the black box of ambidextrous learning strategies within export markets.

By using a mixed-methods approach, Falahat et al. (2021) focus on 257 valid questionnaires of young enterprises and indicate how young firms achieve international sustainable competitive advantage. In these terms, the research analyses the themes of entrepreneurial culture and market orientation, showing the existence of a positive association between entrepreneurial culture (in terms of international knowledge, commitment, and networking), competitive advantage, and superior international performance, which are moderated by government support. Instead, market orientations turn out to be positively associated with competitive advantage while not influencing international performance. Thus, findings and implications investigate the international expansion process of young entrepreneurial companies within international markets.

By applying the lens of international tourism, Nguyen et al. (2021) draw attention to 350 employees' work tasks at specific Vietnamese hotels that use artificial intelligence systems. In particular, the research analyses the impact of artificial intelligence on knowledge sharing behaviors and customer perceptions on employees' service quality. Results enrich the hotel knowledge management literature and underline the relevant role of artificial intelligence in marketing strategies to attract international customers. Moreover, the research gives hotel management tips on how to improve customer satisfaction and get a strategic advantage in international marketing initiatives in the face of emerging challenges.

Alongside the focus on technological knowledge in emerging market firms is another paper titled "Technological knowledge and internationalization: evidence from India", by Bhattacharya et al. (2021). The authors provide an innovative approach of international knowledge technologies by combining institutional theory with resource-based theory. The aim of the paper is to analyze the relation between technological knowledge capital and emerging market firms' push to internationalization in order to exploit knowledge-based assets. In this research, the authors introduce two moderating variables: competitive intensity in the home country and foreign market knowledge. Hence, implications highlight that emerging market firms need to manage their technological knowledge in the home market by increasing technological investments. As a matter of fact, the readiness of internationalization for emerging market firms can be triggered by the increases in technological capital. Overall, technology knowledge has the potential to be a major driver of emerging market firms' internationalization.

Other authors have investigated the function of market knowledge acquisition and transfer in international small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs). For instance, Siachou et al. (2021) conducted a systematic literature review, the results of which shed light on the type of knowledge acquired and transferred in international SMEs. By highlighting technological knowledge as the most common type of knowledge to be both acquired and transferred, the research provides specific mechanisms to acquire and transfer knowledge, such as technology-based, relational, organizational behavior, and

marketing-oriented mechanisms. Thus, knowledge acquisition and transfer are proven to be the most important requirements for SMEs' internationalization as well as for the born-global SMEs.

The importance of international marketing knowledge management is arising in the digital era. In this way, Caputo et al. (2022) provide an article titled "Digital platforms and international performance of Italian SMEs: an exploitation-based overview", which explains how digital platforms influence the economic performance of Italian internationalized SMEs. Based on 746 Italian SMEs and by using the lens of the exploitation-exploration dichotomy approach, the authors found that SMEs' investment in information and communication technologies and the number of languages available for their websites directly influence SMEs' return on sales in foreign markets. This paper opens the doors to new considerations on the contribution of digital platforms as SMEs' essential tools for internationalization strategies.

The crucial function of marketing knowledge management by focusing on individual loci of knowledge to enhance individual dynamic capabilities is explained by Scuotto et al. (2021) with their paper titled "Building dynamic capabilities for international marketing knowledge management". The research empirically tests the effect of marketing knowledge management on dynamic capabilities, i.e., substantive, adaptive, and change capabilities. A sample of 105 managers of Italian firms are analyzed to find a direct and positive relation between individual dynamic capabilities and marketing knowledge management, thus providing evidence on the significant impact those Italian firms have had on corporate performance and internationalization strategy.

Papa et al. (2021) contribute to the international marketing literature review by analyzing the open innovation (OI) journey of knowledge-intensive marketing collaborations. In turn, the study explains a conceptual model of international marketing operations by testing a sample of firms from 30 European countries. To enrich the contribution of international collaborations, the authors analyze different kind of OI: (i) OI in the same group; (ii) OI in the same sector; (iii) OI from the private sector; (iv) OI from the public sector; and (v) OI with suppliers. Knowledge-intensive innovation marketing activities are triggered by the OI marketing journey, and, in turn, firms become ready to face and compete within a "new normal" foreign market challenge.

In presenting the international marketing contributions of SMEs, Magni et al. (2021) provide an article titled "A network model approach to enhance knowledge sharing for internationalization readiness of SMEs". By extending the resource-based view and applying the international theory lens, the paper gives an innovative contribution to the role of networking in the internationalization readiness of SMEs. Specifically, a sample of 300 Italian SMEs, belonging to 11 agro-food consortia, has been analyzed to highlight the triggers that drive the SMEs' readiness for internationalization. The study proposes four main variables that affect the internationalization strategy: (i) customer-specific knowledge sharing; (ii) market-specific knowledge sharing; (iii) economic-setting knowledge sharing; and (iv) risk management perception in the internationalization process. While the authors assumed a positive and direct relation between the first three variables and SMEs' readiness for internationalization, they found a negative relation between the risk perception and the internationalization processes for SMEs. The contribution of networking for SMEs' readiness for internationalization is relevant, and the managerial implications support the need to protect and enhance the typical products of a territory both in Italy and abroad.

Other authors have pointed out how knowledge acquisition creates a competitive advantage in international market. Indeed, Aslam et al. (2022) argue the role of knowledge acquisition from international alliance partners with a focus on leading Pakistani and Chinese engineering firms. Through a grounded analysis, it was found that the process of international knowledge acquisition is quite intricate, but, by leveraging specific adaptabilities (e.g., technical, and social), knowledge can

be addressed among international partners to acquire additional knowledge, both explicit and implicit. The study offers management principles for managing knowledge acquisition and cultural intelligence for attaining a competitive advantage, which will be useful to managers in an era of increased cross-border dependency.

The intertwining of knowledge sharing and digital technologies introduce another paper titled “Testing the antecedents of customer knowledge sharing on social media: a quantitative analysis on Italian consumers”, by Baima et al. (2022). This article empirically analyzes 358 consumers in Italy, aiming to learn what motivates customers to submit product and service information on social media pages. By enhancing customer knowledge management theory, the authors provide a set of drivers that trigger customers to share materials on social media, such as the usage frequency of online reviews, social bonds, subjective happiness, and reciprocity. Hence, given the current digital era, the article highlights the relevant role of social media to spread knowledge worldwide through the commitment of other customers.

In the same line, Chatterjee et al. (2021) provide a wide overview of knowledge sharing in international markets for product and process innovation. In this case, the study focuses on the relationship between knowledge-sharing activities of the firm and its innovation capability. Moreover, the authors have indicated the moderator impact of firms’ absorptive capacity on the main research model. Methodologically, there were a sample of 612 replies from 16 international companies from various nations, which were validated using partial least squares structural equation modeling. As emerged, knowledge-sharing efforts across multinational firms are critical for product and process innovation. The link between organizations’ knowledge-sharing activities and their dynamic capabilities, such as sensing, seizing, and changing, is also influenced by their absorptive ability. Finally, by focusing on practical implications, the study discovered that a firm’s ability to innovate had a beneficial influence on its competitiveness.

Furthermore, another article that stressed the firms’ absorptive capacity within an international scenario is the study titled “Investigating the influence of absorptive capacity of recipients within cross-border transfer of knowledge: evidence from emerging markets”, by Mehreen et al. (2021). In this paper, the authors aimed to analyze the nature of the intra-organizational knowledge in emerging markets by concentrating on the relationship between the knowledge recipient and the source in high-technology sectors. A sample of 180 cellular network providers operating in Pakistan was examined through a multiple regression analysis. The study offers a birds-eye view of the elements that impact the sharing of knowledge from developed to emerging markets in an effective and efficient way.

In a similar context of emerging markets, Zahoor et al. (2021) propose an innovative framework on international OI by bringing the attention of cross-cultural competencies and digital alliance capabilities in the United Arab Emirates scenario. The article envisages 231 SMEs in emerging markets and finds that international OI positively affects the international market advantage of the firms. This study also suggests future research directions to investigate specific characteristics of individual levels of international OI, such as entrepreneurial alertness, ambiguity tolerance, and entrepreneurial passion, and how these factors can moderate the direct relationship between international OI and SMEs’ international market success.

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