



International Journal of Export Marketing

ISSN online: 2059-0903 - ISSN print: 2059-089X
<https://www.inderscience.com/ijexportm>

A future research agenda on export marketing and international marketing themes: a Delphi approach

Dafnis N. Coudounaris

DOI: [10.1504/IJEXPORTM.2022.10052556](https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEXPORTM.2022.10052556)

Article History:

Received:	09 July 2022
Accepted:	21 November 2022
Published online:	02 February 2023

A future research agenda on export marketing and international marketing themes: a Delphi approach

Dafnis N. Coudounaris

Department of Marketing,
Hanken School of Economics,
Kirjastonkatu 16, 65100 Vaasa, Finland
Email: dafnis.coudounaris@hanken.fi
and
Online Global MBA,
University of London,
Senate House, Malet Street, London, WC1E-7HU, UK
Email: coudounaris.londonuniversity@gmail.com

Abstract: Based on 11 export marketing experts of the editorial board of *International Journal of Export Marketing (IJEXPORTM)* and five international marketing experts from *IJEXPORTM*, this study investigates the possible evolution of export/international marketing in the next 15 years. In Round 1, the study uses two surveys which asked participants to complete questionnaires during January–March 2020. Additionally, in Round 2 during May–June 2022, the study uses the Delphi approach in asking an additional 12 experts in export/international marketing to evaluate the initial research themes. Furthermore, the author uses broad categories of research themes derived from the two lists of the initial research themes. The Round 1 study reveals through the tool of dendrogram 17 broad categories of research themes related to export marketing, and 13 broad categories of research themes related to international marketing. Particularly, digitalisation and social media are two new themes of both export and international marketing.

Keywords: export marketing and international marketing; research themes; Delphi approach; digitalisation; social media.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Coudounaris, D.N. (2022) 'A future research agenda on export marketing and international marketing themes: a Delphi approach', *Int. J. Export Marketing*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp.229–260.

Biographical notes: Dafnis N. Coudounaris is an associated researcher at the Hanken School of Economics, Vaasa, Finland, and Tutor of Global MBA at University of London, London, UK. He has published several papers in international journals such as *MIR*, *Jl Management*, *IBR*, *P&M* and *JBR*. He serves as a member of the editorial review boards of *JBR*, *Journal of Innovation and Knowledge* and *Anatolia*. He recently became the Chief Editor of the open-access journal *Nordic Journal of Tourism*, which is published by Inderscience Publishers. In addition, he is the Editor-in-Chief of *Innovation Management and Entrepreneurial Process Journal*, which is an open-access journal.

This paper is a revised and expanded version of a paper entitled 'The evolution of export marketing and international marketing: a future agenda' presented at 16th Vaasa Conference on International Business 2021, Vaasa, Finland, 16–18 August 2021; 'A future research agenda on export marketing and international marketing: a Delphi approach of contents and themes' presented at 4th Nordic International Business, Export Marketing, Int. Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship, Brand Management, Consumer Behaviour and Tourism Conference 2022, Online, 5–6 November 2022.

1 Introduction

Studies on the future of export marketing and international marketing are few in number. For example, Malhotra et al. (2013) have analysed 29 years of research published in *International Marketing Review* since its establishment (1983–2011).

In addition, Czinkota and Pinkwart (2014, p.5) provided insights into the future role of international marketing and its cross-disciplinary and cross-national opportunities. The results of their study [Czinkota and Pinkwart, (2014), Table 1, pp.8–9], based on five experts in international marketing, who participated in a conference of the American Marketing Association in 2012 in Mexico, revealed four segments, i.e.:

- a the future role of international marketing in firms and in collaboration with academia
- b future requirements and barriers in the field of international marketing
- c future challenges of globalisation and their impact on international marketing
- d the future development of international marketing.

Furthermore, Leonidou et al. (2018) have investigated a literature review of 1,722 international marketing manuscripts published in the top six journals of international business during the period 1995–2015. Recently, there has been a literature review by Vrontis et al. (2020) on cause-related marketing (CRM) in international business in the *International Marketing Review*, which needs empirical testing.

In another study, Katsikeas (2019) states that the publication of papers in international marketing in top international business journals (ABS3 and ABS4) has become rather difficult over the last 30 years and more challenging than before.

Additionally, according to Coudounaris (2021b), in recent years, the motivation of new authors contributing to international marketing has become different from earlier authors. For example, new authors want to increase their impact factor, the number of citations, and number of papers published (Coudounaris, 2021b).

In international literature, there have been at least two studies investigating the thematic areas of international marketing articles (Leonidou et al., 2018; Vrontis et al., 2020). The first study by Leonidou et al. (2018, Table 5, pp.17–18) based on a sample of 1,722 articles, revealed in terms of importance eleven categories of thematic areas together with their sub-themes. Namely, specialised issues comprising 28% (relationship marketing: 17.5%, plus marketing ethics/green marketing, information technology and the internet, and planning and organisation); global strategy issues, comprising 23.8% (performance implications 20.5%, plus global strategy formulation and market segmentation/targeting); buyer behaviour, comprising 20.6% (consumer buyer behaviour

18.6%, country of origin effects 6.6%, plus organisational buyer behaviour); internal company factors, comprising 20.3% (organisational factors 18.6%, plus managerial factors); foreign marketing strategy/mix, comprising 15.2% (marketing strategy 4.3%, plus product/brand policy, advertising and promotion, distribution channels, selling and sales management, and pricing); macro-environmental forces, comprising 13.8% (socio-cultural 8.0%, political legal 5.4%, plus economic, and technological aspects); foreign market entry, comprising 13.6% (foreign manufacturing 7.6%, exporting 6.0%, and importing); general international issues, comprising 12.5% (internationalisation process 11.7%, plus international trade analysis); task environment, comprising 10.9% (market characteristics 10.0%, plus competitor analysis and marketing infrastructure); miscellaneous at 8.4%, and marketing research 8.2% (methodological issues 4.7%, plus information acquisition/use).

The research questions are as follows:

- a What will the future research agenda in export marketing be for the following 15 years based on the thoughts of researchers and their research involvement?
- b What will the future research agenda in international marketing be for the following 15 years based on the thoughts of researchers and their research engagement?

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- a To find out the important categories of research themes in export marketing and international marketing.
- b To find research themes for PhD candidates and MBA students who do not have themes for investigation.

This paper contributes to the development of future research agenda of export marketing initial research themes and broad categories of research themes as well as to the future research agenda of international marketing initial research themes and broad categories of research themes.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 The use of Delphi method in social sciences

The Delphi method has been used extensively in social sciences but this method is used for first time in export marketing and international marketing in the current study. According to Fink-Hafner et al. (2019, p.6), the Delphi method is importantly suitable for the following situations:

- a It is suitable for solving complex problems.
- b It is suitable when there is incomplete knowledge about a phenomenon. Particularly, when the purpose is to improve the understanding of a problem, opportunity or solution, or use it for forecast.
- c It is appropriate for exploring areas such as export marketing and international marketing that there is a controversy, debate or a less clarity on the subjects.

- d It is an acceptable substitute for direct empirical evidence when there is lack of availability of many surveys.

In addition, in their study, Rowe and Wright (2001) summarised some principles for using expert opinion in different applications of the Delphi method:

- a Use experts with suitable domain knowledge of the fields.
- b Use heterogeneous experts.
- c Use between 5 and 20 experts.
- d For Delphi feedback, show the mean or median estimates of the panel of experts plus their rationales.
- e Continue the Delphi method until the responses show stability. Generally, three rounds are enough.
- f Obtain the final forecast by weighting all the estimates provided by experts equally and aggregating them.

According to Grime and Wright (2016, p.5), the Delphi process is “in essence, a methodology for the structured aggregation of individual judgments. This does not mean any and all applications of the Delphi method may produce poor quality aggregated judgments and forecasts.” Therefore, researchers and experts should be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the Delphi method [Fink-Hafner et al., (2019), pp.4–7].

3 Method

The study was based on two short questionnaires sent to:

- 1 the 52 members of the board of *International Journal of Export Marketing (IJEXPORTM)* and ten ad hoc reviewers
- 2 the most prolific authors in international marketing mentioned in two studies, namely Leonidou et al. (2018) (30 authors) and Leonidou et al. (2010) (25 authors) during the period January–March 2020 (Round 1).

This is the second study based on *IJEXPORTM*, but the first one was dealing with the research question of how to write a good article in *International Business and Export Marketing* (Coudounaris, 2019).

The questionnaire included two questions. Specifically, the 52 members of the board of *IJEXPORTM* and the ten ad hoc reviewers were asked to:

- a propose an agenda for future research in exporting for future years based on their thoughts and research involvement
- b propose an agenda for future research in international marketing for the following 15 years based on their thoughts and research engagement.

Two examples of research studies were included, indicating the themes researched on export marketing and international marketing (Leonidou et al., 2010, 2018). The collection of the surveys was effected during the period January 2020 to March 2020.

The initial questionnaire was followed up with two reminders. In total, the study received 11 replies for export marketing and five replies for international marketing.

The total sample of the Round 1 study consisted of 117 experts, i.e., 62 experts from *IJEXPORTM* and 55 experts included in the two studies by Leonidou et al. (2018, 2010). The Round 1 study received 11 replies for export marketing and five replies for international marketing. Specifically, 11 replies were received from a total of 87 experts in export marketing, and five replies from a total of 82 experts in international marketing.

The Round 2 study used the Delphi method to validate the initial research themes into broad categories of research themes by 12 experts in export/international marketing.

Furthermore, the study utilises the dendrograms to group information to fewer clusters (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) and the Delphi approach to validate the clusters, which revealed the two dendrograms. In the section of findings below, one can find Figure 1 and Figure 2, which show the validity of clusters using a Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

It is worth noting that the three pages of the first questionnaire were sent to 52 members of the board of *IJEXPORTM* and the ten ad hoc reviewers. These pages consisted of first opened-ended questions as below. The first question was to propose an agenda for future research in export marketing for the following 15 years based on your thoughts and research involvement.

The five pages of the second questionnaire consisted of two parts and included two opened-ended questions:

The first question asked the recipients to propose an agenda for future research in export marketing for the following 15 years based on their thoughts and research involvement; and the second question involved proposing an agenda for future research in international marketing for the following 15 years based on the participants' thoughts and research engagement.

In the above questionnaire, there were two tables of the themes in international marketing and export marketing published by Leonidou et al. (2018, 2010).

The two groups of experts were slightly different as some of the initial group of experts did not have time to assess the initial findings of the comments. Therefore, there was some variation in the categories of the initial research themes and the broad categories of research themes. There were only a few broad categories of the initial research themes. In particular, the second group of experts provided the following themes additional to the first group of experts:

- 1 A conceptual framework of the determinants of export performance: reorganising key variables and shifting contingencies in export marketing.
- 2 A meta-analysis of export performance.
- 3 A longitudinal study of the export attitudes of managers in the internationalisation of SMEs.
- 4 Export promotion programmes after the COVID-19 pandemic period. Governments should strengthen exporting by SMEs.
- 5 Export sales management should be investigated in different Western and Asian countries and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 6 A meta-analysis of country-of-origin of exports should be developed.

7 Social media in export marketing.

In addition, the 12 experts in Round 2 added another two initial research themes for international marketing, namely:

- 1 social media in international marketing
- 2 digitalisation in international marketing.

The Delphi analysis was based on two rounds and based on means scores of the Likert scale (1 to 5) and the various tables: for example, Table 1, Table 2, Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 reveal the research themes of the various initial research themes and the broad categories of research themes. Basically, the adoption of the analysis of the Delphi technique is correct. It is worth mentioning that an investigation of using the keyword of Delphi in the titles of studies in Google Scholar (Delphi, 2022) revealed that there were 915 English studies using this keyword in their titles and another 84 non-English studies using same keyword. Among the 915 studies, there were many papers in the areas of nursing, some papers in tourism, and only a few papers in marketing. The current study is probably the only one using the Delphi technique in export marketing and only the fourth one in international marketing, as the previous ones are studies published by Leonidou et al. (2010, 2018) and Czinkota and Pinkwart (2014).

3.1 *Identifying the themes*

I initially implemented a Delphi approach to develop a core list of themes. A recent bibliometric analysis of the Delphi approach by Flostranda et al. (2020) encourages the use of this technique on various applications and particularly in the current study. The value of the research methodology for this domain of research, specifically the Delphi method, is considered important due to the plethora of earlier studies included, for example by the review paper by Flostranda et al. (2020). The Delphi approach is a formalised technique of soliciting ideas and eventually gaining consensus among experts in the field of interest (Preble, 1983; Chan et al., 2001). A strength of this technique is its ability to gather multiple expert opinions without face-to-face engagement among the experts (Wilson et al., 2003; Hsu and Sandford, 2007; Green, 2014; Shariff, 2015). In Round 1, 16 members of the editorial board of *International Journal of Export Marketing* were asked to generate a list of themes for export marketing and international marketing. A total list of 51 initial research themes of export marketing was generated. The compilation of the list of the 51 initial research themes included a long list of items which should be grouped in broader categories of research themes. The basis of this choice was the fact that the compilation of the list of the 51 initial research themes for export marketing and the 16 initial research themes for international marketing both included a number of items which appeared to be similar. Therefore, the decision was made to combine the 51 initial research themes and reduce them into 17 broad categories of research themes, and the 16 initial research themes for international marketing were merged to 12 broad categories of research themes together to synthesise similar research themes together and therefore make manageable the number of research themes. The author collated the responses and through the use of the tool of dendrogram, resulted in the development of 17 separate segments of broader categories of research themes (see Figure 1). Similarly, a total list of 16 initial research themes of international marketing

was formed. The compilation of the list of the 16 items was further reduced to 13 distinct broader categories of research themes (see Figure 2).

In Round 2, 12 top experts of export marketing and international marketing were asked to evaluate the 67 initial research themes found in the Round 1 surveys by using a five-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. In addition, the 12 experts were asked to evaluate the 17 broad categories of research themes of export marketing found in the first survey (Table 3) and the 13 broad categories of research themes of international marketing revealed in the second survey (Table 4). Both lists were evaluated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The findings of the Round 2 study showed a variety of opinions of the experts for both lists discussed in findings.

4 Findings

4.1 Findings of the Round 1 survey

The study by Leonidou et al. (2010, Table 5, p.86) revealed the following themes and sub-themes related to exporting during the period 1960–2007: export engagement and development (export intention/propensity, export attitude/behaviour, stimuli to exporting, barriers to exporting, and export development process/involvement); internal/external determinants of exporting (environmental determinants of exporting, organisational effects on exporting, and managerial effects on exporting); identification and evaluation of export markets (export information/research, export marketing targeting/selection, export market entry modes, and export market expansion); strategic aspects of exporting (export strategy, export products/services, export pricing/financing, export distribution/logistics, and export advertising/promotion); export performance; special issues relating to exporting (planning/control of export activities, behavioural aspects of exporter-importer relations, government export promotion/assistance, and analysis of exports at the country level); and miscellaneous.

The Round 1 study was based on 11 export marketing experts coming from seven countries from Holland (1), Canada (3), Japan (1), Finland (1), the UK (1), Germany (1), Estonia (1), Portugal (1) and Denmark (1).

Appendix 1 shows the replies of the 11 participants in the survey regarding the future agenda of research in exporting, based on their thoughts and research engagement.

In Appendix 2, a researcher can find the proposed future research agenda by five members of the board of *IJEXPORTM*.

4.1.1 The compilation of lists based on the analysis and synthesis of 16 experts in Round 1

The analysis and synthesis of the views of the eleven respondents on export marketing who provided the initial research themes, were difficult, as there were some overlapping research themes. It was eventually possible to conclude that there were 51 initial research themes of export marketing (see Appendix 3) as a future research agenda based on Appendix 1.

Figure 1 A dendrogram consisting of 17 broad categories of research themes of the future research agenda on export marketing (see online version for colours)



Source: Appendix 1

Figure 1 shows a dendrogram, which shortens the list from 51 initial research themes of future research agenda on export marketing (Appendix 1) to 17 broad categories of research themes.

Among the 17 broad categories of future research agenda on export marketing themes, present and future researchers could investigate the following issues:

- a export performance
- b a longitudinal study of the export attitudes of managers in the internationalisation of SMEs (Coudounaris, 2012a, 2018b, 2021a)
- c export promotion programmes after the pandemic of COVID-19 (Coudounaris, 2012b, 2018a)
- d export sales management in Western and Asian countries after the COVID-19 pandemic (Coudounaris, 2011)
- e buyer-seller relationships (Leonidou et al., 2021)
- f a meta-analysis of the country-of-origin construct (Coudounaris, 2018c)
- g social media in exporting (Hatzithomas et al., 2016; Li et al., 2021).

The analysis of the views of the five respondents on international marketing in Appendix 2 revealed the following 16 initial research themes in Appendix 4.

Using a dendrogram as a tool, the above 16 initial research themes of future research agenda on international marketing can be categorised into the following 13 broad categories of research themes as in Figure 2.

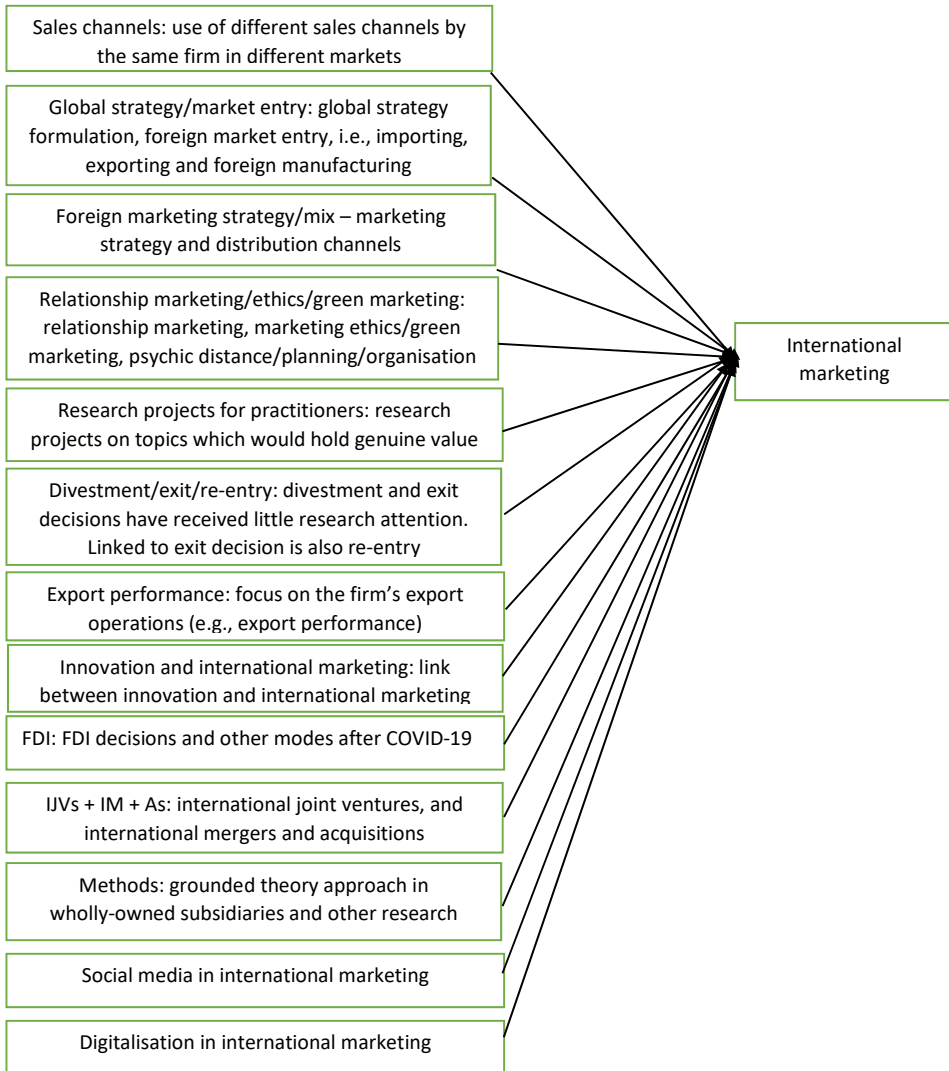
The dendrogram in Figure 2 shows that there are 13 sub-categories of themes related to international marketing.

The items on international marketing include:

- a subsidiary exits (Coudounaris, 2017) and divestment decisions (Coudounaris et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2022)
- b international joint ventures (Ali et al., 2021) and international strategic alliances (Robson et al., 2019)
- c international acquisitions (Oguji et al., 2021; Wang and Larimo, 2020)
- d digitalisation in international marketing (Katsikeas et al., 2019)
- e dynamic capabilities and international performance (Gölgeci et al., 2019)
- f emerging economy firms (Marinova et al., 2020; Marinov et al., 2020)
- g the grounded theory approach in wholly-owned subsidiaries (Coudounaris and Valtonen, 2021)
- h a systematic literature review on psychic distance (Coudounaris, 1984).

Digitalisation and social media have been growing areas of investigation in terms of new themes in export marketing during recent years. In addition, novel methods have also been investigated in recent years in both export marketing and international marketing.

Figure 2 A dendrogram consisting of 13 broad categories of research themes of the future research agenda on international marketing (see online version for colours)



Source: Appendix 2

4.2 Findings of the Round 2 survey

The validation of the four scales is achieved below by collecting data through a survey from 11 experts professors in export marketing and international marketing. Table 1 and Table 2 show the scales of export marketing initial research themes and export marketing broad categories of research themes, respectively.

The Round 2 study was based on 12 experts/professors of export/international marketing, who had origin following countries: China (1), Chile (1), Denmark (1), Estonia (1), Finland (4), Hungary (1), Italy (2) and Norway (1).

Table 1 Delphi analysis of 12 experts on the export marketing initial research themes for future research agenda of export marketing based on a Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

<i>Export marketing (34 initial research themes with score greater than 3.5)</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Means</i>
1	Export and sustainability challenges.				3	9	58	4.833
2	Concern has arisen over social entrepreneurial ventures (not for profit) as well as environmentally friendly/sustainable businesses.			1	3	8	55	4.583
3	Impact of digitalisation on export.			1	4	7	54	4.500
4	Use of new digital technologies in developing value for export customers.			1	4	7	54	4.500
5	New conceptualisation of exporting especially in relation to digital goods. Are old conceptualisations valid or do we need new theories/theoretical paradigms?		1		4	7	53	4.417
6	New payment types and relevant dynamics for exporting in digital age and especially for digital goods?			1	7	4	53	4.417
7	Export promotion programmes after the pandemic of COVID-19 period. Governments should strengthen exporting by SMEs.				7	5	53	4.417
8	Export failures (forms, reasons, learning from them).				8	4	52	4.333
9	Export of green products.			1	8	3	50	4.167
10	With increasing migration across certain countries and a multi-cultural marketplace, practices are affected by cultural issues.			1	8	3	50	4.167
11	Trading of services, especially those relating to automation, financial intermediation and artificial intelligence.		1		8	3	49	4.083
12	Decision-making (effectual, causal, both) during different stages of exporting (e.g., market selection, mature phase).			3	5	4	49	4.083
13	Nonlinearities in exporting (e.g., growth on some markets, then decline, then no exports, then growth, etc. again).			4	3	5	49	4.083
14	Social media in export marketing.			3	5	4	49	4.083
15	Exporting and the gig economy in digital age: Exploration of linkages and dynamics.		2		5	5	49	4.083
16	A conceptual framework of the determinants of export performance: reorganising key variables and shifting contingencies in export marketing.			7	2	3	48	4.000
17	Increasing role of services as complements to exports of goods (as the volume of the latter type of exports is diminishing).		1		9	2	48	4.000
18	Export and import in an era of protectionism; exporters versus importers relationships should be further investigated.			4	5	3	47	3.917

Note: *Eleven replies and **ten replies.

Table 1 Delphi analysis of 12 experts on the export marketing initial research themes for future research agenda of export marketing based on a Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (continued)

<i>Export marketing (34 initial research themes with score greater than 3.5)</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Means</i>	
19	A longitudinal study of export attitudes of managers in the internationalisation of SMEs.			3	7	2	47	3.917	
20	Consequences of de-internationalisation on export.			3	8	1	46	3.833	
21	Exporting of services which have rather less researched in past, e.g., education, touristic attractions, etc.	1		3	5	3	46	3.833	
22	Novel methods for studying exporting.			4	6	2	46	3.833	
23	Exporting to and from less studied countries and regions (e.g., Sub-Saharan Africa).		2	2	5	2	42	3.818	
24	Discussion about tariff barriers, which is a hot topic, but which can also change rapidly, depending on the political leadership in the major trade areas, i.e., the USA, China and Europe.	1	2		6	2	42	3.818	
25	Role of non-market strategies within emerging market, regional as well as global contexts.		1	4	4	3	45	3.750	
26	Change in importer type and relevant aspects? How the research is going to address the fact that many end users (consumers) are also direct importer (e.g., buying from AliExpress, etc.).		1	3	7	1	44	3.667	
27	Export sales management should be investigated in different Western and Asian countries and after the pandemic of COVID-19.			5	6	1	44	3.667	
28	Intermittent exporting (why some firms occasionally export and then do not and then export again).	1		4	3	3	40	3.636	
29	Specifically, in many cases disruption to prior business models and not least digital applications has become important.		1	5	4	2	43	3.583	
30	Changes in emerging market trade (more emphasis on local than global reach).		1	3	4	2	43	3.583	
31	The role of home and host country institutional actors and their influence on SME internationalisation across the continuum of entry modes, including exporting.		1	5	4	2	43	3.583	
32	A meta-analysis on export performance.		2		2	5	3	43	3.583
33	3D manufacturing and SME exporting dynamics in the manufacturing sector. Is size still going to be a barrier for economies of scale for exporting?	1	3	1	3	4	42	3.500	
34	The impact of immigrant, family, foreign owners', etc. network relationships on export failure and success.			7	4	1	42	3.500	
35	A meta-analysis on country-of-origin on exports should be developed.	2	1	2	5	2	40	3.333	
36	Discussion about standardisation vs. adaptation (glocalisation).			3	4	4	36	3.273	
37	Intrafirm export.		2	5	5		39	3.250	

Note: *Eleven replies and **ten replies.

Table 1 Delphi analysis of 12 experts on the export marketing initial research themes for future research agenda of export marketing based on a Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (continued)

<i>Export marketing (34 initial research themes with score greater than 3.5)</i>		1	2	3	4	5	Points	Means
38	Consequently, broad issues covered by Leonidou et al. (2010) such as export problems, export stimuli, export expansion and so on will remain as research interests, but the contexts will vary.		3	4	4	1	39	3.250
39	Export experience counts: exploring its effect on product design change.		4	3	4	1	38	3.167
40	Identification, measurement, and capture of (often hidden) value exchanged, especially as this can start as minute cost bearing value creation (e.g., knowledge exchange in Wikipedia) but has the potential to evolve/change to paid service.		2	5	4	1	37	3.083
41	Export from emerging markets.		4	4	3	1	36	3.000
42	Standardisation and adaptation in export marketing.	2	1	4	5		36	3.000
43	My main interest is in the 'identification and evaluation of export markets' theme and specifically on export market information, identification, targeting and selection.	1	2	7	1	1	35	2.917
44	Main consequences of prior export performance results.*		5	3	2	1	32	2.909
45	Export performance as an antecedent of export commitment and marketing strategy adaptation.	2	3	2	5		34	2.833
46	I am more specifically interested in the images of countries and how they affect export decisions.	2	2	4	4		34	2.833
47	In my opinion, export behaviour (and consequently my research) has moved in terms of the contexts as opposed to the themes of the Leonidou et al. (2010) paper.		6	4		2	33	2.750
48	Export as part of bundles of operation modes (FDI, joint ventures, etc.).	1	4	5	1	1	33	2.750
49	The role of past performance in export ventures.		6	3	3		33	2.750
50	Measuring export performance, in terms of sales effects and getting those into the budget.	3	2	4	3		31	2.583
51	Exporters versus importers relationships should be further investigated.**		2	6	2		30	2.500

Note: *Eleven replies and **ten replies.

Table 3 shows that there are four research themes (items 1–4) of export marketing that get high points (> 4.50) in the five-point Likert scale. These research themes are very important and should be focused by researchers and public policy authorities as a future agenda of export marketing contents/research themes in the forthcoming 15 years. In addition, there are another 30 research themes which are evaluated as high by the 12 experts (items 5–34) and their mean score were between 3.5–4.49. However, the 12 experts show in their evaluations that 17 research themes are not important at all (items 35–51) and that their mean scores were between 2.5–3.49.

Table 2 Delphi analysis and structure of the export marketing broad categories of research themes by 12 experts/professors of export/international marketing for future research agenda of export marketing based on a Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree (SD) to 5 = strongly agree (SA)

<i>Export marketing (12 broad categories of research themes with score greater than 3.5)</i>		<i>5-points Likert scale</i>					<i>Points</i>	<i>Means</i>
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>		
1	Sustainability challenges.				4	8	56	4.667
2	Digitalisation: new digital technologies, exporting digital goods, exporting digital age.		1		3	8	54	4.500
3	Social media in export marketing.			3	2	7	52	4.333
4	Export of green products, export failures, intermittent exporting, de-internationalisation and nonlinearities on export.			1	7	4	51	4.250
5	SMEs exports: 3D manufacturing, home/host country institutional actors for SME exporting.	1	1	5	5		50	4.167
6	Export experience, export attitudes, export promotion programmes, export sales management, country-of-origin in exports.			6	2	4	48	4.000
7	Export services: exporting of services, increasing role of services, trading services.	1	2	6	3		47	3.917
8	Decision-making logics during different stages of exporting.	1	3	4	4		47	3.917
9	Novel methods for studying exporting.			6	3	3	45	3.750
10	New payment types/migration effects: intrafirm export, increasing migration affects export practices due to cultural issues.			4	7	1	45	3.750
11	Export behaviour/barriers/stimuli: export behaviour, export problems, export stimuli, export expansion contexts.	1	4	5	2		44	3.667
12	Export/import in protectionism.*			3	6	2	43	3.583
13	Importers/emerging markets: change in importer type, changes in emerging market trade.		3	3	4	2	41	3.417
14	Exporting to/and from less studied countries, impact of immigrant, family, foreign owners' network relationships on export.		3	4	3	2	40	3.333
15	Export markets: export market info, identification, targeting, selection, export as part of modes.	2		5	3	2	39	3.250
16	Export performance: past/measurement.	2		6	2	2	38	3.167
17	Standardisation vs. adaptation.	2	1	5	3	1	36	3.000

Note: *Eleven replies.

Table 2 shows that there are two very important broad categories of research themes (items 1–2) which are very important, with scores greater than 4.5 that should be focused on by researchers and public policy makers as a future agenda of export marketing themes. These two broad categories of research themes refer to:

- 1 sustainability challenges

2 digitalisation: new digital technologies, exporting digital goods, exporting digital age.

Table 3 Delphi analysis and structure of the international marketing of the initial research themes by 12 experts/professors of export/international marketing for future research agenda of international marketing based on a Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree (SD) to 5 = strongly agree (SA)

	<i>International marketing (8 initial research themes with score greater than 3.5)</i>	<i>5-points Likert scale</i>					<i>Points</i>	<i>Means</i>
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>		
1	Digitalisation in international marketing.				4	8	56	4.667
2	The link between innovation and international marketing is another area which I will explore further.			4	3	5	49	4.083
3	Academics need to be developing research projects on topics which would hold genuine value for practitioners. As such, it is depressing to see that exporting and importing research has declined in salience within our community.	1		2	4	5	48	4.000
4	Currently, the focus should be on exit decisions. While there is a considerable amount of research on foreign market entry, exit decisions have received little research attention. Linked to exit decision is also the re-entry.	1		1	8	2	46	3.833
5	Subsidiary exits and divestment decisions after COVID-19 era.			5	4	3	46	3.833
6	FDI decisions after COVID-19.			5	6	1	43	3.583
7	Other issues, i.e., relationship marketing, marketing ethics/green marketing, and planning and organisation.		1	5	4	2	43	3.583
8	Research should also continue to focus on firm's export operations (e.g., export performance).		1	5	5	1	42	3.500
9	A meta-analysis on international joint ventures, and international mergers and acquisitions.*	2	1	2	5	1	38	3.455
10	The grounded theory approach in wholly-owned subsidiaries and other research.	1	1	6	3	1	41	3.417
11	Social media in international marketing.			3	4	5	40	3.333
12	The successful and unsuccessful use of different sales channels by the same firm in different markets, changes in different channels.		3	4	4	1	39	3.250
13	A systematic literature review on psychic distance.	1	3	2	5	1	38	3.166
14	Systematic literature review on IJVs and international mergers and acquisitions.	2	1	4	4	1	37	3.083
15	Global strategy formulation, foreign market entry, i.e., importing, exporting and foreign manufacturing.	2	2	3	5		35	2.917
16	Foreign marketing strategy/mix – marketing strategy and distribution channels.	2	2	5	2	1	34	2.833

Note: *Eleven replies.

Furthermore, ten important broad categories of research themes (items 3–12) had mean scores between 3.5 to 4.49. However, there are five non-important broad categories of research themes (items 13–17) where the mean scores of the 12 experts were between 3.0–3.49.

Table 3 shows that only one initial research theme of international marketing is very important (with mean score greater than 4.5) in the Likert scale. Specifically, digitalisation in international marketing is the most important initial research theme for international marketing. In addition, seven initial research themes of international marketing are important (items 2–8) with means score between 3.5–4.49. Finally, the remaining eight initial research themes are non-important (items 9–16) with means score between 2.5–3.49.

Table 4 Delphi analysis and structure of the international marketing broad categories of research themes by 12 experts/professors of export/international marketing for future research agenda of international marketing based on a Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree (SD) to 5 = strongly agree (SA)

	<i>International marketing (5 broad categories of research themes with score greater than 3.5)</i>	<i>5-points Likert scale</i>					<i>Points</i>	<i>Means</i>
		<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>		
1	Digitalisation in international marketing.				1	11	59	4.917
2	Social media in international marketing.			2	5	5	51	4.250
3	Innovation and international marketing: link between innovation and international marketing.			2	6	4	50	4.167
4	Relationship marketing/ethics/green marketing: relationship marketing, marketing ethics/green marketing, psychic distance/planning/organisation.*			4	6	1	41	3.727
5	FDI: FDI decisions and other modes after COVID-19.			7	4	1	42	3.500
6	Export performance: focus on firm's export operations (e.g., export performance).		2	4	5	1	41	3.417
7	Sales channels: use of different sales channels by the same firm in different markets.		2	6	3	1	39	3.250
8	Research projects for practitioners: research projects on topics which would hold genuine value.			2	7	3	39	3.250
9	Methods: grounded theory approach in wholly-owned subsidiaries and other research.	1		8	3		37	3.083
10	Foreign marketing strategy/mix – marketing strategy and distribution channels.		4	4	4		36	3.000
11	IJVs + IM + As: international joint ventures, and international mergers and acquisitions.		4	5	3		35	2.917
12	Global strategy/market entry: global strategy formulation, foreign market entry, i.e., importing, exporting and foreign manufacturing.	2	2	5	3		33	2.750
13	Divestment/exit/re-entry: divestment and exit decisions have received little research attention. Linked to exit decision is also the re-entry.		1	5	4	2	33	2.750

Note: *Eleven replies.

Finally, Table 4 shows that digitalisation in international marketing as a broad category of research theme is the most important one for international marketing (item 1) that it will be on the future agenda in the following 15 years. The mean score is above 4.5. Furthermore, there are four broad categories of research themes which are important (items 2–5) with mean scores between 3.5–4.49. Additionally, the broad categories of research themes of eight categories (items 6–13) are non-important as their mean scores are between 2.5–3.49.

5 Discussion

The Delphi method assisted the author to figure out the synthesis and structure of the export marketing research themes and the international marketing research themes as well as to develop eight broad categories of very important and important export marketing themes and five important broad categories of international marketing themes.

Researchers and institutions have now the possibility to develop research on different avenues based on the various analyses used in this study and in particular Round 1 and Round 2. Round 2 utilised the Delphi approach, which brought significant results and future research agendas for the researchers, who will take the opportunity to investigate different themes of research in export marketing and international marketing.

Both previous studies by Malhotra et al. (2013) and Leonidou et al. (2018) referred to the previous studies in the *International Marketing Review* during the period 1983 to 2011 and previous studies in top six international business journals during the period 1995–2015, respectively. Consequently, both studies cannot be used as guidance for future research agenda in export marketing and international marketing. This present study offers the opportunity to researchers, institutions, and public policy authorities to have a study of the future research agenda of both export marketing and international marketing.

6 Conclusions, implications, limitations and future research

6.1 Conclusions

Based on Round 1 and Round 2, the two investigations of a total 28 experts, reveal some important findings as shown in Table 5.

In particular, Table 5 shows that the analyses of collecting initially data from Round 1, based on 11 experts of export marketing and five experts of international marketing, reveals firstly, the 51 initial research themes for export marketing and the 17 broad categories of research themes for export marketing; and secondly, 16 initial research themes of international marketing and the 13 broad categories of research themes of international marketing. It is worth noting that the study initially reveals through the tool of dendrogram of the Round 1 investigation, 17 broad categories of research themes relating to export marketing, and 13 broad categories of research themes relating to international marketing.

During Round 2, another 12 experts of export/international marketing validated the four scales of Round 1 by using the Delphi method.

Additionally, Table 5 reveals four very important initial research themes out of 34 for export marketing and one very important initial research theme out of eight initial research themes for international marketing.

Table 5 Summary of the very important research themes*

Based on Round 1 investigation, the study reveals 51 initial research themes for export marketing (11 experts) and 16 initial research themes for international marketing (5 experts).

The study initially reveals through the tool of dendrogram of Round 1 investigation, 17 broad categories of research themes relating to export marketing, and 13 broad categories of research themes relating to international marketing.

Based on Round 2 investigation of 12 experts, the study uses the Delphi method and it reveals the following:

- A Four very important initial research themes with mean scores greater than 4.5 out of 34 initial research themes for export marketing and with mean scores greater than 3.5, as follows:
- Export and sustainability challenges.
 - Concern has arisen over social entrepreneurial ventures (not for profit) as well as environmentally friendly/sustainable businesses.
 - The impact of digitalisation on exports.
 - The use of new digital technologies in developing value for export customers.
- B Two very important broad categories of research themes with mean scores greater than 4.5 out of 12 broad categories of research themes with mean scores greater than 3.5 for export marketing as follows:
- Sustainability challenges.
 - Digitalisation: new digital technologies, exporting digital goods, exporting in the digital age.
- The other ten important broad categories of research themes include the following:
- Social media in export marketing.
 - Export of green products, export failures, intermittent exporting, de-internationalisation and nonlinearities in exports.
 - SME exports: 3D manufacturing, home/host country institutional actors for SME exporting.
 - Export experience, export attitudes, export promotion programmes, export sales management, country-of-origin in exports.
 - Export services: exporting of services, increasing role of services, trading services.
 - Decision-making logics during different stages of exporting.
 - Novel methods for studying exporting.
 - New payment types/migration effects: intrafirm export, increasing migration affecting export practices due to cultural issues.
 - Export behaviour/barriers/stimuli: export behaviour, export problems, export stimuli, export expansion contexts.
 - Protectionism in exports/imports.
-

Note: *The study uses the Delphi method (measured by means scores to validate the initial research themes and the broad categories of research themes).

Table 5 Summary of the very important research themes* (continued)

-
- C One very important initial research theme with mean scores greater than 4.5 out of 8 initial research themes and with mean scores greater than 3.5 for international marketing, as follows:
- Digitalisation in international marketing.
- The seven important initial research themes of international marketing include:
- The link between innovation and international marketing.
- Academics need to be developing research projects on topics which would hold genuine value for practitioners. As such, it is disturbing to see that exporting and importing research has declined in importance within our community.
- Currently, the focus should be on exit decisions. While there is a considerable amount of research on foreign market entry, exit decisions have received little research attention. Linked to exit decision is also re-entry.
- Subsidiary exits and divestment decisions after the COVID-19 era.
- FDI decisions after COVID-19.
- Other issues, namely relationship marketing, marketing ethics/green marketing, and planning and organisation.
- Research should also continue to focus on the firm's export operations (e.g., export performance).
- D One very important broad category of research themes with means scores greater than 4.5 and another four important broad research themes with means scores greater than 3.5 for international marketing is:
- Digitalisation in international marketing.
- The remaining important categories of research themes include social media in international marketing; innovation and international marketing: the link between innovation and international marketing; relationship marketing/ethics/green marketing: relationship marketing, marketing ethics/green marketing, psychic distance/planning/organisation; and FDI: FDI decisions and other modes after COVID-19.
-

Note: *The study uses the Delphi method (measured by means scores to validate the initial research themes and the broad categories of research themes).

During Round 2, the study revealed a different structure of the items of the scales. In summary, Round 2 revealed four very important categories of research themes of export marketing including. In addition, the Delphi method revealed one category of a research theme of international marketing. The above five categories of themes for export marketing and international marketing are the most important ones, based on the opinions of the 12 experts of export/international marketing, who were professors in different universities.

It is worth noting that two experts in the Round 2 added extra missing items in the initial research themes of export marketing, i.e., business model innovation in 5G/6G era, role of digitalisation in international market expansion. They have also added new research themes in international marketing, i.e., business model innovations of platform business and data centric approach/data management in international marketing, and role of digital strategies in international market selection. Furthermore, one of the experts has added theme under the international marketing themes, i.e., linkages and relationships between business model innovation and IM in the 5G/6G era.

The paper concludes with more specific suggestions on how scholars on international marketing and export marketing should proceed in practice from here in. In particular, the study suggests these scholars use different types of articles and methods in their research such as conceptual and empirical papers, case studies, meta-analyses, reviews of literature, essays, research notes, content analyses of journals, and mixed methods. In this way their research themes on the topics of export/international marketing will be expanded.

6.2 *Implications*

This study could lead to the following implications. It will, for example, trigger the interest of academics in becoming involved more systematically in the areas of export marketing and international marketing (Samice et al., 2021). It is important to note that PhD programmes in international business could get new ideas about topics of research for their own PhD candidates. Furthermore, researchers should focus for both export marketing and international marketing on both digitalisation and social media. Besides researchers should also focus on export themes such as:

- 1 sustainability challenges
- 2 export of green products, export failures, intermittent exporting, de-internationalisation and nonlinearities on export
- 3 SMEs exports: 3D manufacturing, home/ host country institutional actors for SME exporting
- 4 export experience, export attitudes, export promotion programmes, export sales management, country-of-origin in exports.

Additionally, researchers in international marketing should focus on innovation and international marketing.

Furthermore, directors of PhD programmes and MBAs and supervisors can utilise these lists for the benefit of newcomers in academia, who want to go through the experience of a PhD and MBA thesis.

Additionally, both lists of themes can assist supervisors and doctoral programmes to obtain a great variety of sub-areas in export marketing and international marketing. PhD candidates can get a first idea on the availability of themes.

Finally, MBA students doing either research major, or a business consulting project could:

- a assist local businesses interested in exploring exporting
- b conduct research in areas related to themes found in this present study.

6.3 *Limitations*

The survey's responses were received from a rather small total sample of 117 specialists in both areas (87 from the export marketing field and 82 from the international marketing area).

Therefore, this study is considered as a pilot for a bigger study on export marketing and international marketing. The study of replies of a bigger sample of 1,000 authors

specialising in export marketing and international marketing could offer a greater variability in terms of the research themes of both areas.

The above lists of the 51 initial research themes of export marketing and 16 initial research themes of international marketing are rather long. However, in this study, the researcher gave effort to segmenting the lists into short key categories of items based on dendrograms, so that anybody interested in them would be able to understand the of both export marketing and international marketing.

The present study is based on a rather satisfactory sample size (Belton et al., 2021) in Round 1 consisting of 16 experts and members of the board of *IJEXPORTM*, who completed the survey. However, the profile of the sample is that it includes 75% full professors who are specialists in both fields. In addition, the Round 2 study is composed of 12 experts/professors of export marketing and international marketing from whom only 50% were full professors.

Finally, the sizes of the samples were satisfactory, i.e., 16 experts in Round 1 and 12 experts in Round 2, and therefore the Delphi technique could be used. Furthermore, it can be used in the future with a bigger sample of survey participants.

6.4 Future research avenues

Under future research avenues, I discuss some forthcoming research questions, methods and contexts that I would prioritise for these domains of research. My thoughts about future research opportunities are also discussed.

It is obvious that the above conclusions are based on a satisfactory sample size of 28 experts of export/international marketing and therefore this study can be considered as a good pilot one, and a bigger sample with prolific authors on export marketing and international marketing should be used. For example, such a bigger sample could be drawn by using the categories of authors in export marketing and international marketing from the Google Scholar web pages and preferably to target those with high citations per year.

A replication of the study could be done by other authors with a bigger sample frame of participants, i.e., 1,000 specialists from Google Scholar in both areas, i.e., export marketing and international marketing. In this way, the new survey could bring more developed lists of research themes to be used by directors of programmes, PhD candidates and MBA students in their theses and elsewhere. In addition, the Delphi technique could be used again, and the key important and very important research themes found in this current study for export marketing and international marketing fields could be tested again so that to develop them further.

A content analysis (see Leonidou et al., 2010; Coudounaris et al., 2009) of export marketing and international marketing could bring new insights regarding this endeavour to find the research themes in both fields. Additionally, a previous study has dealt with the so-called factory approach of researchers in their efforts to produce scientific papers in international marketing (Coudounaris, 2021b), and this may result in the exponential increase of papers with only limited impact in both export marketing and international marketing.

The idea of using the conference approach in the collection of data as Czinkota and Pinkwart (2014) did in their study, it could be also a useful choice. In their qualitative study, Czinkota and Pinkwart (2014, Table 1, p.8) found international marketing sources

of risks and rewards in the next five years and that marketing tenets, i.e., social media versus traditional mass media, consumer via communication and relationship marketing, capturing the opinions of 52% of the participants of the study are likely to undergo major transformation in international marketing over the next years. The current study shows amongst others the importance of social media and digitalisation in the following 15 years. Therefore, researchers should expect to pay more attention in the following 15 years to studies in digitalisation, social media and innovation in international marketing (see Table 4) and to studies related to export marketing such as:

- 1 sustainability challenges
- 2 digitalisation, for example new digital technologies, exporting digital goods, exporting in the digital age
- 3 social media (see Table 2).

References

- Ali, T., Khalid, S., Shahzad, K. and Larimo, J. (2021) 'Managing international joint ventures to improve performance: the role of structural and social mechanisms', *International Business Review*, Vol. 30, No. 3, p.101791 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2020.101791>.
- Belton, I., Wright, G., Sissons, A., Bolger, F., Crawford, M.M., Hamlin, I., Luka, C.T.B. and Vasilichi, A. (2021) 'Delphi with feedback of rationales: how large can a Delphi group be such that participants are not overloaded, de-motivated, or disengaged?', *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, Vol. 170, p.120897.
- Chan, A.P.C., Yung, E.H.K., Lam, P.T.I., Tam, C.M. and Cheung, S.O. (2001) 'Application of Delphi method in selection of procurement systems for construction projects', *Construction Management and Economics*, Vol. 19, No. 7, pp.699–718 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1080/01446190110066128>.
- Coudounaris, D. (1984) 'Psychic distance – the sequential process of the firm's behaviour', in *The Export Behaviour of Smaller-sized Firms Located in the Greater Manchester Area*, Chapter 5.5, MSc dissertation, pp.221–233, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, SSRN [online] <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2932905>.
- Coudounaris, D.N. (2011) 'Influences of managerial drivers on export sales units' performance of small and medium-size enterprises', *Journal of Global Marketing*, Vol. 24, No. 4, pp.324–344 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2011.602322>.
- Coudounaris, D.N. (2012a) 'An attitudinal factorial model explaining the export attitudes of managerial staff', *Journal of Current Research in Global Business*, Vol. 15, No. 23, pp.76–100.
- Coudounaris, D.N. (2012b) 'Effective targeting of national export promotion programmes for SMEs', *International Journal of Globalisation and Small Business*, Vol. 4, Nos. 3/4, pp.242–283 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJGSB.2012.049253>.
- Coudounaris, D.N. (2017) 'A meta-analysis on subsidiary exit', in Stielor, M. (Ed.): *Creating Marketing Magic and Innovative Future Marketing Trends, Proceedings of the 2016 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) Annual Conference*, pp.837–860 [online] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-45596-9_155.
- Coudounaris, D.N. (2018a) 'Export promotion programmes for assisting SMEs', *Review of International Business and Strategy*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp.77–110 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1108/RIBS-06-2017-0050>.
- Coudounaris, D.N. (2018b) 'Typologies of internationalisation pathways of SMEs: what is new?', *Review of International Business and Strategy*, Vol. 28, Nos. 3/4, pp.286–316 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1108/RIBS-12-2017-0119>.

- Coudounaris, D.N. (2018c) 'Mediation of product design and moderating effects of reference groups in the context of country-of-origin effect of a luxury brand', *Review of International Business and Strategy*, Vol. 28, No. 2, pp.169–205 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1108/RIBS-05-2017-0044>.
- Coudounaris, D.N. (2019) 'Pitfalls in writing a good paper in international business and export marketing: the case of *International Journal of Export Marketing*', *International Journal of Export Marketing*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp.146–169 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEXPORTM.2019.10025857>.
- Coudounaris, D.N. (2021a) 'The internationalisation process of UK SMEs: exporting and non-exporting behaviours based on a four forces behavioural model', *Review of International Business and Strategy*, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp.217–256 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1108/RIBS-06-2019-0075>.
- Coudounaris, D.N. (2021b) 'How successful is the factory approach model: quantity versus quality in international marketing publications?', *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp.1–12.
- Coudounaris, D.N. and Valtonen, A. (2021) 'Foreign operation entry mode of wholly-owned subsidiary as the choice of Finnish hard-service firms in Spain: a grounded theory approach', *International Journal of Globalisation and Small Business*, Vol. 12, No. 4, pp.341–368 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJGSB.2021.10043050>.
- Coudounaris, D.N., Kvasova, O., Leonidou, L.C., Pitt, L.F. and Nel, D. (2009) 'Fifteen good years – an analysis of publications in *Management International Review*', *Management International Review*, Vol. 49, No. 5, pp.671–684 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-009-0008-5>.
- Coudounaris, D.N., Orero-Blat, M. and Rodríguez-García, M. (2020) 'Three decades of subsidiary exits: parent firm financial performance and moderators', *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 110, pp.408–422 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.01.024>.
- Czinkota, M.R. and Pinkwart, A. (2014) 'Introduction: Internationalization in marketing – from theory to practice by means of a Delphi study', *Thunderbird International Business Review*, Vol. 56, No. 1, pp.5–10 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1002/tie.21592>.
- Delphi (2022) *Delphi*, Google Scholar [online] <https://uk.search.yahoo.com/search?fi=mcafee&type=E211GB714G0&p=Delphi> (accessed 18 August 2022).
- Fink-Hafner, D., Dagen, T., Dousak, M., Novak, M. and Hafner-Fink, M. (2019) 'Delphi method: strengths and weaknesses', *Metodoloski Zvezki*, Vol. 16, No. 2, pp.1–19.
- Flostrand, A., Pitt, L. and Bridson, S. (2020) 'The Delphi technique in forecasting – a 42-year bibliographic analysis (1975–2017)', *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, Vol. 150, p.119773 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2019.119773>.
- Gölgeci, I., Assadina, S., Kuivalainen, O. and Larimo, J. (2019) 'Emerging-market firms' dynamic capabilities and international performance: the moderating role of institutional development and distance', *International Business Review*, Vol. 28, No. 6, p.101593 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2019.101593>.
- Green, R.A. (2014) 'The Delphi technique in educational research', *SAGE Open*, April–June, pp.1–8 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244014529773>.
- Grime, M.M. and Wright, G. (2016) *Wiley StatsRef: Statistics Reference Online, 2014–2016*, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., UK [online] <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118445112.stat07879>.
- Hatzithomas, L., Fotiadis, T.A. and Coudounaris, D.N. (2016) 'Standardization, adaptation and personalization of international corporate social media communications', *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 33, No. 12, pp.1098–1105 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20944>.
- Hsu, C-C. and Sandford, B.A. (2007) 'The Delphi technique: making sense of consensus', *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, Vol. 12, No. 10, pp.1–8 [online] <https://doi.org/10.7275/pdz9-th90>; <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/pare/vol12/iss1/10>.

- Katsikeas, C., Leonidou, L. and Zeriti, A.A. (2019) 'Revisiting international marketing strategy in a digital era: opportunities, challenges, and research directions', *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 37, No. 3, pp.405–424 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-02-2019-0080>.
- Katsikeas, C.S. (2019) 'Publishing in international marketing: challenges, opportunities, and guideposts', in *How to Get Published in the Best Marketing Journal*, Ch. 10, pp.138–156 [online] <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788113700.00021>.
- Leonidou, L.C., Aykol, B., Larimo, J., Kyrgidou, L. and Christodoulides, P. (2021) 'Enhancing international buyer-seller relationship quality and long-term orientation using emotional intelligence: the moderating role of foreign culture', *Management International Review*, Vol. 61, No. 3, pp.365–402 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11575-021-00447-w>.
- Leonidou, L.C., Katsikeas, C.S. and Coudounaris, D.N. (2010) 'Five decades of business research into exporting: a bibliographic analysis', *Journal of International Management*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp.78–91 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2009.06.001>.
- Leonidou, L.C., Katsikeas, C.S., Samiee, S. and Aykol, B. (2018) 'International marketing research: a state-of-the-art review and the way forward', *Advances in Global Marketing*, pp.3–33, Springer International Publishing [online] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-61385-7_1.
- Li, F., Larimo, J. and Leonidou, L.C. (2021) 'Social media marketing strategy: definition, conceptualization, taxonomy, validation, and future agenda', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 49, No. 1, pp.51–70 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-020-00733-3>.
- Malhotra, N.K., Wu, L. and Whitelock, J. (2013) 'An updated overview of research published in the *International Marketing Review*', *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 30, No. 1, pp.7–20 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1108/02651331311298546>.
- Marinov, M.A., Marinova, S.T., Larimo, J.A. and Leposky, T. (2020) 'International business and emerging economy firms: present characteristics and future trends', in Marinov, M., Marinova, S., Larimo, J. and Leposky, T. (Eds.): *International Business and Emerging Economy Firms. Palgrave Studies of Internationalization in Emerging Markets*, pp.1–15, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham [online] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-24482-8_1.
- Marinova, S.T., Larimo, J.A., Leposky, T. and Marinov, M.A. (2020) 'International business and emerging economy firms: the contexts of Central and Eastern Europe and Africa', in Larimo, J., Marinov, M., Marinova, S. and Leposky, T. (Eds.): *International Business and Emerging Economy Firms. Palgrave Studies of Internationalization in Emerging Markets*, pp.1–14, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham [online] https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-27285-2_1.
- Nguyen, H.T.T., Larimo, J. and Ghauri, P. (2022) 'Understanding foreign divestment: the impacts of economic and political friction', *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 139, No. 2, pp.675–691 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.10.009>.
- Oguji, N., Larimo, J. and Owusu, R.A. (2021) 'Exploring the determinants of acquisition integration capability: lessons from the acquisitions of Finnish multinational enterprises', *European Journal of International Management*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp.1–27 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1504/ejim.2020.10018553>.
- Preble, J.F. (1983) 'Public sector use of the Delphi technique', *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp.75–88 [online] [https://doi.org/10.1016/0040-1625\(83\)90072-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0040-1625(83)90072-0).
- Robson, M.J., Katsikeas, C.S., Schlegelmilch B.B. and Pramböck, B. (2019) 'Alliance capabilities, interpartner attributes, and performance outcomes in international strategic alliances', *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 54, No. 2, pp.137–153 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2018.12.004>.
- Rowe, G. and Wright, G. (2001) 'Expert opinions in forecasting: role of the Delphi technique', in Armstrong, J.S. (Ed.): *Principles of Forecasting: A Handbook for Researchers and Practitioners*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Norwell, MA.

Samiee, S., Katsikeas, C.S. and Hult, G.T.M. (2021) ‘The overarching role of international marketing: relevance and centrality in research and practice’, *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 8, pp.1429–1444 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41267-021-00433-2>.

Shariff, N.J. (2015) ‘Utilizing the Delphi survey approach: a review’, *Journal of Nurse Care*, Vol. 4, No. 3, p.246, DOI: 10.4172/2167-1168.1000246.

Vrontis, D., Thrasou, A., Christofi, M., Shams, R. and Czinkota, M.R. (2020) ‘Cause-related marketing in international business: what works and what does not?’, *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 37, No. 4, pp.593–601 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-05-2019-0144>.

Wang, Y. and Larimo, J. (2020) ‘Survival of full versus partial acquisitions: the moderating role of firm’s internationalization experience, cultural distance, and host country context characteristics’, *International Business Review*, Vol. 29, No. 1, p.101605 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2019.101605>.

Wilson, A., Averis, A. and Walsh, K. (2003) ‘The influences on and experience of becoming nurse entrepreneurs: a Delphi study’, *International Journal of Nursing Practices*, Vol. 9, pp.236–245 [online] <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1440-172x.2003.00426.x>.

Appendix 1

Proposed agenda of future research in exporting for the future years based on participants’ thoughts and research involvement

I think that the future research agenda in exporting will concentrate on (ranking is indicated – 1 is the highest rank):

- 1 Use of new digital technologies in developing value for export customers, e.g., in relation to market research (online surveys), use of IoT in relation to the creation of offers to foreign customers, use of social media marketing and omni-channel solutions in distributing the value across borders. This also means that services (compared to physical products) will play a much bigger role, i.e., servitisation.
- 2 Measuring export performance, in terms of sales effects and getting those into the budget.
- 3 Discussion about standardisation vs. adaptation (glocalisation) will also be an issue in 10–20 years. This will also follow the ongoing discussion about tariff barriers, which is a much-discussed current topic, but which can also change rapidly, depending on the political leadership in the major trade areas of the USA, China and Europe.

S.H. (Holland)

Of the areas identified, on based Leonidou et al. (2010, Table 5, p.86), my main interest is in the ‘identification and evaluation of export markets’ theme, and specifically on export market information, identification, targeting and selection.

I am more specifically interested in the images of countries and how they affect export decisions – e.g., ‘systematic’ market selection, based on one of the many models and approaches that have been put forward for this process, versus ‘intuitive’ selection, drawing partly or exclusively on anecdotally-based ‘views’ of export managers about various potential target markets. This, of course, is the much-discussed issue of a multi-stage process, where the first few stages are heavily intuition-dependent (no one can perform systematic analysis of all 208 recognised states in the world, so one begins from an evoked set of ‘likely’ countries, which already excludes the great majority of these), and the latter few become increasingly systematic (e.g., countries in a final shortlist of 3 are systematically analysed to choose the best). But my take on it is that this is not necessarily so, and in fact the reverse sequence may be operative in many cases – managers who decide on a shortlist, and maybe even on a single target, based entirely on intuitive views

and *then* seeking to confirm their selection retroactively by looking for the ‘right numbers’ to support that selection.

N.P. (Canada)

- 1 Exporting will be used as an index for trade control, but also as a device to fulfil the control purpose in more aspects. That is, exporting is no longer a term to be discussed within the field of international business trade only. It will be more closely related to international assistance and global development.
- 2 To some extent, exporting is one of the results of importing. How to reach the balance between exporting and importing should be discussed to realise fair trade.
- 3 Organisational efforts are absolutely needed for solutions to all exporting issues. Exporting is behaviour with responsibility rather product trading for profit only. Long-term strategies and plans will be made for more meaningful exporting.
- 4 Factors which have significant impacts on regional development, such as environmental concerns, climate change and training, should be taken into account for more in-depth discussions about exporting.

R.Z. (Japan)

I have a research interest in learning more about the role of home and host country institutional actors and their influence on SME internationalisation across the continuum of entry modes, including exporting.

In my current role, I will soon be involved in recruiting a chair in sales with an emphasis on international sales/exporting, so I will want to work with this individual in areas related to how we can use our MBA students doing either at research major or at nine-week business consulting project to both:

- a assist local businesses interested in exploring exporting
- b as well as conduct research in areas related to themes in Table 5.

M.R. (Canada)

- 1 New conceptualisation of exporting especially in relation to digital goods. Are old conceptualisations valid or do we need new theories/theoretical paradigms?
- 2 3D manufacturing and SME exporting dynamics in the manufacturing sector? Is size still going to be a barrier for economies of scale for exporting?
- 3 Exporting and the gig economy in the digital age: exploration of linkages and dynamics.
- 4 Exporting of services which have rather less researched in the past, e.g., education, tourist attractions, etc.
- 5 Change in importer type and relevant aspects? How research is going to address the fact that many end users (consumers) are also direct importers (e.g., buying from AliExpress, etc.).
- 6 New payment types and relevant dynamics for exporting in the digital age, and especially for digital goods?

A.A. (Finland)

In my opinion, export behaviour (and consequently my research) has moved in terms of the contexts, as opposed to the themes of Leonidou et al.’s (2010) paper.

Specifically, in many cases disruption to prior business models and not least digital applications, has become important. Moreover, concern has arisen over social entrepreneurial ventures (not for profit) as well as environmentally friendly/sustainable businesses.

Furthermore, with increasing migration across certain countries and a multi-cultural marketplace, practices are affected by cultural issues.

Consequently, the broad issues covered by Leonidou et al. (2010) such as export problems, export stimuli, export expansion, and so on will remain as research interests, but the contexts will vary.

D.Cr. (Canada)

Increasing role of services as complements to exports of goods (as the volume of the latter type of exports is diminishing).

Trading of services, especially those relating to automation, financial intermediation, and artificial intelligence.

Identification, measurement, and capture of (often hidden) value exchanged, especially as this can start as minute cost bearing value creation (e.g., knowledge exchange in Wikipedia), but has the potential to evolve/change to paid service.

Changes in emerging market trade (more emphasis on local than global reach).

Role of non-market strategies within emerging markets, regional as well as global contexts.

A.K. (UK)

- Exports and imports in an era of protectionism.
- Impact of digitalisation on exports.
- Exports and sustainability challenges.
- Exports from emerging markets.
- Intrafirm exports.
- Exports as part of bundles of operation modes (FDI, joint ventures, etc.).
- Effects of de-internationalisation on exports.
- Standardisation and adaptation in export marketing.
- Exporting of green products.

St.S. (Germany)

- Export failures (forms, reasons, learning from them)
- Intermittent exporting (why some firms occasionally export and then do not and then export again)
- Nonlinearities in exporting (e.g., growth in some markets, then decline, then no exports, then growth, etc. again)
- Decision-making (effectual, causal, both) during different stages of exporting (e.g., market selection; mature phase)
- The impact of network relationships of immigrants, family, foreign owners, etc. on export failure and success.
- Exporting to and from less studied countries and regions (e.g., Sub-Saharan Africa).
- Novel methods for studying exporting.

T.V. (Estonia)

My proposed agenda is about the impact of past export performance on different export variables (e.g., export commitment, export strategy, export pricing, change, innovation, etc.).

Investigate, for example:

- 1 The role of past performance in export ventures.
- 2 Export performance as an antecedent of export commitment and marketing strategy adaptation.
- 3 Main consequences of prior export performance results.
- 4 Export experience counts: exploring its effect on product design change.
- 5 A conceptual framework of the determinants of export performance: reorganising key variables and shifting contingencies in export marketing.

L.F.L. (Portugal)

In my opinion the following studies in export marketing should be examined:

- a A longitudinal study of export attitudes of managers in the internationalisation of SMEs.
- b Export promotion programmes following the COVID-19 pandemic period. Governments should strengthen exporting by SMEs.
- c Export sales management should be investigated in different Western and Asian countries.
- d Exporter versus importer relationships should be further investigated.
- e A meta-analysis of country-of-origin exports should be developed.
- f A meta-analysis of export performance.
- g Social media in exporting.

D.C. (Denmark)

Appendix 2

Proposed agenda of future research in international marketing based on the participants' thoughts and research engagement

The successful and unsuccessful use of different sales channels by the same firm in different markets (e.g., direct exporting to one market, indirect to another, ...); changes in terms of using different channels

T.V. (Estonia)

Of the topics appearing above, I will be conducting research in:

- Global strategy issues – global strategy formulation.
- Foreign market entry – importing, exporting, and foreign manufacturing.
- Foreign marketing strategy/mix – marketing strategy and distribution channels.
- Specialised issues – relationship marketing, marketing ethics/green marketing, and planning and organisation.

While I have no firm plans for the long (15 year) period you mention, I will be conducting work in the above areas at some point during the period.

In general, I think information on where academics have focused in the past is of limited value. We need to be developing research projects on topics which would hold genuine value for practitioners. As such, it is depressing to see that exporting and importing research has declined in salience within our community. Academics too often behave like flocks of birds – following the next faddish idea – picking areas on the way up as far as they can tell.

M.R. (UK)

Currently focusing on exit decisions. While there is a considerable amount of research on foreign market entry, exit decisions have received little research attention.

Linked to exit decision is also the re-entry. This is another topic which I will focus on in the future.

In addition to the exit/re-entry, I will also continue to focus on the firm’s export operations (e.g., export performance).

The link between innovation and international marketing is another area which I will explore further.

C.M.P.S. (Norway)

Congratulations on the research process which you are developing for the international marketing field. I will be happy to help in the formulation of categories which not only help in drawing research directions but also provide sound advice for the research work by PhD students and programs. I have done one such delineation eight years ago in *Management International Review*, which has had substantial impact.

M.Cz. (USA)

In my opinion in the following years, new studies should investigate:

- a Subsidiary exits and divestment decisions after the COVID-19 era.
- b FDI decisions after COVID-19.
- c Other issues for investigation are a meta-analysis on international joint ventures, and international mergers and acquisitions.
- d Systematic literature review on IJVs and international mergers and acquisitions.
- e The grounded theory approach in wholly-owned subsidiaries and other research.
- f A systematic literature review on psychic distance.
- g Digitalisation and social media in international marketing.

D.C. (Denmark)



Appendix 3*The 51 initial research themes for exporting marketing found in Round 1*

<i>No.</i>	<i>Initial research themes</i>
1	Use of new digital technologies in developing value for export customers.
2	Discussion about standardisation vs. adaptation (glocalisation).
3	Discussion about tariff barriers, which is a current topic, but which can also change rapidly, depending on the political leadership in major trade areas, i.e., the USA, China and Europe.
4	Standardisation and adaptation in export marketing.
5	My main interest is in the 'identification and evaluation of export markets' theme and specifically in export market information, identification, targeting and selection.
6	I am more specifically interested in the image of countries and how they affect export decisions.
7	The role of home and host country institutional actors and their influence on SME internationalisation across the continuum of entry modes, including exporting.
8	New conceptualisation of exporting, especially in relation to digital goods. Are old conceptualisations valid or do we need new theories/theoretical paradigms?
9	3D manufacturing and SME exporting dynamics in the manufacturing sector. Is size still going to be a barrier for economies of scale for exporting?
10	Exporting and the gig economy in digital age: exploration of linkages and dynamics.
11	Exporting of services which have rather less researched in past, e.g., education, tourist attractions, etc.
12	Change in importer type and relevant aspects.
13	How is the research going to address the fact that many end-users (consumers) are also direct importers? (e.g., buying from AliExpress, etc.).
14	New payment types and relevant dynamics for exporting in the digital age and especially for digital goods?
15	In my opinion, export behaviour (and consequently my research) has moved in terms of the contexts as opposed to the themes in Leonidou et al. (2010).
16	Specifically, in many cases disruption to prior business models, and not least digital applications, has become important.
17	Moreover, concern has arisen over social entrepreneurial ventures (not for profit), as well as environmentally friendly/sustainable businesses.
18	Furthermore, with increasing migration across certain countries, and a multi-cultural marketplace, practices are affected by cultural issues.
19	Consequently, the broad issues covered by Leonidou et al. (2010), such as export problems, export stimuli, export expansion, and so on, will remain as research interests, but the contexts will vary.
20	Increasing role of services as complements to the exports of goods (as the volume of the latter type of exports is diminishing).
21	Trading of services, especially those relating to automation, financial intermediation and artificial intelligence.
22	Identification, measurement and capture of (often hidden) value exchanged, especially as this can start as minute cost bearing value creation (e.g., knowledge exchange in Wikipedia), but has the potential to evolve/change to paid service.

The 51 initial research themes for exporting marketing found in Round 1 (continued)

<i>No.</i>	<i>Initial research themes</i>
23	Changes in emerging market trade (more emphasis on local rather than global reach).
24	Role of non-market strategies within emerging markets, regional as well as global contexts.
25	Export and import in an era of protectionism: exporter versus importer relationships should be further investigated.
26	Impact of digitalisation on exports.
27	Export and sustainability challenges.
28	Exports from emerging markets.
29	Intrafirm exports.
30	Exports as part of bundles of operation modes (FDI, joint ventures, etc.).
31	Effects of de-internationalisation on exports.
32	Exports of green products
33	Export failures (forms, reasons and learning from them).
34	Intermittent exporting (why some firms occasionally export, then do not, and then export again).
35	Nonlinearities in exporting (e.g., growth in some markets, then decline, then no exports, then growth, etc. again).
36	Decision-making (effectual, causal, both) during different stages of exporting (e.g., market selection, mature phase).
37	The impact of immigrant, family, foreign owner, etc. network relationships on export failure and success.
38	Exporting to and from less studied countries and regions (e.g., Sub-Saharan Africa).
39	Novel methods for studying exporting.
40	The role of past performance in export ventures.
41	Measuring export performance, in terms of sales effects and getting those into the budget.
42	Export performance as an antecedent of export commitment and marketing strategy adaptation.
43	Main consequences of prior export performance results.
44	Export experience counts: exploring its effects on product design change.
45	A conceptual framework of the determinants of export performance: reorganising key variables and shifting contingencies in export marketing.
46	A meta-analysis of export performance.
47	A longitudinal study of export attitudes of managers in the internationalisation of SMEs.
48	Export promotion programmes after the COVID-19 pandemic period. Governments should strengthen exporting by SMEs.
49	Export sales management should be investigated in different Western and Asian countries and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
50	A meta-analysis of country-of-origin of exports should be developed.
51	Social media in export marketing.

Appendix 4*The 16 initial research themes for international marketing in Round 1*

<i>No.</i>	<i>Initial research themes</i>
1	The successful and unsuccessful use of different sales channels by the same firm in different markets; changes in different channels.
2	Global strategy formulation, foreign market entry, i.e., importing, exporting and foreign manufacturing.
3	Foreign marketing strategy/mix – marketing strategy and distribution channels.
4	Other issues, i.e., relationship marketing, marketing ethics/green marketing, and planning and organisation.
5	Academics need to develop research projects on topics which would have genuine value for practitioners. As such, it is dismaying to see that exporting and importing research has declined in importance within our community.
6	Currently, the focus should be on exit decisions. While there is a considerable amount of research on foreign market entry, exit decisions have received little research attention. Linked to exit decision is also the re-entry.
7	Research should also continue to focus on the firm's export operations (e.g., export performance).
8	The link between innovation and international marketing is another area which I will explore further.
9	Subsidiary exits and divestment decisions after the COVID-19 era.
10	FDI decisions after COVID-19.
11	A meta-analysis of international joint ventures, and international mergers and acquisitions.
12	A systematic literature review of IJVs and international mergers and acquisitions.
13	The grounded theory approach in wholly-owned subsidiaries and other research.
14	A systematic literature review on psychic distance.
15	Social media in international marketing.
16	Digitalisation in international marketing.