

An Assessment of the Exporting Literature: Using Theory and Data to Identify Future Research Directions

Brian Chabowski, Pinar Kekec, Neil A. Morgan, G. Tomas M. Hult, Travis Walkowiak, and Blake Runnalls

ABSTRACT

Exporting research is an established facet of the field of international marketing. That stated, the radical increase in recent export activity necessitates a sustained research effort devoted to the topic. In this article, the authors provide a qualitative review of the core theoretical exporting areas and evaluate the exporting domain quantitatively over six decades (1958–2016). For the quantitative analysis, they use multidimensional scaling and apply established bibliometric principles to offer an understanding of the field and to provide suggestions for future exporting research. For the evaluations, the authors used data from 830 articles with 52,191 citations from 35 journals. Using cocitation analysis as the basis to evaluate the data, they propose a series of intellectual structure implications on exporting that relate to internationalization process stages, dynamic capabilities, knowledge scarcity, social networks, export marketing strategy, absorptive capacity and learning, and nonlinear performance relationships involving marketing channel relationships.

Keywords: exporting, internationalization, knowledge development, bibliometrics, intellectual structure

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Exporting research has been discussed in significant ways in the academic literature since 1958, and it is becoming even more prominent in today's literature. International trade is prominent worldwide, and exporting is the core vehicle for its growth. Between 2000 and 2015, global merchandise exports rose 150%, from \$6.055 trillion to \$16.055 trillion, peaking at \$19.123 trillion in 2014 (World Bank 2017). This increase in exporting is testament to its focal position as a key driver of economic activity

(Leonidou and Katsikeas 2010). Indeed, the central importance of exporting to international business is well-established and long-standing (Bilkey and Tesar 1977; Cavusgil and Zou 1994; Czinkota and Johnston 1983; Leonidou and Katsikeas 1996). Exporting research has long been acknowledged as a swift way to penetrate international markets (Johanson and Vahlne 1977, 1990; Root 1994), and a vast array of topics have been examined in this research area, including behaviors and activities prior to export as well as the relationships among issues such as export strategy, firm-based attributes, and performance (e.g., Cavusgil and Zou 1994; Christensen, Da Rocha, and Gertner 1987; Wiedersheim-Paul, Olson, and Welch 1978). Although exporting has been examined to a large degree in

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developed markets, emerging markets have also produced competitive exporters over this time period (Smits et al. 2015; United Nations 2017). As a result, a dynamic and vibrant marketplace has been created in which the exporting domain has grown substantially.

The expansion in exporting activity among firms globally has been accompanied by an increase in the topic's analysis in the academic world. An emphasis on exporting research in developed economies remains an important facet of the literature (Eberhard and Craig 2013; Zeriti et al. 2014). However, there is also an increased focus on studies on emerging markets because of a general shift in business activity toward developing economies (Gashi, Hashi, and Pugh 2014; He, Brouthers, and Filatotchev 2013; Ju, Zhao, and Wang 2014). As a result, this changing market focus of exporting has provided the opportunity to enrich and advance the central issues of exporting research into new areas.

Considerable academic work has provided overviews of the state of the exporting literature. Usually, the most fundamental basis for a current evaluation of this research area is to categorize previous studies in some fashion (Leonidou and Katsikeas 2010). These author-driven arrangements usually summarize the research design, research scope, study methodology, and thematic areas of the extant literature. Such a classification approach is also sometimes accompanied by a general discussion concerning research directions (Chen, Sousa, and He 2016; Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Coudounaris 2010; Li, He, and Sousa 2017). Taken together, these examinations of the exporting phenomenon provide an understanding of the state of the field and some guidelines for the future. While the field is due for such a literature review, we also want to use state-of-the-art methodologies to glean a deeper understanding of scholarly exporting works.

With this in mind, we increase the value of our review by evaluating the exporting literature from a quantitative perspective and then offer future research- and practitioner-focused suggestions based on the findings related to the domain's intellectual structure. The review includes perspectives of both quantitative and qualitative mechanisms, and our approach reflects theory- and method-based overviews of exporting to offer distinct proposals for consideration in future research. For instance, our qualitative approach to the exporting literature reflects recent efforts to capture relevant theoretical perspectives that have influenced exporting and international marketing (Aykol, Leonidou, and Zeriti 2012). In addition, whereas meta-analyses focus on the construct as the unit of analysis

(Leonidou et al. 2014), our quantitative approach emphasizes the publication itself as the basis for examination. As such, we use a rigorous methodological process to provide insight into the literature.

This approach replies to requests in the marketing field for studies that introduce theory-driven and conceptual-based analyses (Kuhn 1996; MacInnis 2011; Yadav 2010). Our implementation applies the foundational principle that the important themes in an academic field are understood to a greater degree by assessing cocitation data for a given area of study (Garfield 1979; McCain 1990; Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004). In our approach, which is unique to the exporting literature, we use 830 articles with 52,191 citations from 35 academic journals across four time periods (1958–1992, 1993–2002, 2003–2012, and 2013–2016) to assess the exporting literature with multidimensional scaling (MDS). This means we divided the study years (1958–2016) into an origination period, two time periods of ten years each, and a recent period of four years. The findings show four visual representations related to the cocitation data used.

By using qualitative and quantitative analyses together, our study contributes to the exporting literature in at least two major ways. Although there have been considerable qualitative assessments of the exporting domain, the first contribution is that we provide an analysis of the domain using a quantitative approach, MDS, which is introduced by a qualitative theory-driven overview. The assessment of the domain's theoretical perspectives details six driving approaches that have been used in exporting studies and also includes the scope, limitations, and examples of noteworthy publications from each viewpoint. The MDS evaluations depict the intellectual structure of exporting to allow for a longitudinal evaluation across the four time periods of the study. Our multifaceted qualitative–quantitative (or theory–MDS) approach provides a distinct view of the exporting literature that is richer, more in-depth and novel to the exporting literature.

Second, we draw on the intellectual structure established in the MDS results to offer detailed suggestions for future researchers on the topic of exporting. Previous reviews have also offered some agenda-setting items, but the depth, detail, and scientific approach of our avenues for future research on exporting are, we think, much more valuable than the simple reading and projecting approach that has often been utilized in literature reviews. Consequently, using the qualitative–quantitative analyses and adhering to the notion that past and present research influence future research (Kuhn 1996), we offer seven research directions for

consideration that integrate current main topics in the knowledge base of the exporting field. This unique perspective has not been emphasized in previous exporting studies. Indeed, although most recent research has provided a thorough understanding of specific aspects of the exporting phenomenon, it has placed considerably less emphasis on future research suggestions. Our proposed research opportunities are intended as a basis for further exploration and advancement of the study of exporting.

In the following sections, we first provide a summary of the exporting research domain and relate the topic to a variety of theoretical perspectives that have been used in this literature base. Next, we discuss in detail the quantitative methods used to implement the MDS examinations. This is followed by the findings provided by our two approaches. We conclude with a discussion of implications that centers on proposed suggestions for researchers and practitioners in their exporting research endeavors and implementation activities.

EXPORTING AND ITS CORE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Exporting research has focused on a variety of aspects of the organizational transition from a purely domestic enterprise to one that begins to conduct business across national borders. More specifically, many studies have recognized and classified the aspects that are critical to exporting. As these analyses focus on specific facets of exporting, several theory-based viewpoints have been used to explain the exporting phenomenon. As Table 1 shows, these theoretical perspectives include internationalization, the resource-based view (RBV)/dynamic capabilities, the knowledge-based view (KBV), transaction cost economics (TCE), institutional theory, and relationship marketing. Our goal in this section of the literature analysis is not to report on all of the theoretical frameworks employed in exporting research but, rather, to introduce and describe the six theoretical perspectives that have been widely used in the exporting literature to understand and model exporting constructs. The remainder of this section provides a brief overview of these pertinent theoretical streams as they relate to exporting and international marketing.

Internationalization

In reviewing the role of exporting within the internationalization of firms, Johanson and Vahlne's (1977) so-called "Uppsala Internationalization Model" is considered a core contribution, as the model positions exporting as a stage of

internationalization. (Uppsala University is a major research hub for international business research located in Sweden where, at the time, Jan Johanson and Jan-Erik Vahlne were professors.) Johanson and Vahlne assert that firms gradually increase their commitment to international operations on the basis of the size of the investments made and their degree of inflexibility. Specifically, these authors (Johanson and Vahlne 1977, 2009) posit that exporting is often the initial step in an "establishment chain." The term "establishment chain" refers to the typical internationalization sequence followed by companies going international: exporting, formal market entries through intermediaries, investment in company-owned sales organizations, and manufacturing in international markets. In this chain, exporting enables internationalizing firms to acquire information on foreign markets that can aid decisions on future investments. Because exporting requires relatively small and flexible investments, it is frequently employed as a mode of market entry early on in a firm's internationalization, when a low level of commitment is the typical strategic decision taken by upper management. In an update to their 1977 seminal piece (the most cited article in the *Journal of International Business Studies*), Johanson and Vahlne (2009) proposed an improvement to their original model by considering markets as networks of relationships that allow for the establishment of trust, commitment, and knowledge sharing. Consistent with current thinking, Johanson and Vahlne (1977, 2009) argued that exporting represented the lowest commitment of a firm to serve international markets based on the nature of the required investments. Because success in exporting precedes greater commitment to international markets, strategic approaches to exporting are invaluable to managers and researchers in their long-term internationalization efforts (Johanson and Vahlne 2009).

RBV/Dynamic Capabilities

The RBV asserts that firms can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage on the basis of the organization of their resources (Wernerfelt 1984). The RBV focuses on firm-level determinants of performance in relation to industry-level performance (Peng and York 2001). More specifically, resources are distributed heterogeneously across firms, and a firm may obtain a competitive advantage by exploiting its internal strengths through the coordination of resources. To generate sustained competitive advantage, firm resources must be valuable, rare, inimitable, and nonsubstitutable (Barney 1991). Often associated with the resource-based perspective, the framework of dynamic capabilities addresses the shortcoming of the RBV's static nature. As such, the dynamic capabilities extension of the

Table 1. Overview of Main Theoretical Perspectives in Exporting Research

Theory	Definition	Scope	Limitations	Exemplars (Chronological Order)
Internationalization	Firms gradually increase their commitment to international operations on the basis of the size of investments made and the degree of inflexibility.	The focus is on firm size and market entry; most studies conclude that managers' experiences and willingness to export have more of an impact than firm size. Research suggests that the firm employees, rather than the size of the firm, influence the decision to export.	Descriptive in nature, internationalization is a process framework that broadly defines steps taken by firms when entering foreign markets. Exporting is considered one of many potential entry strategies.	Calof (1994); Reuber and Fischer (1997); McAuley (1999); Moen and Servais (2002); Fernández and Nieto (2006); Ellis (2008); Hilmersson and Jansson (2012)
RBV/Dynamic capabilities	Firms can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage on the basis of the organization of their resources and the use of sense making to efficiently respond to changing market conditions.	The focus is sharing and combining local and foreign resources and capabilities to help with export decisions as well as using innovation capability to improve export performance.	RBV is static in nature and is limited in its ability to address dynamic issues such as timing, innovation, and entrepreneurship. Dynamic capabilities extend RBV and assume that firms entering export markets have the necessary sense-making capabilities to respond to local marketplaces.	Guillén (2000); Peng and York (2001); Rodríguez and Rodríguez (2005); Calantone et al. (2006); Wu et al. (2007); Gao et al. (2010)
KBV	Knowledge is viewed as the most important organizational resource. Organizations are responsible for collecting, updating, and implementing knowledge into their marketing activities.	The focus is on adapting to and learning from the marketplace. Firms need to have the stamina to continuously support exporting activities through learned knowledge from host markets.	The creation of knowledge is a difficult and expensive task for firms to undertake and as such it may be more cost efficient to imitate competitors within export environments.	Barker and Kaynak (1992); Cadogan, Diamantopoulos, and De Mortanges (1999); Cadogan, Diamantopoulos, and Siguaw (2002); Ling-yeo (2004); Yeoh (2004); Salomon and Jin (2008); Zhang, Li, and Li (2014)
TCE	Firms and the market act as alternative governance mechanisms with regard to protecting firms from hazards within exchange relationships.	The focus is on exporting as an entry mode to protect against hazards and reduce the costs associated with finding, negotiating, and controlling foreign partners.	TCE emphasizes behaviors and assumes that humans and organizations want to maximize profit. TCE assumes that cultures are consistent across export markets.	Anderson and Gatignon (1986); Anderson and Coughlan (1987); Klein, Frazier, and Roth (1990); Peng and Ilinitch (1998); Peng and York (2001); Brouthers (2002); Yang, Su, and Fam (2012)

Table 1. Continued

Theory	Definition	Scope	Limitations	Exemplars (Chronological Order)
Institutional theory	Firms recognize and react to cognitive, normative, and regulatory forces within the marketplace. They balance and respect their internal operations and external environment.	The focus is on governmental support that provides the necessary institutional infrastructure, including valuable and complementary resources, for the successful implementation of firm export strategies.	Institutional theory assumes that firms will be influenced by cognitive, normative, and regulatory forces. With regard to exporting, institutional theory assumes these influences are consistent across foreign markets.	Yiu, Lau, and Bruton (2007); Lu, Xu, and Liu (2009); Schneider, Schulze-Bentrop, and Paunescu (2010); LiPuma, Newbert, and Doh (2013); He, Brouthers, and Filatotchev (2013); Adekambi, Ingenbleek, and Van Trijp (2015)
Relationship marketing	Firms require the combination of commitment and trust to preserve relationships and focus on long-term value.	The focus is on the antecedents of relationship quality and their impact on export performance.	Relationship marketing describes actions taken by parties to develop and nurture long-term, valuable relationships based on trust and commitment. With regard to exporting, relationship marketing assumes that relationships develop in similar manners across exporting markets.	Bello and Gilliland (1997); Lages, Lages, and Lages (2005); Leonidou, Barnes, and Talias (2006); Skarmeas et al. (2008); Ural (2009); Leonidou et al. (2014); Ju and Gao (2017)

RBV suggests that a firm may gain a sustained competitive advantage if that firm is able to provide prompt, accurate, and proper strategic reactions to the market as compared with its competitors (Helfat and Peteraf 2003). Firms use dynamic capabilities in both the short and the long run, and market dynamism is a factor in shaping the pattern of effective allocation of dynamic capabilities. Dynamic capabilities are a set of specific and identifiable processes such as learning, product development, and development of strategic alliances (Eisenhardt and Martin 2000). The evolution of dynamic capabilities is path dependent and shaped by learning mechanisms such as experiences and losses. Learning as a resource is capable of being reconfigured on the basis of a firm's market orientation. Furthermore, in high-velocity markets, knowing what to retain from experience or memory is crucial because learning may occur rapidly. Dynamic capabilities may be replicated by other firms, but it is the configuration of key resources that leads to a firm's competitive advantage (Eisenhardt and Martin 2000).

Knowledge-Based View

An outgrowth of the RBV, the KBV of the firm considers knowledge the most important organizational resource (Grant 1996). In this paradigm, organizations are considered institutions that assimilate knowledge. Grant (1996) describes the key areas and roles in which knowledge as an input is a means for production. First, firms are institutions for knowledge integration. Management creates and manages the mechanisms needed to coordinate expertise. Organizations utilize capabilities that focus on activities related to effectively combining knowledge toward production. Grant (1996) offers three characteristics that define knowledge—namely, knowledge transferability, integration capacity, and appropriability. The KBV posits that there are “gains from specialization in knowledge acquisition and storage” (Grant 1996, p. 113). People (e.g., employees) create and store knowledge, and effective knowledge implementation resides in the participation and transfer of tacit knowledge among specialists.

Transaction Cost Economics

Transaction cost economics, sometimes referred to as transaction cost analysis (Rindfleisch and Heide 1997), views the firm and the market as alternative governance mechanisms (Coase 1937). More specifically, TCE describes how trading partners protect themselves against hazards within exchange relationships (Williamson 1975, 1979). Transaction cost economics helps explain how exchange partners choose among institutional alternatives

and establish trading arrangements that offer protection against adverse actions while focusing on lowest total costs. Transactions may be characterized by the degree of assets involved, the amount of uncertainty about the future and exchange partner actions, the complexity of the exchange, and the frequency with which transactions occur. These characteristics aid in identifying a preferred institution of governance. According to this approach, governance structures reside along a spectrum. On one end is the firm, which provides the greatest protection for investments and allows for increased efficiency during times of change and when adaptability is required. On the other end of the governance structure continuum is the marketplace. As price information is revealed and continuously updated, the marketplace suffices for basic commodity-like transactions. Between these two extremes exist hybrid modes of governance that may incorporate contracts or partial ownership arrangements to address a variety of risk forms.

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory incorporates the idea that organizations within an institutional environment respond and react to three distinct forces: “cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior. Institutions are transported by various carriers—culture, structure, and routines—and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction” (Scott 1995, p. 33). These forces provide specific guidance to organizations in the form of regulations (Scott 1995) as well as unwritten rules and norms (Scott 2005) and entail cultural influences that usually take the form of taken-for-granted rules (Zucker 1977). Once a firm is established, grows, and interacts with its environment, institutionalization begins. When competitors increase in number and complexity, firms adapt to these situational factors and act accordingly. Interestingly, an argument has been made that institutionalization greatly increases the chance that a firm survives (Meyer and Rowan 1977). Furthermore, “organizations which have structural elements not institutionalized in their environments should be more likely to fail, as such unauthorized complexity must be justified by claims of efficiency and effectiveness” (Meyer and Scott 1983, p. 53). Institutionalization requires firms to balance and respect relations within the internal and external environment. Organizations need to gain approval of their institutional environments to be accepted by regulatory bodies as well as society. This promotes organizational conformity to institutional norms, which leads to legitimization of the focal organization (Aldrich and Fiol 1994; Deephouse 1999; DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Scott 1995). Normative forces help routinize actions and behavior, allowing firms to

stabilize (Emery and Trist 1965; Meyer and Rowan 1977; Terreberry 1968). As a result, firms experience increased efficiency and gain a general understanding of what is expected of them in the global marketplace (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Meyer and Rowan 1977).

Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing is defined as “all marketing activities directed towards establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges” (Morgan and Hunt 1994, p. 22). Managing relationships between exchange partners is a necessary and sufficient condition for marketing practice because marketing actions cannot take place without the exchange of value between trading parties (Alderson 1965). It is well supported that strong relationships positively affect performance (Palmatier et al. 2006). Indeed, the combination of commitment and trust encourages partners to preserve relationships through cooperation, to focus on long-term benefits as opposed to attractive short-term activities, and to recognize high-risk actions as sensible rather than viewing them as opportunistic acts (Morgan and Hunt 1994). To some companies, exporting is viewed as a high-risk endeavor given the uncertainties associated with leaving the company’s home country. Relationship marketing can, to some, even out the risk-reward ratio to a more favorable position for company managers, especially considering the relatively low investments and limited strategic commitment that must be made for a company to export. In addition, other dimensions such as reciprocity and cooperation have been included as contributing factors to the overall quality of partner relationships (Palmatier et al. 2006).

EXPORTING AND ITS QUANTITATIVE GROUPS

Although there are many different approaches to surveying a given literature base, the use of bibliometrics is unique in its application. There is little doubt that standard reviews contribute greatly to our understanding of exporting research (Chen, Sousa, and He 2016; Leonidou and Katsikeas 2010; Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Coudounaris 2010; Li, He, and Sousa 2017). Indeed, these types of peer-reviewed articles supply insight into various trends in the domain, similar to our qualitative, theory-focused overview in the previous section. Such reviews, like ours, adopt certain decision criteria for an article’s or stream’s inclusion in the review. To a certain degree, cocitation analyses accomplish a similar task of reviewing the literature. However, the distinction that bibliometric studies provide relates to the fundamental underpinnings of the

research area. As depicted by Chabowski, Hult, and Mena (2011), the approach follows a four-step process. First, information about the published articles of a given domain is gathered. (This is the step at which typical review pieces reside.) Then, by converting citation data into cocitation matrices, the underlying intellectual structure can be established. From these matrices, we found an emphasis on recent articles to provide a basis from which to discuss future research opportunities. Indeed, this approach is driven by the notion that past and present research tend to influence future ideas in a given literature stream (Kuhn 1996). As a result, although the starting point is similar to typical review articles, a bibliometric study’s perspective and goals, as implemented in this analysis, are unique and offer different insights to the literature.

To begin the bibliometric evaluation of the exporting literature, we identified articles related to the topic by searching 35 academic journals from the inception of the topic’s emergence in the literature.¹ Because the intention of this study was to be as inclusive as possible, we followed previous research and used the single keyword “export*” in the Web of Science database, which is considered the foremost source for citation data (Leonidou and Katsikeas 2010; Samiee, Chabowski, and Hult 2015; Schildt, Zahra, and Sillanpää 2006). By using “export*” as a keyword, articles with all possible iterations of the term “export” would be included because of the use of an asterisk in the syntax. For example, records with the term “exporter,” “exporting,” “exports,” or “export management” would be included in the database. We did this to focus the bibliometric study specifically on the topic of exporting rather than other related topics. The use of our chosen search term is in line with established cocitation studies that have examined specific aspects of the literature (Schildt, Zahra, and Sillanpää 2006). By using this approach, our goal is to focus

¹The 35 journals included in the study were *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Advances in Consumer Research*, *British Journal of Management*, *California Management Review*, *(Columbia) Journal of World Business*, *Decision Sciences*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *International Business Review*, *International Journal of Advertising*, *International Journal of Market Research*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *International Marketing Review*, *Journal of Advertising*, *Journal of Advertising Research*, *Journal of Business*, *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of International Marketing*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *Journal of Retailing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Long Range Planning*, *Management International Review*, *Management Science*, *Organization Science*, and *Strategic Management Journal*.

specifically on the multifaceted nature of the exporting topic in marketing-related research. Following standard protocol in the bibliometric literature, articles were included for analysis when the search term appeared in the title, abstract, author-supplied keywords, or reference identifiers (Clarivate Analytics 2017). This excludes articles that may have been export-focused in an ancillary sense but not in a significant, identifiable way through the core sections of an article. Practitioner-targeted journals, book reviews, biographical items, editorials, and other indirect research documents were excluded from the database to maintain this study's emphasis on themes directly applicable to the development of the exporting literature.

Using previous cocitation analyses in international marketing as a basis (Samiee, Chabowski, and Hult 2015), our intention was to divide the data gathered into ten-year increments to note the overall longitudinal development of the exporting research domain. However, there was a need to show recent trends in the literature as well. As a result, we chose the four-year period 2013–2016 to accomplish this task. Then, in line with previous research, we divided the data into the ten-year periods of 1993–2002 and 2003–2012. Following this, owing to considerably fewer citations per year and for chronological manageability, we grouped together the first decades of our research topic (1958–1992). This resulted in an origination period, two time frames of ten years each, and a recent period of four years. In total, 830 articles with 52,191 citations were used in the study. This includes 152 articles with 3,667 citations in 1958–1992, 160 articles with 7,193 citations in 1993–2002, 293 articles with 21,905 citations in 2003–2012, and 225 articles with 19,426 citations in 2013–2016. Taken together, the depiction of these four periods provides a detailed overview of the exporting literature since its beginnings.

After we performed a citation analysis to determine the most influential publications in exporting research across the four periods, we prepared cocitation data for use in our MDS evaluations. Multidimensional scaling is a common method to evaluate a research domain through bibliometrics. We used hierarchical cluster analysis as an alternative method to compare the findings and determine any additional insights. Our Web Appendix provides similar and complementary results to those found in the article. Most importantly, the approach taken with MDS in this study creates interpretable and meaningful results. While this is suitable to consider for theory-building activities, MDS is also a statistical technique. It distinguishes itself from other quantitative methods used in bibliometrics in that MDS measures the stress (or, goodness-of-fit) of the

model. This provides a level of confidence in the MDS results that is difficult to accomplish otherwise.

Because this study builds on citation data and applies cocitation data, we examine the relationships and configuration of the most highly cited research in the exporting literature (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004). In other words, the intellectual structure shown by the MDS results indicates the interrelationships of the domain's most influential works. Because these data are relational in nature, the findings reveal the network embedded in the data patterns (Burt 1983; McCain 1990). The result is, as with previous bibliometric studies, that the findings should provide the basis for insight into present research as well as suggestions for future research (Alba and Moore 1983; Kuhn 1996; Tsai and Wu 2010; Wasserman and Faust 1994).

To obtain a fair or good model in bibliometrics, approximately 25 documents are typically included for analysis (Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004). We followed this perspective and incorporated 22 documents from the 1958–1992 period, 25 from 1993–2002, 24 from 2003–2012, and 25 from 2013–2016. Then, we used MDS to determine each period's stress value (or, goodness-of-fit). Under these conditions, a good (less than .10) or fair (between .10 and .20) stress value typically results (Kruskal 1964; Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004). The computation of the stress value is a calculation of the difference between the specified model and the data used and is calculated as

$$\text{stress} = \sum_{i < j} (d_{ij} - \delta_{ij})^2,$$

where d_{ij} is the distance between objects i and j , and δ_{ij} represents the fitted distance between these two objects from the original data (Kruskal 1964; Ramos-Rodríguez and Ruíz-Navarro 2004). The origination period (1958–1992) had a fair goodness-of-fit with a stress value of .11. The other periods resulted in a good stress value and fit to the data: 1993–2002 was .08, 2003–2012 was .07, and 2013–2016 was .07.

In the MDS results, we applied a standardized Euclidean distance of .30 or less to determine research groups to be interpretable and meaningful (Hair et al. 1998). Both research groups and cliques were established using this technique. While research groups simply consist of two publications, a research clique in bibliometrics is composed of three or more works in a single group (Alba and Moore 1983; Wasserman and Faust 1994). The names established for each research group are based on the overarching themes of the publications found in each group.

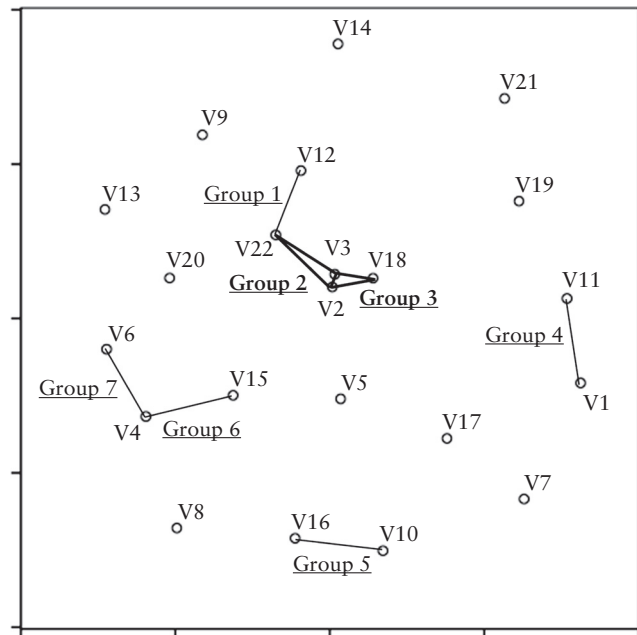
The research groups were also compared longitudinally. We did this using the occurrence of publications in research groups in subsequent time periods, and this provided the basis for an analysis of the domain's development across the study's four periods (Samiee, Chabowski, and Hult 2015). In other words, an article or book appearing in a research group or clique in another time period provided the justification for indicating chronological continuity of a particular research topic. Consequently, a more complete view of the specific trends in the exporting literature can result from such an analysis.

Because a goal of our research is to provide ideas for future pursuit by exporting academics, we evaluated the most highly cited publications published in the last four years to determine the most recent influential topics in the domain because these can be informative and influential in our development of future research opportunities (Burrell 2003). We searched the citation data for articles cited, on average, 1.25 times per year beginning in 2013 to create a list comparable in length to previous studies (Chabowski, Samiee, and Hult 2013). This approach created a basis of 22 articles from which to draw conclusions regarding themes of particular timeliness in exporting research. In line with the notion that past as well as current established research influences future topics (Kuhn 1996), the information gained from this additional analysis is synthesized with established topics in the exporting literature to provide a more complete set of suggestions for prospective research.

COCITATION-BASED MDS RESULTS

This section provides an overview of the exporting literature's intellectual structure across the four periods of this study (1958–1992, 1993–2002, 2003–2012, and 2013–2016). Related to the six theoretical perspectives used in exporting research, there are four specific trends that stand out. First, the topic of internationalization is consistently represented throughout our analysis. Second, the theme of dynamic capabilities emerges alongside hybrid applications of the RBV and institutional theory for the 2003–2012 and 2013–2016 periods. Third, the application of the KBV is noteworthy for the most recent two periods of the study and reflects the increased use of knowledge in the exporting literature. Finally, TCE is introduced in 1993–2002 but transitions to the examination of relationship marketing, which became particularly relevant in the 2003–2012 period. Now, it is critical to indicate that these four developments in the exporting literature reflect the lasting influence of the domain's fundamental theoretical perspectives, as reviewed earlier as well. The following subsections provide more precise details concerning these issues.

Figure 1. Exporting Literature Intellectual Structure, 1958–1992



Notes: Stress value = .11; standardized Euclidean distance $\leq .30$; boldfaced text indicates research clique. V1 = Abdel-Malek (1974); V2 = Bilkey (1978); V3 = Bilkey and Tesar (1977); V4 = Cavusgil (1984b); V5 = Cavusgil, Bilkey, and Tesar (1979); V6 = Cavusgil and Nevin (1981); V7 = Cunningham and Spigel (1971); V8 = Czinkota and Johnston (1981); V9 = Czinkota and Johnston (1983); V10 = Dichtl et al. (1984); V11 = Hirsch (1971); V12 = Johanson and Vahlne (1977); V13 = Lee and Brasch (1978); V14 = Pavord and Bogart (1975); V15 = Reid (1981); V16 = Reid (1984); V17 = Simmonds and Smith (1968); V18 = Simpson and Kujawa (1974); V19 = Tesar (1975); V20 = Tookey (1964); V21 = Vernon (1966); V22 = Wiedersheim-Paul, Olson, and Welch (1978). Group 1 (V12 and V22): Pre-Export Activity, Knowledge Development, and Internationalization; Group 2 (V2, V3, and V22): Pre-Export Activity and Export Behavior; Group 3 (V2, V3, and V18): Export Behavior and Decision Processes; Group 4 (V1 and V11): Export Management, Orientation, and Performance; Group 5 (V10 and V16): Small Firm Export Decision-Making; Group 6 (V4 and V15): Export Decision-Maker and Organizational Characteristics; Group 7 (V4 and V6): Export Marketing Behavior and Organizational Characteristics.

Exporting Literature Intellectual Structure, 1958–1992

Illustrated in Figure 1 are the seven research groups from the first period of our study. An emphasis on pre-export activity, knowledge development, and internationalization (Group 1) shows the comprehensive perspective in early exporting research. By incorporating topics related to the internationalization process, research established a staged approach to exporting during this time period (Johanson and Vahlne 1977; Wiedersheim-Paul, Olson, and Welch 1978). Linking pre-export activity and export behavior in a research clique (Group 2) indicates that research during this period evaluated firm actions before and after the export decision is made. This

is insightful in comparing activities and behaviors involved in both the pre-export and the export condition (Bilkey 1978; Bilkey and Tesar 1977; Wiedersheim-Paul, Olson, and Welch 1978). Relatedly, Group 3 emphasizes export behavior and decision processes. The focus on the decision to export provides a greater understanding of export motives relative to other research groups (Simpson and Kujawa 1974).

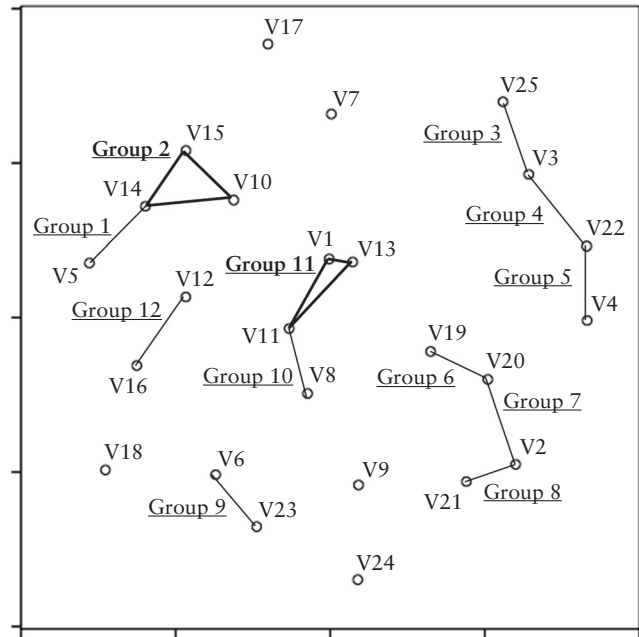
The emphasis on export management, orientation, and performance (Group 4) introduces a strategic element to research during this period. By relating the orientation of activities to performance, the financial relevance of exporting is increased (Abdel-Malek 1974; Hirsch 1971). Small-firm export decision making (Group 5) provides a slightly different perspective on exporting. By studying smaller firms, there appears to be a greater focus on the processes related to the entry decisions of this situation (Dichtl et al. 1984; Reid 1984). Anchored by research emphasizing organizational characteristics (Cavusgil 1984b), the exporting literature also focused on the export decision maker (Group 6) and export marketing behavior (Group 7). This allowed for greater detail in research at the managerial level (Reid 1981) and the marketing function (Cavusgil and Nevin 1981).

Exporting Literature Intellectual Structure, 1993–2002

Figure 2 displays the 12 research groups in this period. A focus on managerial perceptions and export performance (Group 1) is the basis for the research during this period. Rather than emphasizing the firm alone, the relevance of insights at the managerial level are indicated (Axinn 1988; Christensen, Da Rocha, and Gertner 1987). The research clique concentrating on export strategy, organizational characteristics, and performance (Group 2) provides an overview of a specific aspect of the export domain. By examining exporting success factors, a better relation between internal characteristics and competitiveness can be attained (Cavusgil 1984b; Christensen, Da Rocha, and Gertner 1987).

Three related groups in the general area of market entry (Groups 3–5) are centered on foreign market entry, expansion, and national culture (Anderson and Coughlan 1987; Kogut and Singh 1988). They also cover peripheral issues of relational contracting (Williamson 1985) and transaction costs (Anderson and Gatignon 1986). Together, these groups provide a basis for the importance of external factors. Another chain of groups emphasizing internationalization (Groups 6–8) includes information on internationalization models and processes (Andersen 1993; Johanson and Vahlne 1990). To complete this chain, one aspect focuses on knowledge development (Johanson

Figure 2. Exporting Literature Intellectual Structure, 1993–2002



Notes: Stress value = .08; standardized Euclidean distance $\leq .30$; boldfaced text indicates research clique. V1 = Aaby and Slater (1989); V2 = Andersen (1993); V3 = Anderson and Coughlan (1987); V4 = Anderson and Gatignon (1986); V5 = Axinn (1988); V6 = Bilkey (1978); V7 = Bilkey (1982); V8 = Bilkey and Tesar (1977); V9 = Bonaccorsi (1992); V10 = Cavusgil (1984b); V11 = Cavusgil (1984a); V12 = Cavusgil and Nevin (1981); V13 = Cavusgil and Zou (1994); V14 = Christensen, Da Rocha, and Gertner (1987); V15 = Cooper and Kleinschmidt (1985); V16 = Czinkota and Johnston (1983); V17 = Day and Wensley (1988); V18 = Dominguez and Sequeira (1993); V19 = Johanson and Vahlne (1977); V20 = Johanson and Vahlne (1990); V21 = Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975); V22 = Kogut and Singh (1988); V23 = Miesenbock (1988); V24 = Reid (1984); V25 = Williamson (1985). Group 1 (V5 and V14): Managerial Perceptions and Export Performance; Group 2 (V10, V14, and V15): Export Strategy, Organizational Characteristics, and Performance; Group 3 (V3 and V25): Market Entry, Expansion, and Relational Contracting; Group 4 (V3 and V22): Market Entry, Expansion, and National Culture; Group 5 (V4 and V22): Market Entry, Transaction Costs, and National Culture; Group 6 (V19 and V20): Knowledge Development and the Internationalization Process; Group 7 (V2 and V20): Internationalization Models and Processes; Group 8 (V2 and V21): Internationalization and Psychic Distance; Group 9 (V6 and V23): Small Firm Export Behavior; Group 10 (V8 and V11): Internationalization and Small Firm Export Behavior; Group 11 (V1, V11, and V13): Export Management, Strategy, and Performance; Group 12 (V12 and V16): Export Behavior and Sales Volume.

and Vahlne 1977) while another emphasizes psychic distance (Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul 1975). As a set, this chain shows the multifaceted nature of internationalization efforts in the export domain.

Research on export behavior and sales volume (Group 12) provides an indication of the continued importance of performance in export studies. By basing research on internal and managerial factors as well as the exporting problems associated with small and medium-sized firms, a more comprehensive view of exporting organizations can

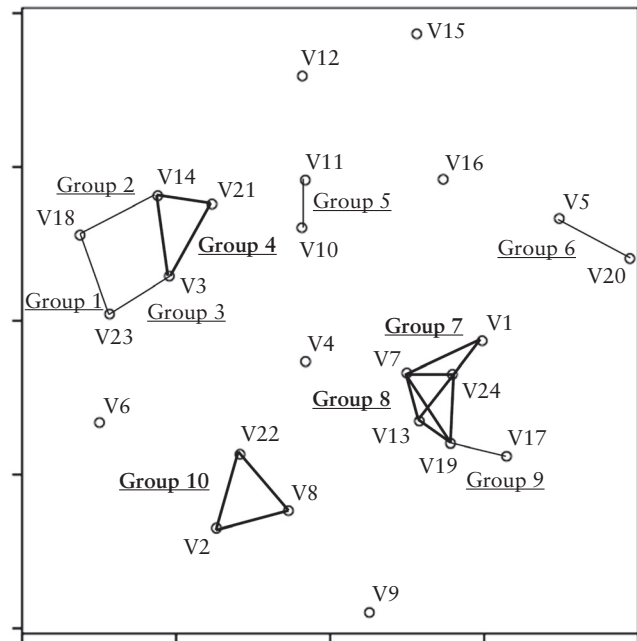
be attained (Cavusgil and Nevin 1981; Czinkota and Johnston 1983). In a related group, the concentration on small firm export behavior (Group 9) is a unique topic. This theme focuses on the transition of firms from a domestic market to their initial exporting endeavors as well as the role of smaller businesses that benefit from the export function (Bilkey 1978; Miesenbock 1988). Relatedly, Group 10 focuses on internationalization and small firm export behavior. By emphasizing the different levels of small and exporting firms, a more detailed understanding emerges regarding how exporting begins (Bilkey and Tesar 1977; Cavusgil 1984a). Research focusing on export management, strategy, and performance (Group 11) is a second research clique in this time period. In extending the previous group to emphasize competencies, marketing strategy, and performance, a more complete understanding of the internal and external factors that an export venture faces is achieved (Aaby and Slater 1989; Cavusgil and Zou 1994).

Exporting Literature Intellectual Structure, 2003–2012

We identified ten research groups for this period (see Figure 3). The focus on internationalization, expansion, and performance of small and new venture firms (Group 1) signals the continued importance of small organizations in the exporting literature. This is evident in the rate and development of internationalization among undersized firms (Lu and Beamish 2001; Zahra, Ireland, and Hitt 2000). Extending this approach, research on internationalization, innovation, and organizational capabilities of small firms (Group 2) shows the multifaceted nature of topics studied in relation to the internationalization process. By evaluating innovation and the capabilities which may develop as a part of this process, this research contributes to the understanding of small internationalizing firms (Knight and Cavusgil 2004; Lu and Beamish 2001). The study of new and early internationalizing firms, knowledge, learning, and performance (Group 3) reveals differing levels of internationalization across firms. This is important in the evaluation of international expansion and growth of firms (Autio, Sapienza, and Almeida 2000; Zahra, Ireland, and Hitt 2000). A research clique emphasizing international new venture innovation, organizational capabilities, and growth (Group 4) pertains to the prevalence of early internationalizing firms. Their importance in the literature indicates a shift in studying the origins of the internationalization process (Autio, Sapienza, and Almeida 2000; Knight and Cavusgil 2004; Oviatt and McDougall 1994).

The continued emphasis on knowledge development and the internationalization process (Group 5) provides a concept of this perspective's role in the literature during

Figure 3. Exporting Literature Intellectual Structure, 2003–2012



Notes: Stress value = .07; standardized Euclidean distance \leq .30; boldfaced text indicates research clique. V1 = Aaby and Slater (1989); V2 = Aulakh, Kotabe, and Teegen (2000); V3 = Autio, Sapienza, and Almeida (2000); V4 = Barney (1991); V5 = Bello and Gilliland (1997); V6 = Bonaccorsi (1992); V7 = Cavusgil and Zou (1994); V8 = Day (1994); V9 = Jaworski and Kohli (1993); V10 = Johanson and Vahlne (1977); V11 = Johanson and Vahlne (1990); V12 = Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975); V13 = Katsikeas, Leonidou, and Morgan (2000); V14 = Knight and Cavusgil (2004); V15 = Kogut and Singh (1988); V16 = Leonidou and Katsikeas (1996); V17 = Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Samiee (2002); V18 = Lu and Beamish (2001); V19 = Morgan, Kaleka, and Katsikeas (2004); V20 = Morgan and Hunt (1994); V21 = Oviatt and McDougall (1994); V22 = Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997); V23 = Zahra, Ireland, and Hitt (2000); V24 = Zou and Stan (1998). Group 1 (V18 and V23): Internationalization, Expansion, and Performance of Small and New Venture Firms; Group 2 (V14 and V18): Internationalization, Innovation, and Organizational Capabilities of Small Firms; Group 3 (V3 and V23): New and Early Internationalizing Firms, Knowledge, Learning, and Performance; Group 4 (V3, V14, and V21): International New Venture Innovation, Organizational Capabilities, and Growth; Group 5 (V10 and V11): Knowledge Development and the Internationalization Process; Group 6 (V5 and V20): Commitment, Trust, and Export Channel Performance; Group 7 (V1, V7, and V24): Export Management, Marketing Strategy, and Performance; Group 8 (V7, V13, V19, and V24): Exporting, Marketing Strategy, and Performance; Group 9 (V17 and V19): Marketing Strategy and Export Performance; Group 10 (V2, V8, and V22): Dynamic Capabilities, Export Strategy, and Performance.

this period. By following the staged efforts of firms seeking to internationalize, this research focuses not only on the firm itself but also on others in the firm's network to add a multifaceted understanding of internationalization (Johanson and Vahlne 1977, 1990). Another topic that emerged centered on commitment, trust, and export channel performance (Group 6). This relates to the nature of the export channel as it is composed of a series of control and relationship exchanges to deliver value to the market (Bello and Gilliland 1997; Morgan and Hunt 1994).

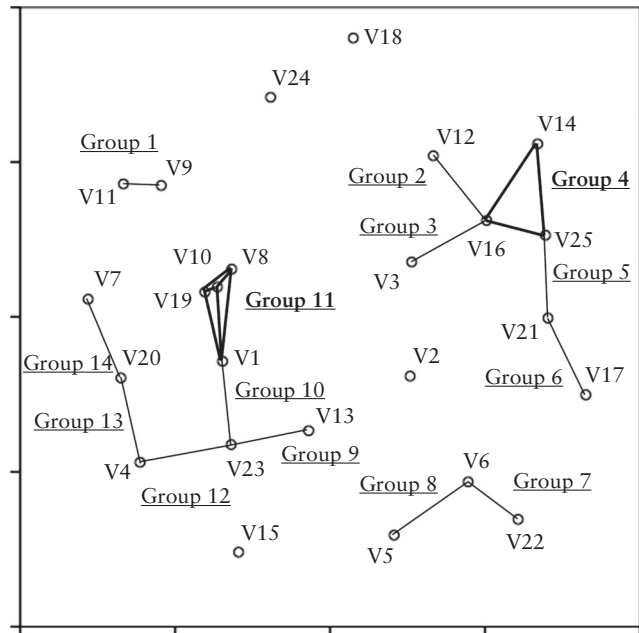
One research clique focusing on export management, marketing strategy, and performance (Group 7) supports the trend to relate the export literature to performance outcomes. By emphasizing the management of export activities, a more complete understanding of the managerial drivers and outcomes can be achieved (Aaby and Slater 1989; Cavusgil and Zou 1994; Zou and Stan 1998). In contrast, an adjacent research clique examines exporting, marketing strategy, and performance (Group 8). This topic relates the wide array of environmental, operational, managerial, resource, and capability factors of performance indicators within exporting (Katsikeas, Leonidou, and Morgan 2000; Morgan, Kaleka, and Katsikeas 2004). Relatedly, the topic of marketing strategy and export performance (Group 9) supports strategy as a precursor to performance. Indeed, the role of strategy is critical in linking managerial, organizational, and environmental characteristics to export outcomes (Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Samiee 2002).

The emergence of dynamic capabilities, export strategy, and performance (Group 10) indicates the expansion of topics related to strategy and performance in the exporting literature. More precisely, with the importance of dynamic capabilities in this research clique, a greater acknowledgment of the fluidity of the export market is noted (Aulakh, Kotabe, and Teegen 2000; Day 1994; Teece, Pisano, and Shuen 1997).

Exporting Literature Intellectual Structure, 2013–2016

The 14 research groups during this four-year time period appear in Figure 4. One research clique emphasizing knowledge intensity and internationalization models (Group 11) is centrally located within the general discussion of competing forms of approaches on the topic. For instance, it is noteworthy that both the incremental and rapid internationalization perspectives are so closely aligned in the same research group (Johanson and Vahlne 1977, 2009; Oviatt and McDougall 1994). However, this position must be taken into consideration, because the topic of firm internationalization (Group 1) represented by the traditional approach is distinctive in its contribution to the domain. Still, anchored by an emphasis on market entry growth through learning (Zahra, Ireland, and Hitt 2000), three topics focusing on rapid international expansion (Group 9), knowledge intensity and international expansion (Group 10), and knowledge, learning, and innovation (Group 12) are connected to the overall view of internationalization models. Furthermore, centered on the critical nature of quickness in market entry (Oviatt and McDougall 2005), two groups related to learning, innovation, and internationalization speed (Group 13) and experience and internationalization speed (Group 14)

Figure 4. Exporting Literature Intellectual Structure, 2013–2016



Notes: Stress value = .07; standardized Euclidean distance $\leq .30$; boldfaced text indicates research clique. V1 = Autio, Sapienza, and Almeida (2000); V2 = Barney (1991); V3 = Cavusgil and Zou (1994); V4 = Cohen and Levinthal (1990); V5 = Dhanaraj and Beamish (2003); V6 = Eisenhardt and Martin (2000); V7 = Eriksson et al. (1997); V8 = Johanson and Vahlne (1977); V9 = Johanson and Vahlne (1990); V10 = Johanson and Vahlne (2009); V11 = Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul (1975); V12 = Katsikeas, Leonidou, and Morgan (2000); V13 = Knight and Cavusgil (2004); V14 = Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Samiee (2002); V15 = Lu and Beamish (2001); V16 = Morgan, Kaleka, and Katsikeas (2004); V17 = Morgan, Katsikeas, and Vorhies (2012); V18 = Morgan and Hunt (1994); V19 = Oviatt and McDougall (1994); V20 = Oviatt and McDougall (2005); V21 = Sousa, Martínez-López, and Coelho (2008); V22 = Teece, Pisano, and Shuen (1997); V23 = Zahra, Ireland, and Hitt (2000); V24 = Zhou, Wu, and Luo (2007); V25 = Zou and Stan (1998). Group 1 (V9 and V11): Firm Internationalization; Group 2 (V12 and V16): Export Venture Performance; Group 3 (V3 and V16): Market Strategy and Export Performance; Group 4 (V14, V16, and V25): Resources, Positional Advantage, and Performance; Group 5 (V21 and V25): Internal and External Export Performance Antecedents; Group 6 (V17 and V21): Strategy Implementation, Capabilities, and Performance; Group 7 (V6 and V22): Dynamic Capabilities; Group 8 (V5 and V6): Resources and Capabilities; Group 9 (V13 and V23): Rapid International Expansion; Group 10 (V1 and V23): Knowledge Intensity and International Expansion; Group 11 (V1, V8, V10, and V19): Knowledge Intensity and Internationalization Models; Group 12 (V4 and V23): Knowledge, Learning, and Innovation; Group 13 (V4 and V20): Learning, Innovation, and Internationalization Speed; Group 14 (V7 and V20): Experience and Internationalization Speed.

complete the set of research topics in this area of the exporting literature's intellectual structure during this period.

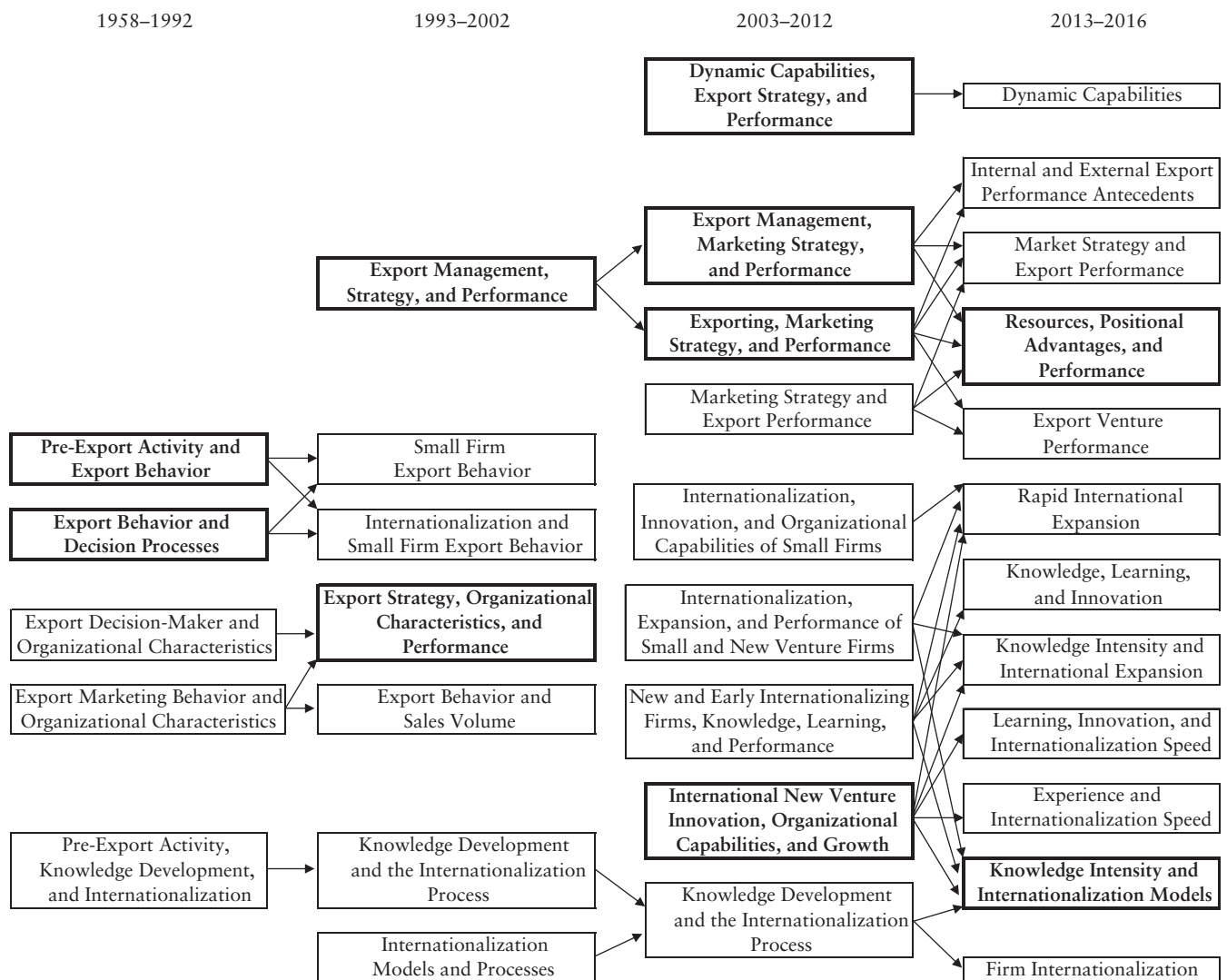
As the focal group in a chain of research topics, the clique emphasizing resources, positional advantage, and performance (Group 4) possesses a holistic perspective of the export process. By taking into account the strategy antecedents of export performance (Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Samiee 2002; Morgan, Kaleka, and Katsikeas 2004; Zou and Stan 1998), a more

complete understanding of export venture performance (Group 2), market strategy and export performance (Group 3), internal and external performance antecedents (Group 5), and strategy implementation, capabilities, and performance (Group 6) can result. This perspective was extended even further with a separate and complementary focus on dynamic capabilities (Group 7) and resources and capabilities (Group 8) during this time frame.

Longitudinal Development of Exporting Research

From an analysis of the four distinct periods of MDS results (1958–1992, 1993–2002, 2003–2012, and 2013–2016), we find four general trends in the intellectual structure development of the exporting literature. These topics relate to (1) pre-export and export decisions; (2) knowledge development and internationalization; (3) export management, strategy, and performance; and (4) dynamic capabilities. To note the longevity of certain research topics, as shown in Figure 5, influential publications in research groups were coupled across time periods to show expansion or contraction for a given subject. In other words, for development to be present from one period to the next, an identical publication must be grouped with other publications in both

Figure 5. Longitudinal Development of Exporting Research



Notes: Boldfaced research group indicates research clique.

periods to appear as a theory-based transition. This approach provides details into the changes inherent in the exporting domain over the course of this study.

The first trend emphasizing pre-export and export decisions begins in the 1958–1992 period with two topical facets. One topical facet emphasized a more managerial focus of all-encompassing export-related topics relating to pre-export activity and export behavior (Group 2) and export behavior and decision processes (Group 3). The other topical facet takes a more firm-specific approach for exporters and emphasizes export decision makers and organizational characteristics (Group 6) and export marketing behavior and organizational characteristics (Group 7). The all-encompassing approach continued only through the 1993–2002 period and included research related to small-firm export behavior (Group 9) and internationalization and small-firm export behavior (Group 10). Meanwhile, the firm-specific exporter approach also continued to the second period and discontinued development after focusing on export strategy, organizational characteristics, and performance (Group 2) and export behavior and sales volume (Group 12).

The second trend relating to knowledge development and internationalization lasted for the complete four periods of the study. Originating in 1958–1992, research on pre-export activity, knowledge development, and internationalization (Group 1) provided an initial view of and subsequently lasting significance to the topic of export commitment. This first group led to a second group in the 1993–2002 period related to knowledge development and the internationalization process (Group 6). During this same period, a group on internationalization models and processes (Group 7) emerged and combined with the knowledge development and internationalization process research subject group to form studies related to the latter (Group 5) in the 2003–2012 period. This topic expanded in the 2013–2016 period and emphasized knowledge intensity and internationalization models (Group 11) and firm internationalization (Group 1). During the 2003–2012 time frame, it should be noted that a new and related collection of topics appeared. The specific groups related to internationalization, innovation, and organizational capabilities of small firms (Group 2); internationalization, expansion, and performance of small and new venture firms (Group 1); new and early internationalizing firms, knowledge, learning, and performance (Group 3); and international new venture innovation, organizational capabilities, and growth (Group 4). This specific area expanded in the last period of the study to focus on research related to rapid international expansion (Group 9); knowledge, learning, and innovation (Group 12); knowledge intensity

and international expansion (Group 10); learning, innovation, and internationalization speed (Group 13); experience and internationalization speed (Group 14); and knowledge intensity and internationalization models (Group 11).

Utilizing an export-specific hybrid of the RBV, the next trend found in the longitudinal analysis relates to export management, strategy, and performance. This subject began during the 1993–2002 period with research on export management, strategy, and performance (Group 11). In the next period, the topic expanded to include export management, marketing strategy, and performance (Group 7) and exporting, marketing strategy, and performance (Group 8). Then, in the final period of this study (2013–2016), further development on this theme increased its presence to include studies related to internal and external export performance antecedents (Group 5); market strategy and export performance (Group 3); resources, positional advantage, and performance (Group 4); and export venture performance (Group 2).

The last trend identified in our analysis relates to dynamic capabilities and can be viewed as a supplement to the previous trend. In fact, this topic originated in the 2003–2012 period with an emphasis on dynamic capabilities, export strategy, and performance (Group 10). However, the trend became more focused during the 2013–2016 time frame and highlighted only the importance of dynamic capabilities (Group 7). Although it is relatively short-lived and self-contained compared with the other trends presented, the attention paid to dynamic capabilities in the exporting literature completes our evaluation of the longitudinal development of this domain.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Simply stated, future exporting research that aims to push boundaries and advance research can, and perhaps should, go beyond both the theoretical foundations often used in the exporting literature and the empirically driven topical groups we identified. In this section, we go deeper to address boundary conditions and theoretical fundamentals. We answer concerns in the literature about theoretical development in the marketing discipline and provide a discussion of possible advancements in the theoretical examination and practical application of the exporting phenomenon (MacInnis 2011; Yadav 2010). We extend our findings in previous sections and base our suggested research opportunities on the intellectual structure of the 2013–2016 period under the premise that past and present research

influences future research (Kuhn 1996). Going further, the Kuhnian perspective clearly indicates that research topics from distinct and opposite sides of a domain are ideal for the development of fruitful research directions (e.g., Samiee, Chabowski, and Hult 2015). Although the approach we use introduces theoretical challenges to the domain, it provides the fundamental premise for our presentation of possible future advancement of the exporting field.

We use specific aspects of network theory to offer suggestions for exporting researchers. More precisely, we take the approach that distant research publications and/or groups represent distinct opportunities, because these configurations symbolize weak ties or institutional voids in the relational network of the exporting literature (Borgatti and Halgin 2011; Burt 1992; Granovetter 1973). Analyzing these untapped relationships between ideas and supplementing these proposals with the most highly cited recent exporting publications (see the Web Appendix; Burrell 2003) creates the opportunity for unique research possibilities. Indeed, based on our analysis of the MDS findings and supplemental recent exporting research, we propose seven distinctive suggestions that we think require further examination. After presenting these concepts, we offer implications based on recent exporting research and discuss the implications of our findings for practitioners by providing thoughts about this study's application to export management, international marketing, and public policy.

Implications for Exporting Theory from the Domain's Intellectual Structure

The first opportunity for advancing the exporting literature comes from a scarcity of studies emphasizing the differences of capabilities, implementation, and performance in the internationalization process stages (Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul 1975; Morgan, Katsikeas, and Vorhies 2012). There is little doubt that each of these topics has been examined in detail in isolation. For instance, previous studies have examined the capabilities and implementation implications of market-oriented manager- and firm-level issues as they relate to organizational culture (He, Brouthers, and Filatotchev 2013; Magnusson et al. 2013; Navarro-García, Arenas-Gaitán, and Rondán-Cataluña 2014; Sleuwaegen and Onkelinx 2014). Even further, an entrepreneurial orientation as exemplified by degrees of innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking offers the potential for successful product strategy in export markets (Lisboa, Skarmeas, and Saridakis 2016). In addition, recent research has made workforce, technology, and process contrasts between small and medium-sized exporters and nonexporters in emerging economies (Gashi, Hashi, and

Pugh 2014). However, an evaluation of the different capability and implementation requirements for success across the different aspects of internationalization could provide greater insight. For instance, the generally acknowledged stages of internationalization are (1) no exporting, (2) using an agent, (3) starting a sales subsidiary, and (4) locating production in the market (Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul 1975). How do capabilities and implementation requirements change across these stages? Are issues such as cultural intelligence and international commitment more important in adapting to foreign markets early in the internationalization process? Or are these an ongoing concern that firms must maintain at a certain level? In addition, does a regional or global focus of these types of capabilities and implementation processes across internationalization stages affect performance differently? As an example, does managerial cultural intelligence matter more as the firm transitions to using intermediaries or beginning a sales office? Can international commitment be more effective with the commencement of manufacturing facilities in foreign markets compared with agents representing the firm? These types of examinations can provide insight into the dynamics of market-oriented organizational culture factors as they relate to the use and application of capabilities in a competitive manner across internationalization stages.

Extending this approach even further, the second possible direction for contributing to exporting research relates to the synthesis of work on the internationalization process and dynamic capabilities (Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul 1975; Teece, Pisano, and Shuen 1997). Although recent work has examined differences in exporter status as well as dynamic capabilities in the application of knowledge management (Gashi, Hashi, and Pugh 2014; Villar, Alegre, and Pla-Barber 2014), relatively little research has connected these two topics. For example, how are capabilities reconfigured across the different stages of internationalization? Do the routines remain the same because they have proved successful in the past? How dynamic are the changes in capabilities across internationalization stages? Is more dynamism required early or later in the process? Examinations into the use of capabilities during internationalization could prove substantive.

The third opportunity for the exporting domain relates to the synthesis of internationalization process inexperience cost with capabilities, implementation, and performance (Eriksson et al. 1997; Morgan, Katsikeas, and Vorhies 2012). Some previous research relates to internationalization knowledge and the performance implications of its development (Fletcher, Harris, and Richey 2013;

Theodosiou and Katsikea 2013). In addition, studies have focused on the linear and nonlinear importance of strategic fit between slack individual, technical, and firm resources with the external environment for increased performance (Gashi, Hashi, and Pugh 2014; Lisboa, Skarmneas, and Lages 2013; Sui and Baum 2014; Zeriti et al. 2014). However, considerably less work has pursued the cost of a lack of knowledge in developing capabilities, strategy implementation, and performance. Indeed, most research has tended to emphasize implications with the underlying premise of performance maximization. Instead, we propose a comparative approach of capability and strategy improvement based on the relative ability of firms to acquire and disseminate market entry, localization, and international process knowledge (Fletcher, Harris, and Richey 2013; Theodosiou and Katsikea 2013). For firms that lack internationalization knowledge, are they able to recover and have successful foreign efforts? How do lacking companies acquire and disseminate information differently? How are the differences embedded in organizational culture and processes? Should they improve, do knowledge deficient firms favor a specific form of internationalization knowledge? In other words, which is most important: market entry, localization, or international process information? Therefore, there are considerable opportunities incorporating the topics of internationalization knowledge deficiency cost and capabilities, strategy, and performance.

The fourth topic that has not been studied much relates to the combination of research related to dynamic capabilities and social networks in emerging market export contexts (Teece, Pisano, and Shuen 1997; Zhou, Wu, and Luo 2007). Successful firms have been found to reconfigure their knowledge-based capabilities to improve their export position (Villar, Alegre, and Pla-Barber 2014). In addition, networking capabilities are known to facilitate the relationship between innovativeness and export performance (Boso et al. 2013). However, relatively few studies have emphasized the role of networking in updating firm capabilities. For instance, is the development of internal technological, organizational, and managerial processes dependent on the exporting firm's position in a social network? In other words, is it easier for an export company that is centrally located in a network to renew its capabilities? Or is there more promise for those on the periphery, as they have fewer network-related demands and requirements? Furthermore, which capabilities are competitively augmented first: managerial, technological, or organizational? Does the answer lie in the economic context of the export market? As an example, are managerial capabilities immediately updated in developed or emerging economies? What about the role of organizational

capabilities? As we have indicated, there are many applications yet to be discovered concerning dynamic capabilities and social networks that could be applied in future exporting research.

A fifth direction that could benefit the exporting literature relates to an integration of internationalization inexperience cost and export marketing strategy (Eriksson et al. 1997; Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Samiee 2002). Previous studies have found the roles of information and knowledge to be critical in the export process (Fletcher, Harris, and Richey 2013; Theodosiou and Katsikea 2013). Indeed, research has even evaluated the importance of the segmentation, targeting, and positioning process to establish sustained performance (Diamantopoulos et al. 2014). Still, the pursuit of firms lacking internationalization experience within these contexts has yet to occur to a large degree. For instance, for companies that aim to export but are deficient in their capacity, how committed are they to export segmentation? Do they use a countries-as-segments, segments-within-countries, or global segments strategy first? Is export information acquired more through personal contacts or formal documentation sources? Do the answers to these questions depend on whether the organizational culture is formal and/or centralized? In short, many research questions can result in a comparison of these distant subjects.

The sixth opportunity arises from a scarcity of research emphasizing the synthesis of topics such as absorptive capacity, learning, and innovation with export marketing strategy (Cohen and Levinthal 1990; Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Samiee 2002). Firms have been found to innovate better as a result of learning through the exporting process (Love and Ganotakis 2013). In addition, the role of differing segmentation strategies while exporting has been addressed (Diamantopoulos et al. 2014). Going further, innovation, networking, and human resource management have been examined in a comparison of regional and global export performance (D'Angelo et al. 2013). However, a combination of these topics could result in further research questions. For instance, can the learning-by-exporting approach be applied to segmentation strategies? More directly, through learning, can an exporting firm transition from a countries-as-segments approach to a segments-within-countries or global segments approach? What would necessitate such a change? Are there specific determinants to encourage the shift to a particular strategy? Moreover, how does an exporting firm determine which strategy is best? Does an internal, managerial-based or external, networking-focused approach contribute more to the appropriate segmentation strategy? Which factors must be considered to optimize the effectiveness of the strategic

choices made? As such, studies into the application of learning and related topics with marketing strategy issues in the exporting context could prove fruitful.

The seventh topic for consideration relates to a comparison of the nonlinear relationship between internationalization and performance with the marketing channel issues of commitment and trust (Lu and Beamish 2001; Morgan and Hunt 1994). There has been considerable recent work relating the focal roles of cooperation, trust, and commitment to exporting (Barnes et al. 2015; Leonidou et al. 2014; Samiee, Chabowski, and Hult 2015). Indeed, issues such as distance, capabilities complementarities, and relational governance in marketing channel relationships also have been noted as important (Griffith and Dimitrova 2014; Ju, Zhao, and Wang 2014). Furthermore, networking has been determined to have an impact on performance after time has elapsed (Eberhard and Craig 2013). However, even though relational marketing has been found to be critical to performance measures, a wholesale examination of its main themes' influence on various outcomes has not yet been accomplished. For instance, how do factors such as flexibility and solidarity influence acquiescence or uncertainty? Do they affect a relationship equally? Or does the influence of these issues depend on the cultural values involved? In addition, is the relationship between relationship quality and performance linear in nature? What are the conditions under which it is curvilinear? Is it possible for the influence of exporting relationships on performance to be exponential? Does this depend on the stage of internationalization? At the very least, these are some of the issues that could be pursued by researchers interested in the juxtaposition of themes related to nonlinear internationalization performance effects and relationship marketing.

Implications for Future Exporting Theory from Recent Research

On a more recent basis, the exporting literature can benefit from integrating organizational sense making and coordination capabilities. These capabilities play a role in deciding whether to enter a specific market (Sheng 2017). Integration of these capabilities could provide a fruitful research stream for international marketers as exploration and exploitation of new information is needed for product innovations. This is especially the case for different innovation typologies. For example, Azar and Ciabuschi (2017) find no relationship between radical innovation and export performance. Exploring different institutions and contexts may help in identifying levels and types of innovations that exporting firms deploy in different markets. In addition, export researchers should continue to

investigate factors that promote successful innovation at the firm and country level. Shaffer, Chastagner, and Umesh (2016) find that the level of innovation within a given country affects firm- and country-level performance. Indeed, firms within countries that embrace and nurture so-called lone geniuses are shown to perform better. More research is needed to understand the economic conditions within a country that are beneficial to promoting entrepreneurial activities and successful exporting activities. Because of innovation's disruptive nature, the rate of innovation acceptance in export markets will likely differ owing to customers' need to perceive value in new or modified offerings (Silva, Styles, and Lages 2017). Broadly speaking, different innovation typologies should be investigated to better understand the impact that innovation has on firm and country export performance by measuring data at the innovation, firm, and country level (Shaffer, Chastagner, and Umesh 2016).

Further research could also pursue two-way interactions between exporters and importers that affecting customer satisfaction (Alteren and Tudoran 2016). Firms that improve their supplier development processes through market-oriented operations are likely to have the necessary knowledge to increase product offerings and product innovations (Chang 2017). Because customers' needs and wants fluctuate as demand changes, firms are required to be flexible to accommodate these changes within their organizational structures and with their trading partners. Changing economic conditions require firms to reassess how value is exchanged with customers and to gauge the health of partner relationships according to the relationship stage. For firms in the initial stage of relationship development, the use of process controls should be limited to reduce perceived invasiveness and promote information exchange (Ju and Gao 2017). Sheng et al. (2015) highlight the importance of social cognitive capabilities that allow for efficient knowledge transfer between firms and overseas subsidiaries. Future research should try to identify actions that firms can take to move between different relationship stages as a result of economic change. Sharing information pertaining to trading partner needs and strategic focus during times of instability will likely result in enhanced partner goodwill along with an effective response to market changes (Obadia, Vida, and Pla-Barber 2017; Sousa and Tan 2015). Specifically, firm subsidiaries are increasingly requesting information to improve the value creation process (Cenamora et al. 2017). As such, international marketing scholars should investigate how different environments and company sizes affect two-way communication between partners. Studying how small and medium enterprises handle these requests will help identify whether

manager experiences and decision-making processes mitigate any negative effects resulting from firm size. In addition, researchers could focus on investigating how firms high in ambidexterity benefit by pursuing both targeted and improvised market actions because recent research has demonstrated that creativity and action taking have positive impacts on responsiveness and customer performance (Nemkova et al. 2015).

Host-market spillover effects have been found to improve firm product offerings (Frambach, Fiss, and Ingenbleek 2016; Silva, Gomes, and Lages 2017). More research is needed to identify processes and mechanisms that exporters can implement to increase information sharing between a firm and its foreign partners. Exporters may use such information to modify and adapt their offerings in light of changing market conditions and unforeseen market forces. In effect, greater emphasis on this issue is required. Obadia, Vida, and Pla-Barber (2017) found that when small and medium enterprises partner with host market intermediaries they can decrease opportunistic behavior, thus reducing costs and maintaining valued relationships. Relational norms promote information exchange. As such, firms that work with their international counterparts on reducing psychic distance may be able to learn and apply new knowledge to other exporting ventures (Durand, Turkina, and Robson 2016; Skarmas, Zeriti, and Baltas 2016). Indeed, new knowledge that is applied effectively may also reduce infidelity in subsequent relationships (Leonidou et al. 2017). Future researchers might consider a counter approach and test under which conditions psychic distance promotes learning, thus leading to more successful future market entries.

In line with Barker and Kaynak's (1992) suggestion regarding export champions, more research is needed that investigates the role of legitimacy theory in explaining firm export performance. Trada and Goyal (2017) find that the infringement on informal norms spurs negative emotions from trading partners. Using institutional theory as a lens, future researchers could examine legitimacy issues within cognitive and regulatory contexts. Durand, Turkina, and Robson (2016) suggest that target country image affects a firm's decision to enter into an exporter–importer relationship. In addition, it has been shown that in countries where formal institutions engage in information-sharing activities with less formalized institutions, economic development is improved (Adekambi, Ingenbleek, and Van Trijp 2015). Thus, future studies could explore how institutional gaps affect country image and attractiveness as well as how these gaps affect the development and success of export exchanges.

Implications for Export Management and Exporting-Related Public Policy

Potential implications for export management and exporting-related public policy can be drawn from this study's findings as well as the suggested research directions. More directly, three general issues have become prominent in recent exporting research: (1) information, knowledge, and learning; (2) resource configuration, market-oriented organizational culture, and strategy; and (3) networking and interorganizational relationships. With each topic addressed uniquely in our suggestions for future research, we provide theory-driven insight that may be useful to practitioners when considering the exporting topic in the future.

First, the intertwining nature of information, knowledge, and learning as noted in this study has provided the field some useful concepts to apply (Autio, Sapienza, and Almeida 2000; Johanson and Vahlne 1977, 2009; Zahra, Ireland, and Hitt 2000). Key in this area is the notion that learning typically takes place after sufficient marketplace information has been converted into usable and applicable knowledge in the firm, which contributes to effective decision making and a better standing relative to competitors. An important concern for practitioners relates to the long-term consequences of a severe knowledge deficiency (Eriksson et al. 1997). Because there are performance penalties for not trying to improve managerial or firm understanding of an export market, managers should be wary of complacency and should aim to begin the export process with as much information as possible. Concerning public policy, the necessity for well-versed, well-informed, and well-funded governmental export agencies is critical for companies to begin basic firm-level functions (Diamantopoulos et al. 2014). Not only does a lack of updated information for nonexporters and exporters alike create a data gap with the marketplace, but such a situation could prove catastrophic for businesses relying on the materials and insights provided as they would not have sufficient data from which to learn and develop as exporters.

With regard to the implicit relationship between topics such as resource configuration, market-oriented organizational culture, and strategy, this overarching topic emphasizes the association and response the exporting firm has with the various forces in the market (Cavusgil and Zou 1994; Katsikeas, Leonidou, and Morgan 2000; Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Samiee 2002; Morgan, Kaleka, and Katsikeas 2004). This interaction between the resources within the firm and the established institutions outside the organization allow for the development of a firm-level approach that is based on the interaction of internal and external forces to

remain competitive. Because resources can be categorized as organizational, entrepreneurial, and technological in nature, there are many human and technical factors that managers must consider when coordinating export strategy (Dhanaraj and Beamish 2003; Gashi, Hashi, and Pugh 2014). However, an important issue for managers to keep in mind is the role of slack and innovation resources (Sui and Baum 2014). By allowing for a certain amount in corporate strategy and encouraging such company behavior by export agencies, firms can develop the capacity to anticipate more quickly and respond to changing market demands. However, in some cases, if very little room for trial and error is allowed, then little or no advancement is possible because employees would be less likely to appropriately consider the many dynamics of the firm's interaction with the marketplace. Such a resource configuration and organizational culture would influence firm strategy to be less market oriented and, subsequently, reduce its competitiveness.

In addition, the related themes of networking and interorganizational relationships have grown in popularity recently in the exporting literature (Zhou, Wu, and Luo 2007). Indeed, given the interconnectedness of companies in the global economy, the establishment of trust and commitment in an individual or firm relationship is widely acknowledged as critical to long-term benefit for both parties (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Still, the role of networking and developing relationships is critical for sustained interaction with others. As such, recent research has suggested that a focus on issues such as credibility, affection, flexibility, and solidarity can contribute to a deeper and longer-lasting relationship (Barnes et al. 2015; Ju, Zhao, and Wang 2014). Thus, rather than focus solely on the professional aspects of developing one's networks, we suggest that international practitioners take opportunities to expand the scope of their interactions and develop joint responsibilities and camaraderie in working relationships, such that enrichment and advancement may be drawn for exporters in the future. This expansive approach related to networks and interorganizational relationships could also be applied in public policy. Rather than emphasize only the process of making and maintaining contacts in a general sense among companies looking to export, encouraging the development of mutual understanding and friendships among managers can create collaborations across borders, which can be more beneficial with more active participation by all stakeholders.

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