

THE ROLE OF MARKET RESEARCHERS IN MANAGERIAL USE OF MARKET RESEARCH INFORMATION

ULOGA ISTRAŽIVAČA TRŽIŠTA U MENADŽERSKOM KORIŠTENJU INFORMACIJA IZ ISTRAŽIVANJA TRŽIŠTA

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ABSTRACT

One key to success in an intensely competitive business environment is superior management of available information. The purpose of this paper is to build and test a model of the role of a market researcher in the process of using managerial market research information in decision making and learning from the market. Findings of the study conducted in a European Union country show that market researchers are able to enhance the managerial use of market research by frequent meetings in each phase of a project, building up trust-based relationships with managers, and by delivering accurate, transparent

Ključne riječi:

istraživanje tržišta, korištenje informacija, marketing odnosa, metafora dviju zajednica, suradnja među poduzećima, povjerenje

SAŽETAK

Jedan od ključeva uspjeha u intenzivno konkurentskom poslovnom okruženju jest vrhunski menadžment dostupnih informacija. Svrha je ovog rada oblikovati i testirati model o ulozi istraživača tržišta u procesu menadžerskog korištenja informacija iz istraživanja tržišta u odlučivanju i učenju iz tržišta. Rezultati studije provedene u jednoj zemlji Europske unije pokazuju da istraživači tržišta mogu poboljšati menadžersko korištenje istraživanja tržišta čestim sastancima u svakoj fazi projekta, izgradnjom odnosa povjerenja s menadžerima te dostavljanjem točnih, transparentnih informacija i konzultantskim uslugama.

information and value-added consultancy services. We found that managers learn from market research studies while evaluating and synthesizing the findings during the decision-making process. This implies that managers learn more from problem-specific than from background research.

ma s dodatnom vrijednošću. Otkrili smo da menadžeri uče iz studija istraživanja tržišta tijekom procjenjivanja i sintetiziranja rezultata za vrijeme procesa donošenja odluke. Navedeno implicira da menadžeri više uče iz problemski specifičnog nego iz pozadinskog istraživanja.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global market research turnover in 2013 was USD 39 billion, representing overall growth of 5.2% (ESOMAR, 2013). In spite of billions of dollars spent on market research, little is known about the manner in which these services actually helped managers make better decisions and enhance their understanding of the business environment. Competitors can access the same market research, but their ability to use this information in a meaningful way shows great variability. The ability to respond to market information leads to enhanced organizational performance (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993), organizational learning (Sinkula, 1994), success of new product development (Citrin, Lee & McCullough, 2007; Moorman, 1995) and sustainable, hard-to-copy competitive advantages (Theoharakis & Hooley, 2008). The aim of this paper is to understand how managers can make the best possible use of market research information and how market research professionals can assist in this process.

Marketing, as a discipline which has acquired extensive knowledge about consumer behavior, knows hardly anything about managers' consumer behavior relating to the use of business information (Wierenga, 2011). Numerous cutting-edge market research handbooks have been published over the last decade. Browsing the contents of these publications, we can see that all relevant methodological issues and statistical procedures have been covered. However, an important theme is missing from these handbooks – namely, the factors affecting the managerial use of market research. We argue that there is an urgent need to provide insights into this process because *several marketing communities* – market researchers, companies purchasing market studies, teachers and students of marketing are all interested in it.

There are scholars (Beyer & Trice, 1982; Caplan, Morisson & Stambaugh, 1975; Cherney & McGee, 2011; Deshpandé, 2001; Deshpandé & Zaltman, 1987; Low & Mohr, 2001; Menon & Wilcox, 2001;

Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpandé, 1992; Zaltman & Deshpandé, 2000) who agree that managers are not only using market research to make decisions, but also to enhance their understanding about the market. In spite of this theoretical consensus, most contributors to this literature have, surprisingly, almost exclusively focused on the uses related to decision making (Dennis, 1996; Deshpandé, 1982; Deshpandé & Zaltman, 1983; Deshpandé & Zaltman, 1984, 1987; John & Martin, 1984; Lee, Acito & Day, 1987; Lee, Lindquist & Acito, 1997; Low & Mohr, 2001; Moorman, Deshpandé & Zaltman, 1993; Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpandé, 1992; Perkins & Rao, 1990) while only a few studies (Fisher & Maltz, 1997; Maltz, 2000; Maltz & Kohli, 2001; Moorman, 1995) examine both the decision-making and the learning aspects of information use. This paper is among the firsts to examine the phenomena of information use comprehensively as it covers both the decision-making and the learning aspects within a single model.

Former studies did not pay due attention to influencing factors that market researchers can directly influence. Instead, factors related to the organizational settings (e.g. centralization and formalization of the company) or business environment (e.g. market turbulence) received greater academic attention. We argue that market researchers play a key role in the managerial use of market research information. That is, to contribute to managerial relevance of findings, in this paper we are focusing on the factors that market researchers might have a direct impact on (e.g.: the quality and degree of collaboration, trust-based relationship with the manager) and that influence the managerial use of market research information.

2. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Information use is a complex and hard-to-measure phenomenon. In theory there is a general consensus upon the multidimensional nature

of market information use. Most authors distinguish between instrumental and conceptual uses of managerial market information. The use of information is instrumental if the manager directly utilizes the information for solving a well-defined problem (Caplan et al., 1975). Thus, the results of market research heavily influence the outcome of decision making in some existing management problem. Without the market research information, no decision could have been made. Considering conceptual information use, market knowledge contributes to the expansion of managers' knowledge base. Market research encourages "joint thinking" within the company and provides new insights (Beyer & Trice, 1982). However, no consensus at all has been reached on how to measure market information use. Various researchers (Landry, Lamari & Amara, 2003; Menon & Wilcox, 2001) have criticized the existing literature for its inadequate conceptualization of information use – because

tween marketing managers and market researchers that determine (2) trust between the two parties, affecting (3) market research information quality perceived by the manager which impacts (4) decision-related instrumental use leading to (5) learning from the market (conceptual uses of information). Quality and quantity of collaboration between marketing managers and market researchers are important prerequisites of a trust-based relationship between the two parties. We believe that trust plays a unique role in managerial perception of market research information, but it does not directly affect the use of market research (indicated with a broken line). If managers do not trust market researchers, they will perceive the market research to be of poor quality. Market research quality is a very important factor in determining instrumental use of market research. On the other hand, decision-related information use will make marketing managers learn from market research findings leading to conceptual use.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework



of no systematic development of formal measures according to generally accepted measurement guidelines, or of their narrow definition and operationalization in terms of only a direct impact of research while ignoring diverse forms of research use – and have emphasized the need to develop suitable measurement techniques. In our research we are relying on the measures developed by Menon & Wilcox (2001) to develop information use, as their USER (Use of Research) scale offers comprehensive and systematic measures for market research and captures the multi-dimensional nature of market research.

According to our approach, the value chain that leads from market research data to marketing knowledge has five elements: (1) collaboration be-

The *level of collaboration between a marketing manager and a market researcher is defined as the extent of co-operation in each stage of the research process (the formulation of the research problem, research design, data analysis, the formulation and discussion of conclusions / recommendations and continuous counseling) (Deshpandé, 1982; Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpandé, 1992).*

Managers primarily identify themselves as businessmen, while market researchers see themselves as scientists (Deshpandé & Zaltman, 1982, 1984). The difference between researchers' and executives' "cognitive schemes" was described by Caplan et al. (1975), who coined the expression "two communities metaphor". "Two communities" explanations assume that a difference between

the culture and norms of managers and market research professionals leads to dysfunctional conflicts, weaken the collaboration efficiency, leads to loss of trust and, consequently, to low levels of information utilization (Caplan et al., 1975).

We argue that increased collaboration between a decision-maker and a market researcher contributes to a trust-based relationship. Regular meetings provide occasions for the researcher to gain insights into managers' everyday problems and to develop mutual understanding. Furthermore, interactions between the two parties provide opportunities for market researchers to demonstrate their competence and benevolence which, in turn, leads to a trust-based relationship. Our hypothesis is supported by the literature. Moorman et al. (1992) found a positive relationship between the level of managerial co-operation with the researcher and the level of trust in them.

H1 The closer the collaboration between the marketing manager and the researcher, the stronger the trust of the marketing manager in the researcher.

Market research is a trust-based industry. Sometimes even the formulation of a research question requires the sharing of confidential information with the researcher. *User trust in the researcher is defined* through two aspects (Moorman et al. 1992). Trust is related to a) the *professional skills* and reliability of the partner and b) to the positive expectations and presumptions about their responsible, helpful and co-operative *behavior*. The marketing manager will only trust the researcher if he is both convinced of the researcher's methodological competence and his willingness to assist in solving his problems. If one of the two aspects is missing, the marketing manager will not trust the researcher.

Morgan reports that trust between business partners engenders co-operation; trust has been viewed as a useful lubricant in avoiding conflict (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Abundant literature on inter-firm trust claims that trust among partners contributes to long-term collaboration stability

(Yeung, Selen, Zhang & Huo, 2009), relationship performance (Wanga, Yeung & Zhang, 2011) and innovativeness (Panayides & Lun, 2009). We expect that information has a positive effect on information quality perceived by the manager. There is *information asymmetry* between market researchers and marketing managers due to relative managerial unfamiliarity with statistical procedures compared to that of market researchers. This asymmetry encumbers the objective judgment of the research quality. Lee et al. (1987) suggest that neither the sampling methodology applied nor the sample size of market research have an impact on marketing managers' perception of the professional quality of survey-type studies. Still, managers must rely on information they have limited competence to evaluate objectively. We argue that managerial perception of the quality of market research information is biased by the quality of the interpersonal relationship. Therefore, we hypothesize that the more the marketing executive trusts the market researcher, the better the quality in their eyes of the market study prepared the researcher.

To our knowledge only one previous study (Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpandé, 1992) investigated the relationship between managerial trust in the researcher and instrumental use of market research information without finding a significant relationship. We expect similar results. We believe that preliminary beliefs related to the professional skills and benevolence of the researcher have no direct impact on the manner in which managers use market research information because information use is a personal activity. The risk of making wrong business decisions is assumed wholly by the manager and not shared with the market researcher, who works at another organization. Therefore, we hypothesize that the trustworthiness of the manager-researcher relationship is indifferent in decision making.

H2 The more the marketing manager trusts the researcher, the higher the quality of the market research study perceived by the manager.

H3 There is no direct relationship between managerial trust in the researcher and instrumental use of market research information.

Perceived research quality is defined as the accuracy, comprehensibility, relevancy and transparency of information supplied in the eyes of the decision maker (Deshpandé & Zaltman, 1982; Gupta & Wilemon, 1988; Maltz & Kohli, 1996). Literature on managerial use of market research suggests that information quality perceived by the manager is the most important factor in determining whether the market research has been used in decision making. (Deshpandé & Zaltman, 1982, 1984; Lee et al. 1987; Maltz & Kohli 1996, 2001; Low & Mohr, 2001; O'Reilly, 1982). Our assumption – supported by the existing literature – suggests that the role of market research in decision making is to reduce managerial uncertainty. We argue that the more up-to-date, comprehensive, relevant and transparent the market information the more valuable it is in the eyes of the managers, because it has the potential to provide credible answers to managerial questions.

H4 The higher the quality of market research perceived by the manager, the more extensive its instrumental use.

We suggest that the more the manager relies on a market research in making decisions, the more he or she will learn from that. Empirical research focusing on providing field-study based evidence on the relationship between information use and knowledge generation is scarce. The vast majority of studies on information use focused on instrumental uses of information (Deshpandé & Zaltman, 1982; Moorman et al., 1992), while empirical studies involving both instrumental and conceptual dimensions are often exploratory (qualitative) by nature (Diamantopoulos & Souchon, 1998). Recent empirical studies argued that instrumental and conceptual uses support each other, one leading to the other, with conceptual use occurring when co-workers teach and educate each other and take their time for further reflection upon the real meaning of information drops (Rollins, Bellenger & Johnston, 2012). These results imply that marketing managers have limited resources to *per se* learn from market information available to them. Marketing theory on knowledge generation offers models on how and through which mechanisms basic data can be con-

verted into market knowledge (Barabba & Zaltman, 1991; Rowley, 2007; Zins, 2007). These models advocate the fact that the availability of market information is a necessary – but not sufficient – condition for the generation of market knowledge. Decision makers need to contextualize, evaluate and synthesize available information to gain knowledge. We hypothesize that managers continuously face various urgent tasks; hence, they are short of time to *per se* contextualize, synthesize and learn from the information available to them. Constant time pressure and the dominance of short-term over long-term goals limit managers' ability to learn from the information available to them. Therefore, we propose, that managers' pressure to make decisions – i.e. to use available market research in an instrumental way – leads them to carefully evaluate and contextualize available data. This process of joint thinking about information available, in turn, leads to conceptual use of market information.

H5 Instrumental use of market research is positively correlated to conceptual use of market research.

3. METHODS

3.1. Sample and data collection

The data for testing the hypotheses were collected in a European country. The questionnaire was pre-tested among 30 marketing managers with proven experience in their roles. The questionnaire was administered by mail to every single marketing executive of companies belonging to the country's top 10 percent, according to their sales revenue. The database of the National Statistical Office was used as a sampling frame, and 920 questionnaires were sent out. The data collection resulted in 254 questionnaires for a response rate of 27%. Only the companies that had done market research with the involvement of an external market research company over the previous five years were involved in the analysis of the utilization of market research information.

Altogether, 154 such companies were included in the returned sample. The mean of the company-specific and the job-specific experience of the respondents was eight years. Most respondents were one level below the top management in hierarchy, supposedly with authority to make decisions. Of the respondent companies which had done market research over the previous five years, 13.9% sold durable consumer goods, 23.6% fast moving consumer goods, 11.8% materials and components, 1.4% industrial capital equipment, 1.4% industrial services, 22.3% consumer services and the rest form a mix of other industries. In our returned sample relevant to market research, 4.1% employed more than 5,000, 22.1% between 1,000 and 5,000, 16.6% between 500 and 999, 18.6% between 300 and 499, 24.8% between 100 and 299, 11.7% between 20 and 99 employees while 1.4% had fewer than 20 employees. Out of the 154 respondent companies, 37.8% were national (26.6% national and 11.2 state-owned) and 62.2% foreign companies.

Table 1: Construct items

Collaboration

Adopted from Deshpandé and Zaltman (1982)
5-point semantic differential scale;
1: no co-operation at all - 5: extensive co-operation

Continuous consulting
Problem definition
Designing the research
Data analysis, development and implementation of recommendations

Trust

Adopted from Moorman, Zaltman, and Deshpandé (1992) 5-point Likert scale
1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree

My researcher is creative and he / she is able to provide added value
My researcher usually accommodates my last-minute requests
The information we share with my researcher will not be shared with competitors
My researcher reflects on his / her experience to fill in the gaps left by the research

Conflicts with the researcher were solved together
My researcher is punctual in meeting deadlines
I am convinced that my researcher deeply understands how things are done around here

Perceived information quality

Adopted from Deshpandé and Zaltman (1982)
5-point Likert scale

1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree

The language of the research study and presentation was clear
There were too many tables / graphics / statistics
The conclusions / recommendations of the presentation followed from the data
The quality of the management summary was high
The information provided was worth the money spent on it
The way the information was gathered was appropriate
The professional quality of the research was high
There were many contradictory statements or findings

Instrumental use of information

Adopted from Deshpandé and Zaltman (1982)
5-point Likert scale

1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree

It is possible that, without the research results, a different decision would have been made
One or more findings of the study had a significant direct impact on the decision
It was worth waiting for the research results because some of them materially influenced the decision

Conceptual use of information

Adopted from (Menon & Wilcox, 2001) 5-point Likert scale

1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neither agree nor disagree, 4: agree, 5: strongly agree

The study results gave fresh perspectives and were used to start discussion about an issue
The study results were used to provide new insights
Doing the study was educational and we learned from the results
It is possible that, without the research results, a different concept would have been created

Analysis of variance did not indicate significant differences in the means of the key constructs or in the descriptive statistics (products / services provided, number of employees, ownership structure) between early and late respondents (Armstrong & Overton, 1977). When contacting the companies via phone, it turned out that the most frequent reason for refusal was lack of time. As the reasons for refusal to respond were not specific to descriptive and key variables, we concluded that non-response errors would not cause systematic error in the sample; therefore, we pooled the data for subsequent analyses.

To measure the constructs, we used five-point Likert-scales taken from former studies – for the sake of comparability of findings. Collaboration with the market researcher was measured with 4 items from Deshpandé and Zaltman (1982), trust in market researcher was measured with 7 items from Moorman et al. (1992). Perceived information quality measures were taken from Deshpandé and Zaltman (1982) and measured with 8 items. Instrumental use of market research was measured with 3 items by scales taken from Deshpandé and Zaltman (1982), while conceptual use of information was measured with 4

items adopted from Menon and Wilcox (2001). In addition, we included firm ownership control variables, measured as a dummy variable (1 = major national ownership; 2 = major foreign ownership).

3.2. Reliability and validity

We assessed the properties of the measurement model by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 19.0. We ran a single CFA, grouping all the multi-item measures. The model so specified showed a reasonably good fit with the data. χ^2 (degrees of freedom) = 342 (196); global fit index (GFI) = .85; comparative fit index (CFI) = .92; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .91; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .06. All constructs showed acceptable values of composite reliability (>.74). To test for discriminant validity, we computed correlations between the factors following the guidelines by Bagozzi & Phillips (1982). In all cases the correlation was significantly below 1.00 (<.57), indicating discriminant validity. The correlation matrix and descriptive statistics for the study measures are reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlations and descriptive statistics

Scale	Number of items	Mean	Std Dev	Average Variance Extracted /AVE/	Composite Reliability / Cronbach Alpha	1	2	3	4	5
1. Instrumental use of information	3	3.41	.92	.62	.76 / .77	1.00				
2. Conceptual use of information	4	3.50	1.02	.50	.65 / .68	.48*** (143)	1.00			
3. Perceived information quality	8	3.62	.88	.51	.75 / .81	.49*** (139)	.30*** (139)	1.00		
4. User trust in the researcher	7	3.45	1.32	.53	.84 / .88	.21** (136)	.21*** (136)	.46*** (134)	1.00	
5. Collaboration	4	3.50	1.3	.69	.89 / .90	.28*** (139)	.27*** (139)	.39*** (136)	.56*** (135)	1.00

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$

4. RESULTS

We tested our model using AMOS 19.0 for structural equation modeling analysis. The main fit indices suggest that the model fits the data acceptably well ($\chi^2/df = 1.74$; comparative fit index (CFI) = .92; Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .91) as these values were all above the recommended 0.9 cut-off and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of our model is .06, or well below the .80 threshold. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 3: Parameter estimates (standardized structural coefficients) and variance explained (R²)

Hypotheses		path coefficient
	Direct effects	
H1	Collaboration → Trust	0.76***
H2	Trust → Perceived Information Quality	0.57***
H3	Trust → Instrumental Use	-.06
H4	Perceived Information Quality → Instrumental Use	0.63***
H5	Instrumental use → Conceptual Use	0.74
	Covariates	
	Ownership → Collaboration	-0.05
	Ownership → Trust	0.02
	Ownership → Perceived Information Quality	0.10
	Ownership → Instrumental Use	-0.02
	Ownership → Conceptual Use	
	Variance explained (R²)	
	Trust	0.57
	Perceived Information Quality	0.32
	Instrumental Use	0.35
	Conceptual Use	0.54

As reported in Table 2, collaboration during each phase of the market research project has a positive and significant impact ($\beta = .76$) on managerial trust in the researcher, thus H1 is supported. H2 states that managerial trust in the researcher has a positive impact on how managers perceive the quality of market research studies. Results of the structural equation modelling analysis support this hypothesis as the standardized coefficients ($\beta = .57$) and the t-values (5.16) are both significant. Managerial trust in the researcher has no significant effect on the managerial use of market research in decision making, with ($\beta = -.06$) and the t-values (.57), thus H3 is supported. The higher the quality of the market research perceived by the manager, the more extensive is its use in decision making as shown by our results ($\beta = .63$), thus H4 is supported. Instrumental use of market research has a strong, significant and positive effect on conceptual use ($\beta = .74$), thus H5 is also supported. We controlled for one variable, namely, ownership (national/foreign). Ownership has no significant effect on any variables included in the model (see Table 2 covariates). The overall results suggest that the hypothesized conceptual framework fits the empirical data acceptably well.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Main findings

Our goal in this paper was to advance marketing knowledge about complex phenomena of the managerial use of market research information and to understand the role of market researchers in this process. Market researchers themselves play a significant role in how managers trust the researcher and perceive the quality of market research, while their contribution to how managers ultimately use market research in making decisions and learn about the business environment is less direct.

According to our results, the more the managers rely on market research information in mak-

ing decisions, the more they will learn from the results. We argue that managers have limited resources to learn from information available to them as short-term tasks dominate over long-term goals. However, when managers need to make decisions based on market research information, they are forced to thoroughly evaluate, draw conclusions and contextualize these data which then leads to obtaining in-depth knowledge about the business environment. Thus, using market research in managerial learning is a personal activity that market researchers can hardly influence. The only means of having an impact on managerial learning is for market researchers to deliver superior quality market research information – information that is accurate and transparent and that reduces managerial uncertainty by giving direct answers to managerial questions. This result also indicates that, paradoxically, managers will primarily not learn from those studies that serve to describe the market and provide general background information, but rather from those prepared to solve a well-defined management problem.

It would appear from our results that managers primarily look at information quality (e.g.: relevance, accuracy, transparency) to determine whether market research will be used in decision making. Our findings suggest that, when marketing managers evaluate the quality of the market research, they consider not only the narrowly defined statistical (data gathering, sampling, methodologies), but also the more technical aspects of the product (structure, outlook, volume of data). Managers may have difficulties in objectively evaluating the professional quality of market research as they lack the required statistical background knowledge to judge the accuracy of the applied methods. Still, they must rely on market research – that is, information they have limited resources to evaluate comprehensively. Our empirical results highlight the importance of a trust-based relationship between market researchers and marketing decision makers. Such a trust-based relationship is a prerequisite for a decision maker to perceive market research to

be of high quality. Former studies reported trust to be more important in perceiving market research information than the very characteristics of the market research study (Deshpandé, 1982; Deshpandé & Zaltman, 1984, 1987). Our results show that the degree and quality of personal interaction between the parties during each phases of the market research project contribute significantly to creating managerial trust in the researcher and, consequently, in the market research results themselves. A trust-based relationship between the parties, however, has no direct impact on the use of market research. Managers hold personal responsibility when they make decisions. The quality of the personal relationship between a marketing manager and a market researcher is indifferent in the decision whether to choose and use the delivered market research as a source of information in marketing management; however, the better the quality of the market research in the eyes of the manager, the more the manager will rely on it.

5.2. Managerial implications

The reported findings imply that, on the one hand, companies suffer from lack of ready-to-use market information whereas, on the other hand, they spend on information they have little capacity to effectively rely on. Our results suggest that numerous companies buy background type of market research information that they fail to use in learning about the market. Such information is paid for and may provide longitudinal data; therefore, it has the potential to be used as a tool in learning something new about the business, identifying market trends or to provide new insights. But, in reality, the majority of these research studies are never used and they never become a part of the management information systems, because – as our study shows – managers learn from data used in making marketing decisions. Businessmen live from one day to the other, they are overwhelmed with urgent tasks and do not have the capacity to *per se* analyze market data.

Market research companies, as players in a market in the phase of maturity, always seek ways of market growth. Our results indicate that a diversification of market research services could be a source of increase. Market researchers should offer audit type of services to evaluate companies' market research portfolio and to also identify services that are paid for but not used in marketing management.

Our findings provide empirical support for managerial trust in a researcher as a uniquely important element in the process of market research use by the manager. We advocate that the best way to build up mutual trust is by closely co-operating in each phase of the market research project – beginning from the formulation of the research question until the implementation of the findings. Conflicts between market researchers and marketing managers are often encoded as the former think of themselves as scientists while the latter see themselves as businessmen. Frequent meetings, however, result in a better understanding of each others because they provide opportunities for market researchers to gain a deeper understanding of managerial problems. Marketing managers often complain about market researchers 'just providing numbers' instead of giving aid to solve business problems. We argue that collaboration not only reduces dysfunctional conflicts between the parties deriving from their different focus but, ultimately, also leads to more useful market research studies.

Finally, our results imply that the use of market research information mainly depends on how researchers manage to understand the embedded managerial expectations from market research. Products delivered by researchers are not market information, but a service to decrease managerial uncertainty. Executives expect actionable results that provide forthright answers. Accordingly, researchers should learn how to communicate in their clients' language and provide consulting-like added value.

5.3. Further research and limitations

The study findings suggest several issues that warrant further inquiry. First, methodological references for measuring conceptual information are scarce as there is no widely accepted or extensively used scale for measuring this dimension of information use. This paper is among the few empirical research studies actually measuring the degree of conceptual use of information, even though Menon and Wilcox (2001) suggested a measurement tool (USER-scale) for measuring market research use. For the sake of further comparability of our results, and to overcome the limitations of former measurements on conceptual use of market information, we used the referred USER-scale items adopted from Menon and Wilcox (2001).

It would have been interesting to measure the performance consequences of the use of market research information in determining whether any products launched to satisfy the consumer needs discovered by market research indeed perform better in the market. Our current model is based on data gathered by marketing managers. Further research may incorporate asking the suppliers of market research – external market researchers – how they see their role in the process of managerial market research information use. Results from dyad-type research, where marketing manager–market researcher pairs collaborating in a research project are surveyed, could be used to compare the cognitive schemes of managers and market researchers on the process of information use.

None of the previous studies have investigated how the position of an internal market researcher modifies collaboration between marketing managers and market researchers, so it could make an interesting subject of a forthcoming study since companies that frequently buy external market research services often employ internal market researchers to co-ordinate the companies' research projects.

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