B2B international internet marketing
A benchmarking exercise

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Abstract

Purpose – To provide the foundation for further research and good practice in benchmarking since it combines the best aspects of traditional and new internet marketing activities.

Design/methodology/approach – A methodological triangulation approach has been adopted that uses secondary data, a mail questionnaire survey, and case studies, to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The answers of each respondent were coded into the statistical package for social science (SPSS). Frequency analysis was used for data reduction purposes and to develop an overall understanding of the survey responses and a general picture of how the sample group has responded. The initial analysis used descriptive analysis for the whole sample. Furthermore, factor, regression and path analysis were used to study the research variables and their relationships.

Findings – Identification of business-to-business international internet marketing (B2B IIM) critical success factors (CSF) by a holistic literature review and a series of statistical and qualitative analysis of the relevant data. Provides information and valuable insights into the marketers' acceptance of the internet for B2B marketing activities. It has also tested the validity of the TAM and IDT in the domain of internet environment.

Research limitations/implications – B2B IIM is an area of research where theory is still inadequate. This study is limited by its cross sectional nature. An additional limitation of the study is the reliance on the subjective, self-report indicators to measure the research constructs in the survey questionnaire. Another limitation to this study is in representativeness and generlisability issues.

Practical implications – In terms of academic implications, it proposes factors that affect the adoption of the internet for B2B international marketing activities. A key managerial implication is the effect of internet usage on B2B IIM efficiency. Notably, it was found that the use of the internet affects B2B IIM efficiency not directly, but indirectly, through B2B marketing and customer relations activities, international marketing targeting activities and marketing performance. This means that the competitive advantage of marketing efficiency is not automatically achieved with the adoption of the internet.

Originality/value – This paper offers several avenues for investigating individual factors that have a direct impact on the use of internet for international marketing purpose.

Keywords Business-to-business marketing, Internet marketing, Benchmarking, Critical success factors, Competitive advantage

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The main challenge for many companies today is to manage, control and advance daily business activities and find leverage points to improve performance, particularly in terms of market-oriented activities that can be influenced by the internet. For example, Avlonitis and Karayanni (2000) note the central role of the sales force, Chan and Swatman (2000) observe the involvement of suppliers and customers: and Duggan and Devenery (2000) stress the importance of integrating "off" and "online" marketing efforts, language and customer culture. But although the last few years have witnessed phenomenal growth in web-based business activities, many studies show that benefits from internet use is considerably less than expected (Alshawi *et al.*, 2003). However, one of the most important developments has been the explosion of international marketing activity and the associated emergence of the global information superhighway. Consequently marketing academics and practitioners have devoted considerable effort to identifying the critical success factors (CSF) for business-to-business international internet marketing (B2B IIM). Yet few can provide strong theoretical or statistical support in this field, often because they are of an exploratory or purely theoretical nature.

Some of these issues can be addressed through benchmarking studies, and for the purpose of this research we define benchmarking as "an ongoing process of measuring and improving products, services and practices against the best that can be identified worldwide" (McGaughey, 2002). It includes the application of the skill of comparison – comparing one's own performance of a particular strategy, task or operation with that of others, and provides an objective analysis of how successful is an organisation's performance by adopting a systematic measurement process of the improvement (Shen *et al.*, 2003). It is widely believed that competition provides an impetus for improvements and benchmarking is a powerful tool for continuous improvement (Zairi, 1998). To this end a best practice benchmarking approach has been adopted by this research to examine internet marketing in today's successful companies (Eid *et al.*, 2002).
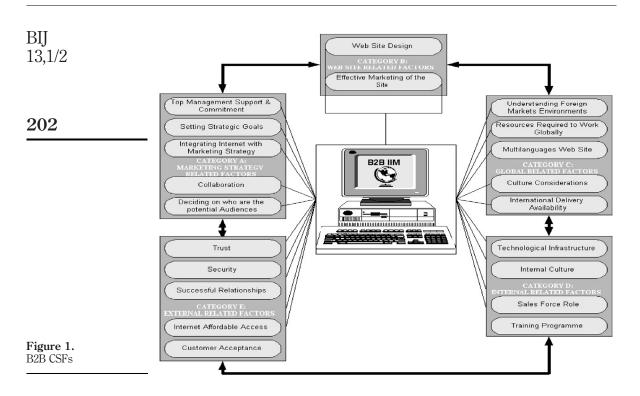
The main objectives of this paper are threefold; first to identify CSF for B2B IIM through an analysis of the literature and secondary case studies; second to empirically test these factors using a large scale sample representing different industries; and third to adopt a systematic measurement process from a benchmarking perspective. To this end, various articles, empirical research, and secondary case studies about B2B IIM have been reviewed. This material was used to construct the research design and methodology, develop a survey questionnaire, and interpret the findings. A total of 123 (59 per cent) UK industrial companies replied to a sample frame of 250 taken from the Yahoo database. As a result 33 factors, drawn from statistical package for social science (SPSS) factor analysis, showed a direct relationship with successful B2B IIM. These have been classified into five categories:

(1) Category A: marketing strategy factors
(2) Category B: web site related factors
(3) Category C: global dimension factors
(4) Category D: internal company factors
(5) Category E: external related factors

The constituent variables and interpretation of these findings are discussed below (Figure 1).

Figure 1.
B2B CSFs

Category A: marketing strategy related factors

Although could be argued that the internet is merely a resource issue for companies, it should be an integral part of marketing strategy if it is to reinforce overall corporate strategy (Chaffy *et al.*, 2000). In fact many researchers consider marketing factors as a vital component of successful B2B practice (Damanpour, 2001; Chaffy *et al.*, 2000; Clarke and Flaherty, 2003; Gurau *et al.*, 2001; Hofacker, 2001; Honeycutt *et al.*, 1998; Lynn *et al.*, 2002; Naude and Holland, 1996; Perry and Bodkin, 2002; Porter, 2001; Quelch and Klein, 1996; Wilson and Abel, 2002). From a marketing strategy perspective, this research found that the most important factor to be "top management support", followed by "setting strategic goals", "integrating internet marketing with marketing strategy", "collaboration with strategic partners", and "deciding the potential audience". Here it is not surprising to see the significance of "top management support", yet if all these factors are combined they represent a balanced formula for integrating the internet on the one hand, and collaborating with strategic partners and customers on the other, thereby linking technological processes with strategic goals.

Category B: web site related factors

Companies often use their web sites to convey promotional messages and as a vehicle to attract interest and inform existing or potential customers. The web site can sell products directly to business customers, and provide them with a range of electronic or communication services (Hamill and Gregory, 1997, p. 25). However, since the corporate web site is a marketing showpiece for the company, many researchers have

considered it as a crucial component of any B2B practice (Anderson, 1996; Herbig and Hale, 1997; Hofacker, 2001; Karayanni and Baltas, 2003; Kolokotronis *et al.*, 2002; Lynn *et al.*, 2002; Kotab and Helsen, 2000; Samiee, 1998; Quelch and Klein, 1996). This research found that a "well-designed site", that is "effectively marketed", "easy to find", "up to date", "clear", and "accurate" are the most important factors. However, attention is also given to "ease" and "speed" of use. In other words, although some companies may consider that site appearance is of paramount importance, for new and existing B2B customers, web site design should reflect use as much as if not more so than appearance, since some sites may appear attractive but may be difficult to use. These findings are significant because all companies in the sample can be seen as customers as well as vendors in a B2B context.

Category C: global market related factors

The ability of the internet to make sales to new overseas markets is often used to champion its use for corporate business. But in practice this depends on many factors if companies are to succeed in the global market place. For example, Damanpour (2001) stresses the importance of continuing to meet existing client demands and fulfil their obligations. However, many authors have considered "global market related factors" as a vital component of successful B2B IIM efforts, although there are many pitfalls associated with developing a global presence not least effective communications in different languages and cultures, and the need for an effective infrastructure to meet supply and demand requirements (Chaffy *et al.*, 2000; Chan and Swatman, 2000; Duggan and Devenery, 2000; Gogan, 1997; Hamill and Gregory, 1997; Herbig and Hale, 1997; Hofacker, 2001; Kotab and Helsen, 2000; Samiee, 1998; White, 1997). This research reinforces previous work in finding the following factors to be significant – an "in-depth understanding of foreign marketing environment"; adequate "resources for global operations"; and a "multi-language web site" to reach target customers. There are also "cultural considerations", and the "availability of delivery channels" to overcome the logistics and meet the needs of a complex, fragmented global market.

Category D: internal company related factors

The importance of delivery channels highlights the need for an appropriate, internal company infrastructure to manage, control and advance daily activities, and collaboration with global networks. To this end Bremer (1996) points out the need for appropriate, planned staff training and awareness. Subsequently researchers have stressed the importance of internal company environment factors as a critical component for successful B2B IIM (Avlonitis and Karayanni, 2000; Chan and Swatman, 2000; Duggan and Devenery, 2000; Gogan, 1997; Huff *et al.*, 1998; Samiee, 1998; Quelch and Klein, 1996). This survey found that there is a need to blend "technological infrastructure", and "appropriate internal culture". The "relationship between marketing and IS/MIS departments" is also important, together with a "well trained sales force" if B2B internet marketing is to be effective. This need to focus on internal processes is reinforced by Alshawi *et al.* (2003) who observe a strong need to improve internal organisation and infrastructure if companies are to be responsive and succeed in using global ICT (information communications technology or information systems), to gain a competitive advantage.

Category E: external business related factors

External factors such as "security" can present considerable problems (Cronin, 1996a), although this research has found that financial security has become less of an issue for many companies with recent technological progress and closer collaboration between companies. In fact Furnell and Karweni (1999) observe the need for the development of strong inter-organisational relationships, and many researchers consider factors related to managing and controlling the external business environment as a key component of successful B2B IIM (Chan and Swatman, 2000; Duggan and Devenery, 2000; Merrilees and Fry, 2003; Poon and Jevons, 1997; Quelch and Klein, 1996; Ratnasingham, 1998; Urban *et al.*, 2000; Wilson and Abel, 2002; Zairi, 2001a, b). The external business environment is a natural extension of the internal company infrastructure but, as discussed above, will not be accessible without responsive and well-organised internal processes. This research found that both company and customers require elements of "trust", "security" as well as "easy and affordable access to the internet". Both will value the building of a "successful relationship" and "customer acceptance" of policies and processes for the advancement and sustainability of B2B IIM. This also illustrates the importance of creating a company culture that is responsive and changes according to new technological opportunities as well as customer requirements (Alshawi *et al.*, 2003). At the same time they observe a "universal information language" and companies that can "trade information" as well as participate in learning.

Research methodology, population and sample

Following an extensive literature review this research was able to divide the key issues of B2B IIM into the three categories of internet "adoption", "implementation" and "implications". At the same time, because much of the previous work was theoretical, exploratory or had a very narrow focus, it was decided to carry out a large-scale, cross-industrial survey of UK companies to empirically record current practice in B2B internet marketing. Once the results of the survey have been analysed, the results can be verified by conducting case studies some deliberately contrasting companies. However, the main focus of this paper is on the major survey results and interpretation.

A research survey questionnaire was designed to incorporate factors relating to the adoption, implementation and implication variables that arose from the literature. The survey form was piloted with six companies in January 2002 and points were clarified by follow-up phone calls after receiving the replies. Revisions were then made to the questionnaire design and the formal survey was conducted between April and July 2002. A total of 250 B2B companies were randomly selected from the Yahoo database to form the survey sample and a total of 123 valid returns were received, representing a 59 per cent response rate (Table I). This response is much higher than other similar surveys conducted in this field, partly because of careful preparations made to the

Total number of questionnaires	250
Completed and returned questionnaires	128
Unreachable companies	9
Declined participation	24
Response rate	59 per cent

Table I.
Survey response
summary

survey questionnaire to ensure clarity and ease of completion, – it took not only 20 minutes, – but also by using "follow-up" reminders and phone calls to encourage respondents to complete the forms. A personalised cover letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope were enclosed with each copy of the questionnaire sent out. Each organisation was contacted up to five times via e-mails and phone calls before the firm was dropped from the sample. In fact most companies were likely to perceive their participation in the study as further evidence of their success regarding using the internet for marketing purposes. Finally care was taken to discover accurate and up to date respondent names and roles for the "mail out".

Companies involved in the study remain anonymous, but each has been carefully logged and recorded for analyses purposes. A total of 50 multiple-choice questions were asked, which were grouped into three sections: background information (used for internet adoption), internet usage (implementation), and CSF (implications).

Profile of respondents in the survey
Detailed descriptive statistics relating to the responding organisations and respondents are shown in Table II.

This shows that more than half of respondents are marketing managers, one quarter are sales and the remainder are export or IT managers. Only 18 per cent have more than 500 employees, and 45 per cent have less than 100. This is a considered to be a reliable set of data since it is a representative profile of UK companies who currently practice internet marketing, illustrated by a plethora of medium and small companies, and a few but significant large companies. In terms of internet usage, the minority (18 per cent) have less than two year experience, and nearly a quarter (24 per cent) have between two and three years, whereas nearly one third (31 per cent) have more than four years. In other words this reveals the "newness" of the technology and its adoption for internet use. As far as industry type is concerned, the two largest sectors are industrial supplies and computing representing two thirds of the sample and possibly

Measure	Items	Frequency	Percent
Position	Marketing manager	68	55.3
	Sales manager	32	26.0
	Export manager	11	8.9
	IT manager	12	9.8
Number of employees	Less than 100	55	44.7
	100-500	46	37.4
	501-1,000	16	13.0
	More than 1,000	6	4.9
Years of internet use	Less than 2 years	22	17.9
	2-3 years	29	23.6
	3-4 years	34	27.6
	More than 4 years	38	30.9
Type of industry	Aerospace	8	6.5
	Agriculture	14	11.4
	Chemical and allied products	8	6.5
	Computers	40	32.5
	Industrial supplies	41	33.3
	Textile	12	9.8

Table II.
Characteristics of
the sample

those with a "new technology" focus, these are augmented by aerospace, agriculture, chemical products and textiles which may have a more "traditional" approach.

Instrument validity and reliability
The discriminant validity and data reduction of research findings was assessed using SPSS principal component factor analysis. The resulting 33 items (variables) defined the five categories of CSF from Category A: marketing strategy to Category E: external related factors described above. Eigenvalues and scree plots were used to determine the number of factors to be extracted. Moreover, in order to ensure the valindity of factor analysis, the Bartlett test of sphericity (BTS) and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test of appropriateness were carried out accordingly (Table III). The results (the BTS ranged from 373.055 to 825.768 and the level of significance at $P = 0.000$) indicated that the data are appropriate for the purpose of factor analysis. Statistically, this means that there are significant relationships between the variables and that they can be appropriately included in the analysis (Bryman, 1989). As shown the result of sampling adequacy ranged from 0.767 to 0.907 which, following KMO measure reflecting a high level of sampling adequacy.

The 33 items or "variables" were loaded onto the five factors using an eigenvalue greater than 1, and the extracted factors account for a range from 60.272 to 75.667 of the total variance, using a verimax rotation. All factors loading were higher than 0.5 since, as Hair *et al.* (1998) observe, a factor loading higher than 0.35 is considered statistically significant at an α level of 0.05. Only the Category B, web site related factor of "real time online interactive elements", had a factor loading less than the accepted level, so it was ignored in the analysis. The reliability of all constructs was assessed by the Cronbach α reliability coefficient and exceeded Nunnally (1978) standards for research (Table IV).

Statistical results of the questionnaire survey
Respondents were asked to assess the CSF distilled from the B2B internet marketing literature and previous case studies, on a Likert scale of 1 = not critical, 2 = minor, 3 = moderate, 4 = major, 5 = critical. As mentioned earlier, the factors were

	KMO	Bartlett's test			Number of extracted item(s)	Eigen values	Percentage of variance explained
		Chi-square	d*f*	Significance			
Marketing strategy related factors	0.898	738.520	28	0.000	1	5.272	65.906
Web site related factors	0.907	825.768	45	0.000	1	6.027	60.272
International dimension related factors	0.767	373.055	10	0.000	1	3.374	67.489
Internal related factors	0.863	443.447	10	0.000	1	3.783	75.667
External related factors	0.807	376.726	10	0.000	1	3.454	69.089

Table III.
KMO and Bartlett's test

categorized into five groups, namely Category A: marketing strategy factors (MSF),
Category B: web site factors (WSF), Category C: global-related factors (GRF), Category
D: internal, company-related factors (IRF) and Category E: external, business-related
factors (ERF). In this way nearly all aspects of B2B IIM have been addressed.

Rank order of critical success factors

A rank order of CSF is shown in Table V. This displays the top 26 most critical factors,
ranked on a range of between 3.5 and 4.7, and representing a high level of criticality. Of
these, 14 variables are rated above 4 and can be said to be very critical. In fact the first
seven are all Category B, "web site related" factors such as an easy to find, clear site
that is accurate, up to date and informative. The site should be well designed with a
"speedy" access. The second seven variables are a mixture of Categories A and C,
marketing and external related factors including top management commitment, the
need to integrate internet marketing with marketing strategy and set strategic goals
for internet use. This section also includes easy and affordable access to the internet,
successful relationship with customers and suppliers and one Category B factor that
addresses effective offline marketing of the site. In other words it illustrates a need to
focus on company and customer web site requirements in terms of interaction and
communication, supported by a clear strategy, resourced and embedded within the
company.

The next seven factors are a mixture of categories and reflect efficient processes as
well as stakeholder relationships. They include an in depth understanding of foreign
cultures and markets, supported by the necessary resources to work globally, as well
as security, trust and the effective online marketing of web sites. These are followed by
a group of variables that illustrate some practical considerations such as building
effective relationships between marketing and MIS, the company's technology
infrastructure, its internal culture and ability to collaborate with strategic partners.

The final section indicates the important role played by the sales force, which
should be regularly trained to keep abreast of new developments, as well as the need to
collaborate with suppliers, distributors and technology providers. Findings regarding
the sales force reinforce previous research that has found that salespeople can be
replaced by technology in some cases (Rich, 2002). However, the sales force should
focus on activities that add value to customer relationships in ways that the internet
cannot.

An one-sample test was conducted to determine whether these observed means of
the CSF (Table V) are significantly different from the mid-point 3.0. The results are
given in Table VI. Here the results are found to be significantly different from the
mid-point 3.0 ($p < 0.01$). This confirms that all the critical factors for B2B IIM are
positive, except real time online interactive elements.

Constructs	Number of items	α
Marketing strategy related factors	8	0.9249
Web site related factors	10	0.9088
International dimension related factors	5	0.8732
Internal related factors	5	0.9187
External related factors	5	0.8782

Table IV.
Measure of constructs'
reliability

Factor	Group	Mean[*]	Rank
Easy to find site	WSF[b]	4.6667	1
Clear site	WSF	4.5041	2
Up to date site	WSF	4.5041	3
Accurate site	WSF	4.4959	4
Informative site	WSF	4.4715	5
Well designed site	WSF	4.4634	6
Speed (download) site	WSF	4.3902	7
Top management commitment	MSF[a]	4.3333	8
Customer acceptance	ERF[e]	4.2439	9
Easy and affordable access to the internet	ERF	4.1626	10
Integrating internet marketing with marketing strategy	MSF	4.1545	11
Setting the strategic goals for using the internet	MSF	4.0813	12
Effective offline marketing of the site	WSF	4.0650	13
Successful relationship with customers and suppliers	ERF	4.0407	14
In-depth understanding of foreign marketing environment	GRF[c]	3.9593	15
Resources required to working globally	GRF	3.9593	15
Security	ERF	3.9512	16
Effective online marketing of the site	WSF	3.8537	17
Deciding the potential audience	MSF	3.8293	18
Culture considerations	ERF	3.7317	19
Trust	ERF	3.7236	20
Effective relationships between the marketing and IS/MIS	IRF[d]	3.6992	21
Collaboration with strategic partners	MSF	3.6829	22
Availability of international delivery	GRF	3.6667	23
Technology infrastructure	IRF	3.6504	24
Internal culture	IRF	3.5772	25
Multilanguage web site to successfully reach target customers	GRF	3.5528	26
The great role of the sales force	IRF	3.4797	27
The importance of training programs for sales force	IRF	3.4390	28
Collaboration with strategic suppliers	MSF	3.3496	29
Collaboration with strategic technology provider	MSF	3.3415	30
Collaboration with strategic distributors	MSF	3.3333	31
Real time online interactive elements	WSF	2.1707	32

Table V.
Ranking of B2B IIM success factors

Notes: [*]Mean is based on the five point Likert scale; [a](MSR) marketing strategy related factors; [b](WSF) web site related factors; [c](GRF) global dimension related factors; [d](IRF) Organisation: internal related factors; [e](ERF) Organisation: external related factors

Discussion of findings: strategic factors

Generally, our findings are in line with conventional theory about B2B IIM but add reliability, rigour and insight to the body of knowledge on this subject. This study helps us to identify and prioritise CSF in the adoption and implementation of internet marketing as well as highlight the implications of internet use in a B2B context. At the same time, companies can develop a benchmarking approach to manage dynamics at each category level based on the findings and interpretation of this research.

	t	df	Test value $= 3$ Significance (two-tailed)	Mean difference	95 per cent confidence interval of the difference Lower	Upper
Top management commitment	16.906	122	0.000	1.3333	1.1772	1.4895
The strategic goals for using the internet	12.676	122	0.000	1.0813	0.9124	1.2502
Integrating internet with marketing strategy	13.015	122	0.000	1.1545	0.9789	1.3301
Collaboration with strategic partners	6.956	122	0.000	0.6829	0.4886	0.8773
The strategic technology provider	3.156	122	0.002	0.3415	0.1273	0.5556
Deciding the strategic distributors	3.298	122	0.001	0.3333	0.1332	0.5334
Deciding the strategic suppliers	3.451	122	0.001	0.3496	0.1491	0.5501
Deciding the potential audience	9.071	122	0.000	.8293	0.6483	1.0102
Web site related factors	20.341	122	0.000	1.1585	1.0458	1.2713
Well designed site	22.307	122	0.000	1.4634	1.3335	1.5933
Easy to find site	31.015	122	0.000	1.6667	1.5603	1.7730
Up to date site	23.259	122	0.000	1.5041	1.3761	1.6321
Clear site	23.259	122	0.000	1.5041	1.3761	1.6321
Accurate site	21.787	122	0.000	1.4959	1.3600	1.6319
Speed (download) site	18.025	122	0.000	1.3902	1.2376	1.5429
Informative site	21.446	122	0.000	1.4715	1.3357	1.6074
Real time online interactive elements	−9.375	122	0.000	−0.8293	−1.0044	−0.6542
Effective online marketing of the site	7.852	122	0.000	0.8537	0.6384	1.0689
Effective offline marketing of the site	11.555	122	0.000	1.0650	0.8826	1.2475
Understanding foreign markets environment	12.471	122	0.000	0.9593	0.8071	1.1116
Resources required to working globally	12.471	122	0.000	0.9593	0.8071	1.1116
Multilanguage web site	5.930	122	0.000	0.5528	0.3683	0.7374
Culture considerations	8.317	122	0.000	0.7317	0.5575	0.9059
Availability of international delivery	7.020	122	0.000	0.6667	0.4787	0.8547
Technology infrastructure	6.687	122	0.000	0.6504	0.4579	0.8430
Internal culture	6.019	122	0.000	0.5772	0.3874	0.7671
Effective relationships between the marketing and IS/MIS	6.774	122	0.000	0.6992	0.4949	0.9035
The great role of the sales force	4.919	122	0.000	0.4797	0.2866	0.6727
Training programs for sales force	4.222	122	0.000	0.4390	0.2332	0.6449
Trust	8.667	122	0.000	0.7236	0.5583	0.8889
Security	9.163	122	0.000	0.9512	0.7457	1.1567
Relationship with customers and suppliers	12.825	122	0.000	1.0407	0.8800	1.2013
Easy and affordable access to the internet	16.257	122	0.000	1.1626	1.0210	1.3042
Customer acceptance	17.401	122	0.000	1.2439	1.1024	1.3854

Table VI.
One sample t test of
statistical significance of
B2B IIM CSFs

In fact some may be classified as a strategic factors, which require a significant change in the manner of which business is being done (Turban *et al.*, 1999). These include Category A. marketing strategy related factors, such as top management commitment, developing an integrated internet marketing strategy and setting the strategic goals for internet use. This strategy will, in turn affect web site policy about accuracy, information and design as well as ease of use. It will also determine external factors like customer and supplier relationships, the nature of internet access in terms of affordability and appropriateness. In general, all these factors should be considered at the early and long-term planning phase of B2B IIM implementation.

Discussion of findings: tactical factors

The next group of factors can be classified as tactical. These include marketing strategy related factors such as deciding the potential audience and the nature of collaboration with strategic partners; WSF like effective online marketing of the site; and global factors in terms of understanding of foreign marketing environment, the resources required to work globally and the use of multi-language web sites. Tactical factors might include internal considerations such as effective relationships between the marketing and IS/MIS, the required technology infrastructure and internal culture, as well as external issues like trust, security and culture.

However, we were surprised to find that "real time online interactive elements" has shown only a negligible importance. But, upon closer examination of our study, this finding relates to work carried out by Chaffy *et al.* (2000) who note that interactive elements are important for B2C rather than B2B internet marketing.

Conclusions

This research was able to meet its objectives firstly: by identifying CSF for B2B IIM and secondly: by empirically testing these factors using a large-scale survey of UK companies in five different industrial sectors. Thirdly: it was able to develop a framework for analysis using five dimensions (Categories A, B, C, D, E), and 33 factors that can be adopted as a systematic measuring process, from a benchmarking perspective, for those companies who want to make effective use of B2B IIM.

In fact this study provides new theoretical grounds for research into global B2B internet marketing, as well as a guide for practitioner decision-making if they are to remain competitive in the dynamic electronic marketplace. It provides an empirical assessment of the essential elements in B2B IIM adoption, implementation, and implications as well as a means to prioritise CSF. These have been distilled from a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, and tested on marketing and IT managers in 123 UK companies in aerospace, agriculture, chemical, computing, industrial supplies and textiles.

Moreover, the CSF serve as building blocks for the development of a holistic conceptual theory dealing with B2B internet use. They provide a framework for academic theorists and highlight the significant role of marketing practitioners who can play a significant part in developing and sustaining effective internet practice in the global market place. Company managers can derive a better understanding and measurement of activities that are undertaken by marketing professional within their organisations, and derive an appropriate balance between traditional and internet marketing practice. It also points to the need for future research to refine and validate

the framework as a benchmarking tool in the B2B, B2C and B2A (administration) environments, so that comparison can be made. At the same time the quantification of CSF can be developed into an "index of practice" for companies to determine the level of performance on a year-on-year time-based approach, for benchmarking purposes.

In short, this study provides a thorough analysis of critical factors that enhance or detract in current B2B IIM practice. It adopts a balanced perspective that incorporates the dynamics of new technological opportunities, a volatile, fragmented global market place, and the networks and relationships between company, customer, suppliers and distributors. It addresses the challenges faced by many companies today in their efforts to manage, control and advance daily business activities and find leverage points within the world of B2B internet marketing.

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