In 2015, Jamaica Blue, an Australian café franchise, wanted to expand its brand in mainland China. Starbucks was the first cafe chain to enter the Chinese market and it had already achieved overwhelming success with its brand offering. Jamaica Blue knew that the key to understanding how to expand its own café franchise in this competitive market was to conduct research to identify and profile consumers for insights. The
study the company undertook was qualitative and quantitative, using secondary and primary research methods.

In the initial phase, Jamaica Blue conducted secondary research to overview the café sector (the competitive landscape). They did this to uncover existing knowledge regarding consumers, including socio-demographic trends and their implications on café usage. The research provided Jamaica Blue with an understanding of the current purchasing behaviours of café patrons in China. The researchers utilised trade journals, empirical studies and publications from industry organisations, and government institutions.

In the second phase, an in-market study was conducted in Shanghai, China, with a focus group employed to gain a deeper understanding of the consumer’s choice of café, purchasing preferences related to coffee and menu selections, and attitudes towards local versus international café brands operating in China. The overarching objective was to profile the Chinese cafe patron. The interaction between consumer behavioural changes, a transforming retail food environment and relevant government regulations played a significant role in shaping the characteristics of the Chinese café market.

The study revealed three key insights critical to defining the profile of the Chinese café patron. First, Chinese consumers are purchasing luxury goods and brands at an increasing rate as a symbol of modern sophistication and to convey status, with coffee being an everyday affordable indulgence. As more Chinese people are exposed to and embrace a Western lifestyle, café and coffee culture is quickly building momentum despite the traditional consumption of tea. Second, the study highlighted the need to ensure a balance between innovative or exotic menu items, and traditional food choices and tastes. An increasing number of Chinese consumers are influenced positively by
global tastes and therefore are seeking greater variety from café menus. Finally, the social environment provided by a café plays a significant role in shaping consumers’ experiences. The study found that delivering a strong balance of function and aesthetics to create an inviting social space was essential.

The results of the overall study supported the need for Jamaica Blue to continue to acquire and maintain a detailed understanding of food and beverage consumption trends at cafés in China to compete successfully in its dynamic marketplace.

Source: Roberts (2014)

Vignette questions

Q1: Think about the research undertaken by Jamaica Blue. How was secondary data used to effectively inform the research study and assist in delivering the project benefits?

There are several areas where secondary data will assist. These include: understanding the competitive landscape, providing the latest consumer trends, and informing the primary research design for the qualitative and quantitative studies.
Discuss the challenges that may arise when facilitating a focus group discussion in an international context. Researchers face a range of challenges in an international context. These may include, but are not limited to: translation issues such as cultural context and multiple word meanings, comparability challenges with forward and backward translation of transcripts, and the skill set of the moderator to overcome barriers to eliciting and capturing open feedback from respondents.

Introduction

This chapter begins by outlining the critical role research plays in international business and then examines the international business research process through highlighting the importance of clearly defining the research problem. The discussion describes why international business research is conducted, studies the key types of international business research, and provides discussion around secondary and primary information sources, and the associated benefits and challenges of each. Strategies to help overcome the major issues that complicate cross-country research are also considered, and the challenges associated with conducting international business research are explored. In the international context, the key issues faced by researchers include political, economic, legal and cultural differences. The benefits of engaging a professional research agency, rather than relying on in-house services, are discussed. The chapter
concludes by outlining the methods associated with reporting international business research studies.

**Understanding the international business research process**

Why conduct research? Business research is an essential element in the development of a company’s international strategy. Being fully informed about the business operating environment, the customers and consumers, is key to entering a market successfully and achieving profitability. Many companies fail to undertake appropriate and enough research before entering a foreign market. Their international research often lacks rigor, formality and a quantitative nature in comparison to their domestic research activities.

There are several reasons firms fail to undertake enough research, such as a lack of sensitivity to different cultures, a lack of recognition that not all markets are the same, resource restrictions and hasty decision making in reaction to an opportunity. In some cases, the excitement of the opportunity to expand internationally overshadows the need for rigorous business research. Differences in distribution systems, labour rules and media regulations are examples of market characteristics that must be fully understood in a foreign market. Additionally, a company may fail to understand that specialist and experienced management is needed to interpret international business conditions and real market data, rather than relying solely on internet-based information. Companies that have been exporting and engaged in international business over considerable time, may feel their experience is adequate and a suitable substitute for organised business research.
Appropriate business research is needed at the pre-entry stage and at different stages throughout the international business life cycle. International competition is dynamic and aggressive in the current business-operating environment. The emergence of electronic business and online commerce, intensifying levels of globalisation, technological innovation and the convergence of industries, create a marketplace in a constant state of change. International businesses must have a well-developed understanding of their competitive landscape to hold a sustainable position in their international markets. The role of business research remains pivotal for companies to understand the drivers of their evolving consumer, competition, supply chain and macro dynamics. In 2016, the global revenue of business research reached US$44.51 billion, an increase of almost 42 per cent over the previous five years (Statista, 2018).

International markets are complex. A robust research strategy is central to international business decision-making processes. Neglecting the research phase may prove to be a costly mistake and result in missed opportunities.

**Planning the research process**

Research is vital to inform the evaluation and development of a comprehensive market entry strategy. Pre-market entry research is the first step to evaluate potential new markets. Failing to undertake due-diligence research can result in reduced sales, unforeseen complications and costs. This research generally begins with an analysis of primary variables for a country, including GDP, market size and growth, socio-demographics and competitor analysis. It is also important not to underestimate principal demographic factors, including per capita income, mortality rates, education attainment levels and population figures, as well as the business operating and
economic environments, relevant import regulations and how they may impact the proposed market potential. Each of these factors enables companies to evaluate if successful market entry is achievable. For example, premium consumer products may not succeed in many developing countries as their price may exceed customers’ annual salary, or the consumer value of the product may be held differently when compared to the home market. The next step is to focus on product or service specific aspects. This entails a supply-and-demand assessment including relevant regulations and standards within the sector. Finally, a full competitive assessment, to understand current offerings and market gaps for potential products, is required. A systematic and logical approach to analysing these characteristics helps to shortlist potential markets. Business decisions informed by research are more likely to be supported by local subsidiaries.

**The six-step international research process**

Tools, techniques and approaches used in international business research are like those employed for domestic research activities. They share the same purpose of gathering and analysing information for input into key business planning and decisions. Most research techniques can be applied in the international marketplace, pending available infrastructure. There are six steps to follow when conducting international business research:

1. Define the research problem.
2. Determine the information needs and output requirements.
3. Develop the research design.
4. Capture and collect the data (secondary research and primary research).
5. Analyse the data and document the information.
6. Report and present the findings.

**Begin margin-definition**

**Research design** a detailed outline of how a research study will be undertaken, including the set of methods and procedures for the collection of data, and the measurement and analysis of the variables specified in a research problem.

**Secondary research** the collection and analysis of data previously collected for another purpose.

**Primary research** the collection and analysis of data for a specific research purpose through interviews, focus groups, observations, surveys or experiments.

**End margin-definition**

At each of these steps, researchers may confront challenges when the activities take place in a foreign market. The major issues to address include:

- complex research design to accommodate environmental and cultural constraints, including language translation, literacy rates and gender issues
- availability of research infrastructure to implement the study
- access to accurate and up-to-date secondary information
- time and cost requirements for primary research
- coordination of multi-country research and data collection
- establishing comparability and equivalence across multi-country studies
- differences in cultural norms concerning sharing opinions with strangers.
Research should be scheduled as an ongoing requirement within the business environment. Business operations in many countries change rapidly; for example, policy and regulatory changes, and consumer reactions to local and international events can cause transformations. Regularly scheduled research enables timely data capture, which links to market indicators and provides insights and feedback that is needed to monitor, evaluate and anticipate business impacts to minimise risks. An ongoing research program allows an international business to anticipate and respond appropriately to local and global competition. For example, the Indian mobile phone company, Bharti Airtel with international business subsidiaries in 17 African nations, sought to expand its business presence through a standardised market entry approach, with a supporting communications campaign across the continent. However, the organisation underestimated the cultural diversity across the African continent. They used South African actors, images of the Savannah and local coins when many African nations use paper money. The company’s lack of research and informed market understanding resulted in a significant failure of its international business expansion strategy, which has taken several years for it to recover from (The Economic Times, 2017).

Business research plays an important role at each stage of the internationalisation process. Once the initial pre-market entry information has been established, companies then require ongoing information to assess market entry modes, opportunities and risks. This research informs operating strategies and determines which elements will be standardised, and which, if any, require adaptation for the new market. As companies continue to expand and obtain more data about their international markets, they amass information and establish global knowledge systems to efficiently manage the allocation of organisational resources.
Identifying the research problem

Clearly defining the research problem or problems is the critical first step in the research process. A research problem, or phenomenon, is an area of concern or opportunity where there is a gap in the knowledge base required to move forward. Failure to clearly define the research problem can lead researchers in a direction that does not solve the root cause of the relevant business concern. This may result in lost time, frustration or, worse, create a bigger issue.

The identification and definition of the problem is not solely a statement of the problem. It may also include the known limiting conditions as well as the overarching objective of the research study. A precise definition will result in a better understanding of the problem to be solved and how to use resource efforts effectively. Even the most elaborate data analysis tools will not compensate for incorrect problem definitions. In many cases, preliminary research is employed to assist in creating a precise definition of the research problem. Once the research problem is clarified, it then needs to be translated into specific research questions. The scope of the research questions should be broad-based, with the ability to tackle both strategic-level and tactical-based market operating decisions. In the international business context, research problem formulation can be hindered by three factors:

- self-reference criterion (SRC)
- ethnocentrism
- unfamiliarity with the foreign environment.

SRC was first described in 1966 by the researcher James Lee. His research defined SRC as the unconscious reference to a person's own cultural values, experiences and knowledge as a foundation for decision making (Lee, 1966). When confronted by a
problem or situation in another culture, the tendency is to react instinctively and refer to one’s own SRC rather than using rational thinking.

Closely connected to SRC is ethnocentrism, which is the tendency to view one’s culture as superior to others. Both SRC and ethnocentrism reduce the ability to assess a foreign market in real terms, which can lead to serious mistakes and consequences, such as narrow or incorrect problem definitions. In larger multi-country research projects, SRC contributes to disagreements and disengagement between head office and local subsidiaries. Researchers must try to view the research problem from the cultural perspective of the foreign participants, and isolate the SRC influence to mitigate risk. A consultative approach should be taken with each local subsidiary engaged in the research process.

The third major issue in formulating the research problem is unfamiliarity with the foreign environment. This leads to false assumptions, incorrectly defined research problems and, ultimately, misleading or ill-informed conclusions upon which key business decisions are based.

Once the research problem has been clearly articulated, the next step is to determine the information and output requirements, and develop the research design that will best deliver them. Some pieces of information will already be available from within the organisation or from sources that are publicly available through secondary data. Information that does not exist will need to be collected by the firm in primary research for the specific purpose of the study. In the international context, both secondary and primary data collection may present as challenges for researchers. The following section examines the role of secondary information as an important first step in the research process.
Multiple-choice question

Q: What is the first and most critical step in the international business research process?

A – Choosing the right international research agency to work with.

B – Clearly defining the research problem.

C – Developing the research design.

D – Collecting both secondary and primary data.

Secondary sources of information in international markets

When conducting international business research, companies require a range of macro and micro data related to the operating sector. Macro-level information includes a country’s political, economic, socio-cultural and technological position; while micro-level information relates to customers, consumers, competitors and suppliers. This type of information is obtained by accessing secondary resources. In the preliminary phase
of a study, researchers use secondary data as a screening process to inform base-level understanding. The operational outlays of this phase are generally cost effective and time efficient, prior to moving on to primary in-market research.

Secondary information is usually second hand, as a government institution, research agency or trade organisation gathered the data for a purpose other than the specific research project at hand. In this first phase, secondary information assists decision making by:

- evaluating a range of markets for market entry consideration
- estimating demand for products or services in a given market
- assessing the market interconnectedness to guide resource distribution between regions or across international markets.

Secondary data is routinely captured by public and private sector organisations in developed countries, and is readily accessible by businesses. In developing and emerging economies, equivalent databases have not always been available or are difficult to access. The Global Data Lab, based in the Netherlands, provides an online forum that brings together datasets from over 100 countries on a range of topics. The group undertakes analysis and monitoring of large-scale demographic, socio-economic, behavioural, political, cultural, health, institutional and environmental changes occurring in developing countries. The website of UNdata and the WB are also reliable sources of secondary information, covering global trends and statistics. While the online environment offers a range of websites, researchers should be mindful that the quality and quantity of documents might vary depending on the country of study and the level of resources dedicated to the data collection.
International researchers can also access the information resources available within their own organisations. Many large organisations maintain their own libraries and build significant databases that capture historical activities of their operations.

**Using the internet for secondary research**

A starting point for data search is generally in the worldwide web, where an abundance of international business resources is easily accessible. Computerised database services such as Lexis Nexis provide real-time access to news, legal and business information, captured globally and accessed via keyword searches. Other common sources of secondary data and information include: country census reports, government databases with official statistics, organisational records, annual reports and reviews, technical reports, scholarly journals, trade journals, literature review articles and reference books. Of the resources outlined above, government and professional bodies’ websites provide more accuracy and reliability and offer a greater breadth of information. As an example, the globalEDGE an online resource tool, created and maintained by the University of Michigan, is a valuable resource that provides links to information and insights to inform global business research.

Many countries have internal networks of government agencies and industry-supported institutions that maintain databases of key information relevant for international business development; for example, Industry Export Associations or Trade Organisations. These agencies generate market-specific information and insights for their members, since their core purpose is to advise and support domestic companies seeking to trade abroad. The Australian Trade and Investment Commission,
known as Austrade, is an example of this type of agency. A wide selection of secondary data resources are available to international businesses.

### Useful websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sources of secondary information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country Information</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• UN Yearbook of Industrial Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>• UN Statistical Yearbook</td>
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<tr>
<td>• OECD Economic Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The Economist Intelligence Unit Country Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• UN Demographic Yearbook</td>
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<tr>
<td>• ADB, statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAOSTAT)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Global Edge</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Country Watch</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Centre for International Development (CID)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• DFAT</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ministry of Commerce, People’s Republic of China</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Gov HK, market information and statistics, Hong Kong

Foreign Industry Directories

• Forbes, Asia's fab 50 companies
• Companies House, international directory of importers: Europe (Interdata)
• Companies House, mailing lists of worldwide importing firms (Interdata)
• Moody's International
• Financial Times, markets data
International Marketing

- Michigan State University, International Business Centre
- Euromonitor International, economics marketing data and statistics
- Global Data Lab, Database Developing World
- Euromonitor International, Asia advertising marketing and media data
- National Library of Australia, Virtual International Business and Economics

Sources (VIBES)

International Trade

- UN International Trade Statistics Yearbook
- World Chambers Network
- International Chamber of Commerce
- International Trade Centre
- Hong Kong Trade Development Council
- European Trade Study Group
- Austrade
- ADB
- WB
- WTO

End Table 8.1
Country Information

- UN Yearbook of Industrial Statistics
  www.unido.org/resources/publications/flagship-publications/international-yearbook-industrial-statistics

- UN Statistical Yearbook

- OECD Economic Survey
  www.oecd.org/economy/surveys

- The Economist Intelligence Unit Country Reports
  www.eiu.com/home.aspx

- UN Demographic Yearbook

- ADB, statistics
  www.adb.org/data/statistics

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAOSTAT)
  www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data

- Global Edge
  www.globaledge.msu.edu

- Country Watch
  www.countrywatch.com

- Centre for International Development (CID)
  www.cid.harvard.edu/cidtrade

- DFAT
  www.dfat.gov.au

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan
  www.mofa.go.jp

- Ministry of Commerce, People's Republic of China
  http://english.mofcom.gov.cn

- Gov HK, market information and statistics, Hong Kong
Foreign Industry Directories

- Forbes, Asia’s fab 50 companies
  www.forbes.com/fab50/list

- Companies House, international directory of importers: Europe (Interdata)
  https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk

- Companies House, mailing lists of worldwide importing firms (Interdata)
  https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk

- Moody's International
  www.moodys.com

- Financial Times, markets data
  http://markets.ft.com

International Marketing

- Michigan State University, International Business Centre
  https://global.broad.msu.edu/ibc

- Euromonitor International, economics marketing data and statistics
  www.euromonitor.com/economic-research

- Global Data Lab, Database Developing World
  https://globaldatalab.org/ddw

- Euromonitor International, Asia advertising marketing and media data
  www.euromonitor.com/asia-pacific-regional-profile

- National Library of Australia, Virtual International Business and Economics Sources (VIBES)
### International Trade

- UN International Trade Statistics Yearbook

- World Chambers Network
  [www.worldchambers.com](http://www.worldchambers.com)

- International Chamber of Commerce
  [https://iccwbo.org](https://iccwbo.org)

- International Trade Centre
  [www.intracen.org](http://www.intracen.org)

- Hong Kong Trade Development Council
  [www.hktdc.com](http://www.hktdc.com)

- European Trade Study Group
  [www.etsg.org](http://www.etsg.org)

- Austrade

- ADB
  [www.adb.org](http://www.adb.org)

- WB

- WTO
  [www.wto.org](http://www.wto.org)

## End Table

Global information databases, such as those held by the WB or the ADB, provide broad country profiles which are useful in the preliminary phase of a study. These sites offer economic information and statistics, such as GDP and lifestyle data, which cover literacy rates, expected lifespan, and other societal indicators in addition to
macroeconomic country data. Examples of global data holders include the UN, the WB, the OECD and the Virtual International Business and Economic Sources (VIBES). These international entities capture large amounts of data in structured sets to allow individual analysis for a given study or specific purpose. A significant number of these sets report information for multiple years, providing a context to examine trends within socio-economic indicators for an individual country, and to compare between countries.

Secondary data challenges

The efficacy of secondary information is underpinned by the quality of the data. This may present several challenges for the international researcher. The process of interpretation and analysis must be rigorous, and a review of the data sources and criteria should be evaluated in the first instance, including qualification, accuracy, reliability and comparability, to ensure the validity for its use. Data discrepancies, in terms of accuracy or equivalence, may arise for several reasons, such as the way a measurement unit is defined, the frequency with which data has been captured, and the level of national industrialisation and taxation structures. In some cases, market-specific data may be missing or does not exist. Where data variables and values are not available, the researcher needs to infer data by using proxy variables or values from previous periods or sources. Interpretation of secondary data also requires a level of creative thinking by the researcher. For example, a researcher for a cruise line may need to forecast the potential demand for a cruise operation in a new seaport from complimentary and comparable city and tourism statistics. This requires creative thinking, but the process of interpretation and analysis should still be thorough.
Qualification

A rigorous process of data qualification is essential in any research study. A lack of appropriate data qualification is arguably one of the major causes of project failures. The aim of data qualification is to clarify and thoroughly document the meaning of the data. The validity of a research study can be called into question where poor quality data has been used or gaps exist. Several documents may report on income measures for a country, but the researcher must ensure all indicators are utilised and reported consistently. For example, what currency is the applicable measure in each report, are gross or nett income figures cited? The gap between what is presented, and any erroneous assumptions made by the researcher could completely invalidate the entire analysis. Globally, the definitions used for a range of indicators, such as GDP, often differ between countries, creating a qualification challenge for the researcher.

Accuracy

The accuracy of secondary information may raise questions for few reasons. At the core, the purpose for which the data was collected originally could affect the accuracy and relevance for the study. For example, the original data may have been manipulated or reorganised to meet another purpose unknown to the researcher. Additionally, the components of timeliness and age of data can affect the accuracy. Due to the time required for global data collection, many sources of secondary information, particularly those that are in print, are often outdated by the time of publication.

The researcher must ensure the data aligns with the time that governs the analysis. For example, if the current study is focused on current sales issues, comparing
income levels from the previous decade will not provide an appropriate analysis. Many countries collect information relating to their economic activities and conduct their national census on different or infrequent schedules. China, India and the US undertake national census studies once every decade, whereas in Australia a national census is undertaken every five years. In contrast, in some emerging economies, a census seldom occurs or never takes place. The quality of information may also be compromised because of the processes followed in collecting, organising and analysing the original data. Developed countries use sophisticated and well-established procedures to capture national data. However, due to a lack of resources, skills and experience, many developing countries have to rely on inexperienced or unreliable mechanisms (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010).

Official data sources often group or aggregate statistics for certain variables into broad categories, and this can negatively impact the usefulness and interpretation of such data. Therefore, inspecting what has been included in a relevant data set to ensure accuracy of reporting is required. Conversely, missing data can cause challenges; for example, cross-border and counter-trading are often not reflected in country-level trade statistics. These transactions, in some instances, are more significant in value and volume than legitimate trade, and therefore the true value of some industries may be grossly underestimated.

**Reliability**

Despite the ease of access to high volumes of online data, the level of reliability and comparability of the information must be checked to ensure appropriateness for purpose. It should be noted that internet search engines encompass only a portion of
international sources and remain heavily biased towards English-based publications. As a result, sole reliance on readily-available electronic sources may result in the researcher missing valuable information.

To study trends, the researcher needs to understand the degree to which data has been measured consistently over time. It is not uncommon for the definition of key economic indicators to change swiftly. This is especially likely for variables that have political ramifications, such as unemployment and inflation statistics (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010). While not unique to them, less developed countries are prone to underestimate or overestimate official statistics to seek advantage or reflect national sentiment. Many organisations review historical patterns of variables to identify underlying trends that highlight market entry opportunities opening or to identify a market reaching maturity. Researchers should be aware of such practices that can adversely affect data reliability and, if necessary, make appropriate corrections.

**Comparability**

Comparability of data maybe a problematic issue in the analysis phase. Cross-country analysis often requires a comparison of indicators across culturally and linguistically diverse countries. Accessing information on a given item from a variety of sources frequently produces contradictory information. The challenge is to reconcile such differences to achieve comparability. **Triangulation** is one method of managing contradictory information. In this process, information on the same item is obtained from at least three different sources, followed by speculation on potential reasons for any data variances (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010). For instance, consider the collection of information on the import penetration of mangoes as a percentage of total consumption
in a range of Asia–Pacific countries. Triangulation may highlight that some statistics are based on value, while others are based on volume, and some sources include both fresh and dried mango and others do not.

**Begin margin-definition**

**Triangulation** a commonly used strategy when multiple methods or sources of data are applied to address the same question.

**End margin-definition**

Comparability may be undermined by a lack of functional equivalence. Functional equivalence refers to the degree to which similar activities or products in different countries fulfil similar functions (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010). Many products perform a different function in different markets. For example, in Australia and New Zealand, bicycles are primarily used as a social activity, while in countries such as Vietnam and China, they are a major means of transportation. In Vietnam, however, as the middle class becomes more affluent, bicycles are increasingly being used for recreation, while electric motorbikes are becoming more prevalent for transportation.

**The process for secondary research: evaluate, validate and rank**

Secondary data provides valuable information which can shape and influence international business decisions. However, this data must be evaluated for accuracy and its reliability validated, otherwise any analyses may prove to be flawed and detrimental to effective business decision making. In today’s global environment, the online
environment provides an extensive range of information and information sources, including materials published or posted by institutions, journalists and individuals. Consequently, the challenge is to identify the qualification of the information source. Given the challenges and issues posed by secondary data, six questions should be asked when evaluating it.

1. What was the purpose for the original data captured?
2. Who collected the data?
3. When was the data collected and over what period?
4. How was the data captured?
5. Is the data consistent with data from other sources?
6. Have the variables been redefined or have they remained constant over time?

Asking and answering these questions will help with the process of data validation and determine which sources provide the greatest level of accuracy to guide the analysis. Researchers and managers should always be mindful of the potential value of secondary data or its associated issues.

Multiple-choice question
Multiple-choice question

Q: What key challenges are associated with the use of secondary data?

A – Secondary data is commissioned for a different purpose than the current research problem.

B – Secondary data is often out of date with many countries collecting information on a less frequent basis.

C – Secondary data is costlier than sourcing primary data.

D – Both A and B.

Using primary research in international business

Secondary information alone will rarely prove enough for a comprehensive market study when a company is seeking to internationalise. Although many studies begin by examining a market through a lens of secondary research sources, the findings are usually followed up and confirmed with in-market primary research. International business research, incorporating this information, is needed for a range of reasons at different points of the internationalisation process. At the beginning, firms require information to assess appropriate market entry and identify opportunities and risks. Given the complexity and volatility of the international business environment, fundamental research is needed to inform judicious business decisions. Moreover, companies can gain support from potential local subsidiaries by engaging in primary research in prospective markets.
A key advantage of primary research is that it is tailored to the unique and specific business objectives, thereby delivering timely and relevant information to guide business decisions. Primary research may be qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative research is predominantly exploratory research conducted on a small scale using a specific target audience sample. It is used to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations. Qualitative outputs are narrative descriptions which provide insights into relevant business or consumer issues and are used to develop hypotheses for potential quantitative research. Common collection methods of qualitative research data include focus groups, individual interviews and observation studies. Quantitative research is used to measure attitudes, opinions, behaviours and other defined variables. This type of research assigns a number to represent a variable that can then be analysed statistically to formulate specifics and uncover patterns. Data collection methods are much more structured than those employed in qualitative research, and include various forms of survey instruments such as online and paper surveys, phone interviews and online polls. The two most common approaches to undertake primary research are focus groups to elicit thematic information, and survey methods to capture qualitative and quantitative measures.

**Begin margin-definition**

**Qualitative research** the inductive approaches to building knowledge and meaning, which describe attitudes, opinions, behaviours and motivations of research participants, and provide insights into a research problem.
**Quantitative research** data collected in numerical order to identify statistical significance or trends.

**Focus groups**

Prior to commencing a large-scale quantitative market research project, many organisations will undertake exploratory research that is qualitative. The **focus group** is one of the most popular research techniques for this purpose. Focus groups involve loosely structured discussions among a target group of eight to twelve participants, where qualitative data is generated through opinions expressed in the group. This form of qualitative research is used extensively within Western populations and is an increasingly useful method for engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

**Focus group research** a research method where representatives of a target audience contribute by participating in an unstructured but directed discussion.

Focus groups are used for many different business research applications: to generate a hypothesis to guide quantitative research projects, to reveal new product and service opportunities, and to test new product and advertising concepts. Advances in technology have led to an increasing use of online focus groups, with participating
individuals able to connect from anywhere in the world. Once considered an inferior substitute for physical groups, virtual groups are proving to have unique advantages without geographical constraints.

The rules for designing and running focus groups in a domestic setting apply equally in an international context. However, the global environment places extra demands on the researcher, notably:

- the importance of a skilled moderator
- the level of engagement between the moderator and the group
- the levels of literacy amongst group participants.

Firms undertaking focus groups in international settings require the use of an experienced moderator. The role of the moderator is to direct the session, discuss and probe feedback, and provide comments to stimulate thematic information that enriches a profile of the area under investigation. Success in an international context is highly dependent upon the cultural competence of the moderator. Local language familiarity, understanding of social interaction patterns and cultural sensitivity are all critical when conducting focus groups. Many countries in Asia have highly collectivist societies. The Geert Hofstede model, dimensions of culture, identifies the role of individualism versus collectivism as a cultural dimension that most characterises differences among people (see Chapter 4). People from a highly collectivist society tend to be more hesitant about criticising ideas or concepts or sharing their views when compared with people from individualistic societies. In some cultures, gender issues are significant and there may be difficulties with conducting focus groups with women. As a result, constructing the desired group dynamics for focus group research within such societies is often very challenging and requires thorough preparation.
To engage group discussion in an international setting, the following tips are recommended.

- Hire experienced moderators with strong skills in developing group dynamics quickly and with the ability to identify and challenge consensus.
- Ensure the recruitment phase delivers group homogeneity to enable ease of group bonding.
- Be alert to group participants’ non-verbal cues, including body language, gestures and intonation. This form of communication can add emphasis relating to the discussion topic or demonstrate opinion in a manner that cannot be picked up by the recording.

When planning focus groups, an incentive may be desirable for participants to encourage their attendance at the session. In some cases, a fee may be payable, or, in some countries, a meal should be offered at the beginning of the session to allow participants to get to know each other and to encourage a relaxed interaction among the group. Once the session is underway, it is important for the moderator to assist the attendees to feel at ease, and to encourage open and frank discussions related to the topics. The moderator also has a key role to ensure that the opinions of one or a few do not influence the entire group. The use of an experienced local or indigenous moderator ensures group interactions are courteous and discussions are not misread.

The levels of literacy and education of each participant are very important considerations for focus groups. If participants cannot understand what is being asked of them, then they cannot provide answers that accurately reflect their opinion on the topic at hand. Research outcomes can be skewed significantly or misinformed if group understanding is limited.
The output of a focus group is generally recorded as a full transcript. The participants are de-identified, and the information is aggregated. Technology applications are often used to analyse and present the themes from the group’s discussions. An example of this is NVivo, a software which supports qualitative and mixed-methods research, that is designed to organise, analyse and identify insights in unstructured or qualitative data, such as focus groups and interviews.

**Surveys**

Focus groups are the most popular method for gathering qualitative data, but surveys are the most common method for gathering quantitative data in market research. Survey research uses a cross-sectional approach to study specific characteristics, such as the opinions, behaviours, attitudes, motivations and beliefs of a sample population at a point in time. Surveys are conducted by phone, mail, online and face to face.

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**Survey** a quantitative research instrument where a relatively large number of people are asked a standard set of questions, posed in the same way each time, to extract specific data from a particular target group.

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The design and development of an appropriate questionnaire is the first step in constructing survey research. In the second step, the target population for the study is defined and selected, ensuring that a major representative sample is taken. Once these
two steps are completed, the process of data gathering by questionnaire can commence. Data is acquired, aggregated, analysed and interpreted, forming the body of material from which the results are concluded, and the findings are reported.

Surveys are a powerful tool for keeping up to date with individual market trends and changes. Accurate survey research can lead the company to success while poorly planned research will deliver inferior information. Surveys require the direct engagement of individuals. Individuals differ by culture, education level and attitudes, therefore the choice of survey approach and its instrument needs to be designed for the given international market. Three critical factors must be considered in developing a survey instrument:

- instrument design
- construct equivalence
- measurement equivalence.

**Instrument design**

The selection of the research instrument depends on the research design, applicability and cost. The most popular survey instrument for gathering primary data is the questionnaire. As in domestic marketing, the wording and sequencing of questions in an international research questionnaire are critical. Further, there are significant challenges that must be addressed when designing and implementing multi-country research projects to ensure comparability of survey-based results across multiple languages, cultures and contexts. A cross-national survey instrument is influenced by cultural and political sensitivities. In some countries, surveys related to consumer behaviour studies omit questions relating to national government and leadership, as
these subjects are inviting undue scrutiny from authorities and not helpful to directly understand consumer buying behaviours.

**Research instrument** a measurement tool designed to gather data to answer the research question.

In cross-national research, measurement and comparability issues centre around the question: are the phenomena in countries A and B measured in the same way? Likewise, the equivalence or comparability of data collected across countries is a key issue when making inter-country comparisons. For informed analysis to occur, data should have the same meaning across all countries being studied. Biased information or disparate information leads to ambiguous or even flawed conclusions. Therefore, construct equivalence and measurement equivalence is considered.

**Construct equivalence**

Construct equivalence relates to whether an object, concept or behaviour serves the same purpose and achieves the same salience in all contexts and cultures being studied (Hult et al., 2008, p. 1030). Ensuring construct comparability is a pre-requisite for testing multi-country differences. Neglecting to establish data equivalence in cross-cultural studies can create bias in the empirical results and any inferences that are made. A failure to acknowledge and correct for construct discrepancies often leads to
unfounded results. There are three aspects of construct equivalence recommended in the international research process: functional, conceptual and category equivalence.

**Functional, conceptual and category equivalence**

Functional equivalence refers to the extent that objects and behaviour take the same role or function across cultures. For example, is a bicycle a mode of transport or a recreational vehicle in the country under study?

Conceptual equivalence refers to the extent to which the attitudes towards the concept or behaviours are the same across cultures. For example, is the ownership of a refrigerator a symbol of status or just a necessity?

Category equivalence refers to the extent to which the same classification scheme can be used for the same concept and behaviour across cultures (Hult et al., 2008, p. 1030). Socio-demographic characteristics and classifications may differ from country to country; for example, the term ‘nuclear family’ includes parents and children in one society but in another culture the classification includes extended family as well.

**Measurement equivalence**

In multi-country research it is necessary to ensure measurement equivalence. Measurement equivalence addresses the comparability across different populations of the operationalisation of the constructs, such as the wording, scaling and scoring of measures (Hult et al., 2008, p. 1035). To establish the reliability and validity of items used to measure theoretical constructs, there are three critical components of measurement equivalence that need to be addressed: calibration equivalence, translation equivalence and scalar or metric equivalence.
Calibration, translation and scalar equivalence

The establishment of calibration equivalence is needed to ensure that units of measure are converted correctly between cultures in the research survey. Calibration equivalence reflects equality between physical and perceptual measures across cultures (Hult et al., 2008, p. 1035). Typical calibration equivalence problems relate to monetary units, exchange rates, units of weight, distance and volume measurements. For example, Australians use the metric system for measuring distance in kilometres and liquid volumes in litres. In the US, however, the standard system used measures distance in miles and liquid volumes in gallons. Calibration is required to identify and agree a standard unit of measure for the study.

The next focus should be ensuring translation equivalence by confirming the research instrument and stimuli items are translated appropriately from one language into another. This ensures that items are aligned to the same constructs in different populations. Translation equivalence reflects the conveyance of identical meaning from culture to culture (Hult et al., 2008, p. 1035). While high-quality translations are sometimes difficult to obtain, careless translations can lead to fundamental errors. Two key methods exist to minimise translation errors in international research: forward-and-back translation and parallel translation.

Forward-and-back translation is the most commonly used method for the establishment of translation equivalence. This two-phase process enables researchers to check language, and more importantly, to assess compatibility of concepts between cultures. As an example, in an Australia–China study, the questionnaire initially is translated from English to Mandarin, by an accredited English-to-Mandarin translator, whose native language is Mandarin, the target language. In the second phase, an
accredited Mandarin-to-English translator, whose native language is English, translates
the Mandarin version back to English. This version is then compared with the original
survey to uncover any translation errors. Some caution should be taken in focusing on
semantics, as literal translations of the measurements have the ability to become stilted
and lack the naturalness required for concept understanding (Hult et al., 2008, p. 1035).
This two-step process is repeated until an acceptable degree of convergence is achieved.

**Begin margin-definition**

**Forward-and-backward translation** the procedure in which a document is first
translated from one language to another, then translated back
into the original language to confirm reliability and accuracy of
the translation.

**End margin-definition**

**Parallel translation** employs multiple interpreters to independently translate the
same questionnaire. A committee of translators compares each version and the
identified differences are then reconciled for the survey instruments. The parallel
translation process is considered costlier than the forward-and-back translation
process.

**Begin margin-definition**

**Parallel translation** the procedure in which multiple interpreters are employed
to independently translate the same questionnaire and the
results are reviewed for consistency.
To achieve scalar equivalence, survey respondents must understand the measurement of scales in the same way. In cross-national research, pre-planning prevents errors resulting from inadequate scalar equivalence. First, respondents in some countries may not be as familiar with various scaling or scoring formats as those in other countries. Many surveys typically have questions for 'agree/disagree’ or 'likely/unlikely’ statements using a Likert scale to record responses. In Australia, it is common to use a five- or seven-point scale, while a ten or twenty-point scale is common in other countries. Comparing results from surveys using different scales requires the application of equivalence. Likewise, researchers need to ensure that the responses to questions by respondents from different countries have the same meaning and interpretation. Cultural or social values and experiences may influence the way a target group record their responses, and researchers should note that significant scores in one country are not necessarily significant scores in another country.

International researchers need to take steps to ensure that any differences found between cultures are considered when constructing the survey instrument. This is so participants’ responses truly reflect the phenomena of interest and are not simply a reflection of culturally influenced values or a misunderstanding of the scaling measure. When employing a semantic differential scale or a Likert scale, international researchers must test the significance and appropriateness of the scale anchors, in terms of the intended respondents, and adjust it as necessary. In some countries, ‘1’ on a scale of 1 to 5 is perceived to be the best or top score and '5' to be worst or lowest, while the opposite is true in other countries. In an Australia–China study, a pre-test phase identified that Chinese managers did not adequately understand the scale anchors
‘agree/disagree’. As a result, the anchors were changed to ‘definitely true’, ‘somewhat true’, and ‘not at all true’.

Understanding and planning for the features of each research instrument is critical to achieving equivalence. If researchers can demonstrate that the measures used are calibrated consistently across groups and that the meanings taken from the items are equivalent, the results of the study have greater validity (Hult et al., 2008, p. 1036). Pre-testing a survey is often the best solution to remove any issues. While the pre-testing process takes time and speed is often critical when collecting data, commencing a survey in the field without undertaking this step is highly undesirable.

**Survey samples and sampling**

Once the survey instrument is complete and equivalence has been achieved, the researcher must develop a sampling plan. The ultimate validity of research outcomes or findings is greatly impacted by the efficacy of the sampling plan. The sampling strategy must be comprehensive in its construct and thorough in its implementation to prevent inaccurate or incomplete findings. Techniques to achieve effective sampling are applicable in both the domestic and international contexts, however, the international environment requires researchers to take additional elements into account, including balancing the similarities and differences among selected countries with the representativeness of cohorts from within individual countries. The validity of research results is highly contingent upon the effectiveness of the sampling plan and the rigour with which it is implemented.

At all times, survey research requires due consideration and appropriate balancing of data reliability, costs and timeliness of process. In multi-country research,
organisations need to determine which countries should be studied. Ideally, research should be conducted in all countries and contexts relevant to proposed operations. However, due to high costs, researchers may consider the use of findings from one country as a proxy for another. One approach to determining the countries to include in a study is to first employ a large-scale exploratory project utilising an omnibus survey, which covers several or many countries. An alternative approach is to choose just a few countries on which to focus. To identify which countries to include, an organisation may group countries using socio-cultural indicators, then choose one or two countries as representative from each cluster. This process can be repeated to include other countries of interest as required.

**Omnibus survey** a quantitative research instrument where companies purchase one or more questions and associated responses from a commercial research agency with access to a large-scale target market database.

There are three core elements to a sampling plan:

- *sampling unit:* the target population being surveyed
- *sample size:* the number of respondents being surveyed
- *sampling procedure:* the method for recruiting the survey respondents.
Sampling unit

A sampling unit needs to be created from the target population; this means the researcher must define the sample. The researcher constructs a set of criteria to be measured and then identifies the minimum level of the population that corresponds to those criteria and thereby creates the research sample unit. For example, a research study on customer satisfaction with a restaurant chain would utilise a person who patronised that food outlet. After defining the sample unit, the next step is to obtain a sampling frame, which is a comprehensive list of the population the sample will be chosen from. Examples of sampling frames include purchased lists, website groups and telephone directories. However, in many situations, particularly in emerging markets, such listings do not exist or are incomplete, inaccurate or lack currency, which can create a level of sampling-frame error. The term ‘incidence rate’ is used by researchers to signify the percentage of individuals who are genuine members of the targeted population. As the incidence rate increases, the chance that an error has occurred in the sampling frame decreases. Developing accurate samples in different countries requires researchers to employ a level of flexibility with the research methods they use.

Sample size

Identifying the sample size needed is the next step in the process. The accuracy of research findings is directly related to and affected by the sample size. The validity and representativeness of findings will improve as a sample size increases, but larger sample sizes naturally incur greater costs. Determining the desired sample size in cross-country research often involves a level of plausible guesswork and the requirement may vary across cultures. Typically, heterogeneous cultures such as India require larger
samples than homogenous cultures like Thailand and South Korea. Diverse cultures tend to exhibit more variance in the traits to be measured than homogenous markets (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010). A sample is often characterised as a small-sized representation, rather like a snapshot or model, of the broader population. In basic terms, the aim of sampling is to employ small units to represent the larger group. Drawing an appropriate sample for a survey is undertaken through two methods: probability and non-probability sampling.

Probability sampling, also called random sampling, refers to the methods that ensure the likelihood of a member of the population being chosen can be calculated. Almost every person in the targeted population is qualified with a known and non-zero chance of being chosen for the sample; therefore, researchers can make statistical inferences about the collected data. Because of this, most researchers prefer some form of probabilistic sampling. In contrast, non-probability methods are more subjective and are constructed to remove or reduce selection probability. An example of non-probability sampling is constantly using the same group of respondents, regardless of the subject matter. Consequently, there is much greater concern regarding the validity of results from non-probability sampling. In China, there are many well-organised research companies that conduct target market research studies with appropriately structured groups based on probability sampling. In other countries, however, the absence of sampling frames makes a non-probabilistic sampling procedure the only alternative.
Sampling procedure

The final step in the sampling plan is to establish how to contact prospective respondents to complete the survey. Surveys may be conducted in person, online or over the phone. The factors of cost and available infrastructure in a country can be major determinants in the research approach. Cultural considerations may also impact the preferred recruitment process. In business-to-business projects, for example, Chinese professionals are often reluctant to complete survey research over the phone so in these cases, undertaking the survey research face to face would yield significantly better results.

Data collection

Once the sampling plan is complete and implemented, the in-field data collection process can commence. There are a range of challenges which may impact the collection of primary data. These can relate to both the respondents and the investigator.

Respondent-related issues

The first challenge that may be encountered with respondents is simply non-response. This can result from reluctance of consumers to speak with strangers, from concerns around confidentiality and a backlash from their responses or from other cultural biases. One way to address non-response is to increase sample sizes in certain countries where this issue is anticipated. In China, research projects sanctioned by the local authorities will generally result in greater participation rates.
Two other respondent-related factors that can impact the data collection process are courtesy bias and attempts to reflect a certain social status. The courtesy bias is common in Asia and the Middle East, and refers to a desire to be polite to others. Responses may not be a true or entirely true reflection of the respondents’ opinions or behaviours as they aim to please the interviewer. Some individual populations and cultures are more likely than others to provide socially-desirable answers.

People from more influential groups in society, or from more affluent countries, tend not to exhibit courtesy or a social-desirability bias. While there are no specific measures to avoid such biases, pre-testing the survey as well as utilising a well-trained investigator will assist in minimising their incidence. It may also be worthwhile to incorporate questions that measure personal tendencies such as social desirability (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010).

Investigator-related issues

Engaging a skilled and experienced investigator is crucial as unmanaged biases or misunderstandings on the part of respondents will impact in-person survey results. The availability of skilled researchers can be a major problem in cross-national research, particularly in developing countries. A lack of supervision or inadequate remuneration may lead to cutting corners or reduced integrity. An example of this could be investigators completing surveys themselves to reduce their workload or ignoring the project sampling procedure. The following actions can be taken to decrease investigator related biases in cross-cultural survey research.

- Match investigators with respondents in terms of cultural background as this may assist in reducing misunderstandings.
• Ensure solid recruitment, training and supervision of investigators.
• Build redundancy into the questionnaire, such as asking the same question in different ways and in different parts of the questionnaire to enable researchers to cross-check the validity of responses.

**Online environment**

Increasingly, organisations are employing non-traditional data collection methods by entering the digital environment instead. While traditional methods of research (focus group and survey) continue to be useful, researchers need to reconceptualise what constitutes relevant connections, and be open minded in employing new technologies to complement existing ones in the data collection process. With the rapid advancement of the use of digital in international markets, researchers need to recognise that the consumer interactive environment is now inclusive of their online activity. It is increasingly apparent that digital platforms will be valuable in delivering insights about the physical and social interactions of various groups.

Surveys are commonly administered online through a range of access points, emails, websites and panel surveys. Email surveys are self-administered questionnaires sent as an attachment or embedded within the email, to be completed by the addressee. In website surveys, members of the website are asked to fill out a questionnaire. If they accept, they are directed to a webpage where the survey is located. A variation of this is the pop-up survey which appears in a new window while the user is browsing the website. These are useful for projects seeking to understand a broad target audience. In panel surveys, respondents are members of an online group where their socio-demographic and behavioural preferences are known to the website owner. When
eligible for a survey, panel members are contacted via email and are asked to complete a password-protected survey (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010).

### Survey methods

*Table 8.2* highlights the advantages and disadvantages of the various survey methods available to researchers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey type</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal survey</strong></td>
<td>• Very high response rate</td>
<td>• Cost intensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Most flexible</td>
<td>• Interviewer bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Visual aids</td>
<td>(gender issues or misinterpretation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Immediate clarification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Data quality control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Most effective in developing countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone survey</strong></td>
<td>• Economical</td>
<td>• Short interview only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• High response rate</td>
<td>• Interviewer bias</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ability to call back to seek clarification</td>
<td>• Requires very simple questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• No visual aids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Mail survey | • Inexpensive  
• (no fieldwork costs) | • Survey cost may be high to achieve the desired response rate |
|-------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Online survey | • Short response time  
• Inexpensive to manage (apart from start-up costs)  
• Use of visual aids  
• Higher degree of sophistication  
• Increased flexibility  
• Error reduction (human)  
• High quality response (compared to mail) | • Representativeness may be low  
• Sampling error  
• Increased likelihood of Non-response bias |

End Table 8.2

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VS icon

Multiple-choice question

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<08–MCQ–03>
Multiple-choice question

Q: What is the principal advantage of conducting primary market research?

A. Primary research is more cost effective than secondary research.
B. Primary research can only be quantitative.
C. Primary research is specifically tailored to the research project at hand.
D. None of the above.

Spotlight 8.1

Shipping Australian seafood to Asia: CMG Australia

The Craig Mostyn Group (CMG) is one of Australia’s leading food and agribusiness companies. Turnover in its seafood division has doubled in the last six years, largely due to thriving demand for two products: the southern rock lobster and the trademarked Jade Tiger Abalone. These products are prized delicacies, especially in the Chinese luxury wedding market where they signify elegance and prosperity. CMG is targeting this luxury market and is seeking to understand end-user behaviours in Shanghai’s competitive wedding sector. To successfully research this market, the company has engaged Chinese firms to develop a market profile and identify expansion opportunities.
CMG’s Chief Executive Officer, Mark Wray, believes that seafood export success is about understanding the market, and ensuring processes enable consistent delivery of the quality and freshness expected of a luxury product. Current achievements result not only from having highly desired products, but also from building business structures to identify and meet customer needs. Their diverse team incorporates key skills in specialised seafood business practices, language and culture, and supply chain expertise to develop crucial distribution partnerships.

With 806 million active accounts for WeChat alone, social networking in China is the primary forum for consumers to recommend products and brands to others. CMG is acutely aware that all supply chain partners need to understand the brand and their products to communicate with their customers. Going forward, the company is committed to developing partnerships and undertaking ongoing market research to achieve their goal of becoming the largest exporter of luxury Australian seafood.

Source: NAB (2016)

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Questions

Spotlight question
1. What types of social and digital research could CMG undertake to gain more knowledge and build their understanding of the seafood market segments in mainland China?

There is a range of responses students may present. Suggestions include:

- mapping the buyer journey
- mapping buyer ‘trust’ points
- mapping buyer ‘pain’ points.

2. Consider the research process to assess ‘buyer trust points’. Why might this be important for CMG to undertake?

CMG needs to conduct online research to understand the buyer persona of their customers. The buyers in China are constantly in touch with all types of seafood brands, local and international. Each of these touchpoints may affect, increase or decrease their consumer trust in the brand. The key for CMG is to build consumer trust and be the brand of first choice. Positive consumer connections are generally achieved through branded websites rather than traditional mediums, such as advertisements in newspapers or on mainstream television.
Challenges and issues in international business research

Conducting international market research requires a detailed approach to planning new market entry, and to identifying the opportunities and issues for a firm. Research is a central activity for businesses managing the uncertainties and dynamic changes occurring in the global environment. When a firm expands domestic business operations into a foreign market, the uncertainties become more prominent and decisive action is often required.

Understanding the set of actions required, and the appropriate reactions to key challenges and issues is often connected to a time imperative for managers. International business managers experience cultural, political and legal differences when operating in foreign countries. Consequently, business research in cross-national settings involves additional considerations when compared to domestic business research. A priority for researchers is to reveal how such inter-country differences translate into different consumer habits, preferences and behaviours. As a result, such research underpins effective decision making when organisations start to internationalise.

Coordinating international research

Cross-national research projects demand careful coordination and planning to validate the research efforts. Coordination of research activities delivers benefits in terms of timeliness, cost management, centralisation of communication and quality control. Two main issues central to the success of an international study are the timely coordination
and planning of the research. The first relates to who will coordinate the research and the extent to which research is centralised or decentralised within an organisation. The second relates to the decision to engage either professional external research services or utilise inhouse research resources. If the decision is to employ an external research company, the preparation of selection criteria is required to guide the choice of either a large international research firm or select a locally-operated one.

The choice of a centralised or decentralised strategy is influenced by the research focus in terms of who will use and who will be impacted by the research outputs. This consideration speaks to those located in head office and those in local subsidiaries within the countries under investigation. The head office for a firm usually favours standardised data collection, sampling procedures and survey instruments. Local user groups within subsidiaries prefer country-customised research designs that recognise the nuances of their local environment (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010). Cross-cultural researchers are faced with a choice between emic and etic research approaches.

The emic approach to research focuses on the uniqueness of each country, and emphasises the importance of studying its individualities and characteristics. Attitudinal phenomena and values may vary from country to country and must be identified through culture-specific measures. However, country-specific studies with inferences made about cross-national similarities and differences are generally subjective in nature. An international researcher may consider tailoring the research approach in various countries to suit the national culture and more accurately represent the findings in each nation. This may be at the expense of comparing results across multiple countries. For example, a recent mango field study, conducted in Australia and Vietnam, used on-farm interviews and observations to understand the farming culture
and the tasks involved in a typical day on the farm in each country. In Australia, on-farm interviews were conducted, and farmers were asked to go about their normal activities. In Vietnam, this approach was not possible without disrupting the standard household order. In the Mekong region, the researcher was treated as a visiting guest and the whole family was involved in the study. A further issue to resolve was that the local culture where females and children are viewed as inferior to male family members, notwithstanding that the women and children complete most of the farm work. To capture accurate observations, the researcher needed access to the women. To enable this, the researcher gave the males a role to play in the project; they were issued with video cameras in advance and asked to record the on-farm interviews with the women to capture the completion of the daily responsibilities.

The etic approach is primarily concerned with recognising universal attitudes and behaviours across cultures and nations. According to this model, thoughts derived in one nation are potentially universal and may be applicable to other nations. If this assumption is legitimate, such measures make comparisons across nations feasible and objective. Proponents of this school of thought include Geert Hofstede, the prominent cultural researcher, and many psychologists and international marketing professionals.

To gauge such phenomena requires culturally unbiased measures. For instance, there appears to be a convergence in consumer preferences across cultures for many goods and services (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010). Therefore, consumer preferences could be studied from an etic viewpoint. The buying motivations behind those preferences, however, often differ substantially across cultures. Hence, a cross-country project that examines buying motivations may demand an emic approach. There are strengths and
weaknesses associated with either approach and the researcher should be mindful when planning the research design.

The terms emic and etic were introduced into anthropology in the 1960s by linguist Kenneth Pike (1967). He argued they should not be perceived as opposite approaches, rather they describe the problem of cross-national comparability from two different perspectives. Table 8.3 outlines each approach’s strengths and challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Begin Table 8.3</th>
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**Table 8.3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Emic approach</strong></th>
<th><strong>Etic approach</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td>Permits an understanding of the way in which a specific nation or culture is constructed.</td>
<td>Provides a broad perspective about different events around the world to ensure cultural differences and similarities can be recognised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assists the researcher to understand how individuals behave and why they behave in the way they do.</td>
<td>Techniques for recording differing phenomena are available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
<td>Subject to systematic bias, which occurs when individuals represent or misinterpret their own behaviour.</td>
<td>Easy to overlook the differential aspects of cultural impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subject to arbitrariness, which refers to the subjective status of scientific knowledge.</td>
<td>The definition of the phenomena variables being studied may itself be culture-bound.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The only point of entry, since there are no other ways to begin an analysis other than by starting with a rough, tentative etic description.

• A comparison of selected cultures which allows the researcher to meet practical demands, such as financial or time limitations.

End Table 8.3

With increasing globalisation, the need for comparison and generalisation across nationalities is a core focus in most business research studies. Multi-country studies have therefore tended more heavily towards the etic approach, with an emphasis on similarities and parallels, but they have sought to alleviate the problems of comparability by establishing cross-cultural equivalence, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Nonetheless, to make the research study relevant and acceptable to local users, organisations need to recognise the individualities of local cultures. Ideally, survey instruments developed for cross-country market research projects should encompass both the emic and etic approaches (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010). Strategies used to balance these conflicting demands include:

• involvement of all relevant parties, such as from head office and local subsidiaries, from the initial planning stages of the research

• a contribution by all parties in the funding of the research

• ensuring hypotheses and objectives are agreed to by all involved
• collecting data in two stages by initially capturing it from a country-specific pool of psychographic statements, followed by using a standardised-survey instrument, which contains measures that have been country customised from the stage 1 research.

In some cases, coordination is implemented by the research agency that is hired to run the project. When markets differ greatly, or when researchers vary from country to country, the organisation will often prefer to coordinate the project (Kotabe & Helsen, 2010).

**Key issues in international business research**

Researchers must be aware of the presence of biases that may impact the validity of research findings, whether through survey or experimental research methods. One of the most recurrent sources of bias in this context is the concept of social desirability. In simple terms, **social desirability bias** refers to the tendency of participants to respond to research questions in a manner that will be viewed favourably by others or will portray them in a certain social status, rather than choosing responses that are reflective of their true feelings. This bias often comes to the forefront in studies involving sensitive social or personal matters such as religion, politics, current affairs, personal relationships, drugs and alcohol.

**Social desirability bias** the tendency of a research respondent to answer questions in a manner viewed as more acceptable by peers rather than as reflective of their real feelings.
While there are no guaranteed ways to eliminate such biases, the following measures are usually employed to minimise their impact:

- incorporating a socially desirable scale in a survey instrument wherever possible
- careful wording and use of more indirect questioning in interviews
- thorough pre-testing of the survey instrument
- use of an experienced interviewer to examine and probe issues to confirm the participants’ responses
- collection of data through methods that do not require the presence or involvement of an interviewer
- repeating the same or similar questions in a survey or interview at different places to cross-check responses.

In some cases, it might be worthwhile to incorporate questions that measure social desirability tendencies.

**Cultural nuances**

There is a range of cultural barriers encountered when undertaking business research in an international context. The challenges are particularly apparent in developing and emerging nations. Language is a significant challenge in cross-country research studies. In regions like South Africa, where there are over 1000 languages, it would be cost prohibitive for researchers to translate questionnaires for diverse populations. In some places, it is unacceptable for women to conduct personal interviews with men, or vice versa. In other countries, during religious holidays or events, research activities must be
suspended until the period has passed. Cultural taboos in conversations, either business or personal, such as revealing your personal wealth to another person, can inhibit the data gathering process and undermine the validity of the research outcomes.

Historically, researchers have assumed that the prepared discussion guide for a focus group or in-depth interview should be the same in each country under study, to ensure they are comparing like with like. However, in many cases, discussion guides need to be modified to obtain the same information. For example, Pacific-Island focus-group participants require more warm-up time and do not feel comfortable moving directly into specific research questions; and more time is required reassuring Thailand participants about privacy issues versus New Zealand participants. In certain regions, it is advantageous to match the ethnicity of the interviewer with the group being interviewed.

**Political influences**

In some countries, the law requires the research firm to register and purchase a permit to perform a research study; in a few cases, the government may also require a copy of the research instrument to ensure the study’s alignment with its policy and purposes prior to giving approval. This can slow the process so time to obtain the relevant permits and needs to be factored into a project’s timeline. Further, administrative corruption is a common feature in developing countries. Researchers may be faced with illegal searches and the confiscation of their study materials if the commissioned research firm does not obtain the appropriate approvals. In some instances, where low socio-economic communities are present, the market research can be highly dangerous due to the presence of criminal gangs threatening researchers with violence or
extortion. Civil war and political unrest in certain parts of the world can also present issues for research teams.

**Engaging an international research agency**

Enlisting the services of experienced research professionals is often essential in foreign markets since skilled experts will have a great capacity to deliver research objectives. Therefore, appointing a reliable and trustworthy local research partner in each country involved in the study is often crucial to the success of the research. Access to expert local market knowledge can mitigate many of the challenges involved in conducting research internationally. Local research firms possess a high level of local market understanding, such as knowledge of optimal research participation rates, local customs and technical expertise. Occasionally, engaging with local research firms is necessary, such as in China, to gain access to the market and navigate government bureaucracy. Timely, focused and unique consumer data is critical to a business seeking to understand a foreign market. Obtaining appropriately qualified research information can facilitate market entry and expansion opportunities, whereas an ill-informed choice of a research agency, inadequate information and poorly interpreted data can seriously damage a business’ goals and strategies. A company’s selection of an agency should be based on scrutiny and the screening of possible candidates.

The key advantage of using a professional research agency relates to governance and quality. A professionally accredited research agency will ensure research is undertaken ethically and complies with the legislation of the country under investigation. They will ensure that the respondent feedback received and the
conclusions drawn are fully objective. International research firms, with different organisational structures, include:

- local agencies in the market under investigation
- national agencies with overseas offices or associated firms
- national agencies that subcontract field work to an agency in the market under investigation
- national agencies with experienced foreign staff
- global organisations with multiple international offices.

Integrity, credibility and experience are three important criteria in selecting a research agency. Integrity is measured by reputation within the research community, and adherence to professional research codes of conduct. Credentials, or suitability of the research firm, relates to the agency’s current standing in the market. The agency should demonstrate up-to-date knowledge of the relevant sector or superior technical experience and capability related to the collection of data. Finally, the level of experience speaks to the number of years in business, qualifications of staff, ability to provide client testimonials or referrals to validate their experience, and the scope of previous research problems undertaken.

Cost is a crucial factor in the selection process. Generally, international research is more expensive than domestic research. Infrastructure in developing nations is lacking, making the cost of gathering data more expensive. Other costs need to be factored into an international study, such as the cost of multiple translations, coordination across multiple countries and long-distance project management. However, managers should be cautious about using cost as the sole means of judging the merits of competing research agencies. Seeking to reduce costs by such means as the
use of inappropriately small sample sizes or inexpensive research methods only increases the potential for inaccurate and unusable findings. It is more critical for firms to review potential research agencies in terms of their understanding of and experience with the firm’s business or at least the relevant wider industry, and their proven capacity to deliver the appropriate information. National and local trade associations and business or market networks often act as valuable sources of referrals in relation to selecting research groups or agencies; for example, a national market research society or a chartered institute of marketing exist in many counties and are reliable sources. Online directories also provide contact details and business synopses for a range of relevant research agencies.

On completion of the research, the agency should provide a comprehensive report on the findings and arrange a meeting to present the research results. The findings should be reported in a way that clearly addresses the research objectives and explores all the areas under investigation agreed at the outset. Opportunity should also be given for the firm to ask questions about the research, raise any questions and ask for clarification on the results presented.

**New market information technologies**

Traditional methods of surveys and interviewing to perform market research deliver credible results. The emergence of new market information technologies is improving the capacity of researchers to build more robust research platforms that capture more detailed data. In a highly competitive age, there is an ever-pressing need to do more with less, to deliver quickly and better than other firms. Technology provides the opportunity to capture larger sample numbers and to provide analysis that breaks
down data into meaningful pieces of information so that informed decisions can be made.

The internet and mobile technology platforms provide an increased access to customer and consumer insights. In some respects, technology has made the job of market researchers a little easier. With the ability to reach target markets at multiple touchpoints and with timely feedback, it is understandable why the online environment has achieved a dominance in data collection. Researchers are adapting to this new, data-rich environment and transforming traditional methodologies with new technologies and techniques.

As the world becomes more globalised, societies are becoming more connected and technological innovations are transforming the way we communicate. However, just as the increased connections reveal our similarities, they also throw our differences into prominence. Increasingly, researchers need to be aware of how to navigate in this complex multicultural world. A dynamic shift is taking place in the international business research sector. Previously, clipboard surveys and focus groups were customary, and the research methodology was time-consuming and arduous. Specific technological changes are utilising computerised modes of data capture, the internet for information access, and data collection software to link information via intranets for business. At a national level, improvements in basic communication infrastructures are impacting both consumers and firms, and providing new opportunities to undertake business research. Despite all the advances in market research over the past two decades, the objectives remain the same: capture insights from customers and consumers, and respond in a manner that will manage market entry risk, increase sales and grow market share. Ultimately, the research is about profiling the market, the
customers and the consumers better. Continuing developments in technology underpin these processes.

**Begin margin-definition**

**Research methodology** the process used to collect information and data in a research study.

**End margin-definition**

**Consumer panel data**

Consumer panels capture large data sets that continually record consumer purchases in long-term studies. GfK, Taylor Nelson Sofres and Nielsen are examples of marketing research organisations that provide this type of panel data. Panellists remain in these studies if they continue to meet the criteria of the research agency that hosts the panel. One approach to the collection of household level data that requires panellists to present an identification card at the checkout ensuring information is captured each time the household member shops. An alternative approach is to place in-home scanners to record purchases when panellists return home from a shopping trip. More detailed information including intended use, as well as when and where they make purchases, is also captured.

**Single-source data**

Single-source data is continuous data that measures various characteristics of an individual consumer based on information from many sources. The advances in
technology has created the ability to ease the research process by shifting data collection online. Attention is now being turned towards further technological development and the need to produce a standardised approach to create a single-data collection platform. For example, the approach could be the measure of media and marketing exposure, and purchase behaviour over time for the same individual or household. Researchers and those collecting information across businesses have traditionally utilised several online survey tools independently to gather data and generate insights. This results in data that is siloed within and across departments, and presented in a range of formats. For example, feedback from an individual customer could be in more than ten different places. When different parts of the same business rely on different data sources, this can inhibit collaboration, result in errors, and impact information needed to facilitate new market introduction of products and services. Unless this information is readily accessible and open to sharing and assessment, it loses much of its strategic intent.

To fully optimise the impact that corporate data provides, firms often develop a single business-wide collection platform. Setting up and standardising a single-insight repository allows managers within the business to access information for a specific business purpose. For example, the procurement division will be focused on product packaging and format, whereas the R&D team will require information captured from consumer feedback regarding taste. A central business-wide research platform enables all stakeholders engaged in the strategic business units to be informed and it provides a common platform where information is accessible to the broader business operations.
Online data and social media

Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and blogging websites such as Tumblr, have expanded the landscape in which research is conducted (see Table 8.4). Social media is transforming market research in stimulating new ways. These platforms create environments that yield unfiltered feedback, yet they are considered a validated source for examining business reputation and brand awareness. Researchers can take advantage of the advanced capabilities inherent in social media metrics. Learning to master social media for market research will provide salient information and enhance the knowledge obtained about a potential target market.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social media platforms</th>
<th>Active users (billion/million)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>1.50 b</td>
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<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
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<td>Facebook Messenger</td>
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<td>QQ</td>
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<td>QZone</td>
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<td>Sina Weibo</td>
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<td>Twitter</td>
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<td>Baidu Tieba</td>
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<td>Line</td>
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<td>Pinterest</td>
<td>200 m</td>
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Source: Adapted with permission from Statista (2018).
Social media analytics have experienced a sweeping paradigm shift from humble beginnings nearly a decade ago to a major research source. This segment has taken an active approach by using sophisticated technology to provide actionable insights with the unsolicited data collected. The trend will become more aggressive and methodologically innovative as time goes on. Technology that enables the capture and analysis of what consumers are saying online will continue to be a focus. Social media, with user generated content, are predicted to gain in relevance, and the ability to harness this voluntary feedback will be an important element for international businesses to stay competitive, and deliver products and services that meet market demand.

**Ethics in international business research**

International businesses must consider the planned interactions between the multiple business stakeholders in the research process. Ethical considerations are paramount at all stages of the research process and must be respected within each country. The issue of respect is considered an overarching responsibility; it relates to the requirement that firms researching should conduct their market research in a socially responsible way and in accordance with international research standards. By doing so, more trustworthy information is generated for managers. Since stakeholders have a specific role in the research process, but a different investment in the outcome, ethical considerations in international research can be challenging. The specific areas of focus relate to the four main parties involved in the research process: the respondent, the interviewer, the research supplier, and the firm.
Research strategies should reflect the nature of the information required, and the privacy and confidentiality of primary data should be safeguarded unconditionally. This is often a legal requirement, which may differ between countries. Therefore, particular attention must be given to the legal consequences in the planning, collection and reporting of data. It is unethical to misrepresent in any way the nature of a research study, the information requested or the content of the results. Further the sharing of sensitive information for commercial gain, such as revealing third-party information from a study, is regulated in a few countries. Researchers are required to safeguard the confidentiality of all information captured, to use information only for prescribed purposes and to ensure the destruction of data on completion of the study.

Multiple-choice question

Q: What does social desirability bias refer to?

A – The desire of a research participant to be involved in further research projects

B – The tendency to always be truthful even if responses may offend others
The tendency to provide responses that will be viewed favourably by others

D – None of the above

Working in an international R&D team

Multidisciplinary and cross-institutional project teams feature specialist technical researchers working together to share experiences, information and skills to deliver study outcomes. A major outcome for agribusiness is to achieve strategic benefit from investment in research projects. This involves developing key partnerships, and a more coordinated approach to targeting priority areas of research in conjunction with institutions and overseas partners and agencies.

The challenge for this type of teamwork is the balance of multiple elements, comprising technical skills, the international environment, languages, private and public sector organisations and structures, and individual relationships. Based on the 2013 research of Nancarrow and her colleagues, there are eight key competencies for an international research team that contribute to an effective, high performing multidisciplinary team.

1. a leader who establishes clear direction and vision for the team, while listening and providing support.

2. a documented set of team values, which provide direction
3. a team culture where contributions are valued and consensus is fostered
4. appropriate processes and communication channels in place to deliver the outcomes
5. quality research design informed by internal and external feedback
6. recruitment of researchers who demonstrate multidisciplinary competencies, including team functioning, collaborative leadership, well-developed communication skills, and professional knowledge and experience
7. promotion of research autonomy while respecting individual roles and integration of research activities
8. promotion of personal development through appropriate training, recognition and opportunities for career advancement.

Agribusiness research, industry development and technical capacity remain a high priority for the Australian federal and state governments.

Source: Nancarrow et al. (2013).

<insert img0803>

Questions
1. A new research project is just starting. eBay would like to understand the current Australian consumer journey with their brand over a 12-month period starting in two months. You are the leader and are required to design and recommend the top line areas to be investigated. List the research areas and what types of research methods may be suitable.

The students could identify the buyer journey for eBay shoppers by breaking down the following areas:

- problem identification (what are the consumers looking for?)
- information search (how do they find what they are looking for?)
- alternative evaluation (what is the secondary choice?)
- decision making
- post-purchase behaviour.

Researching these areas can be undertaken by using qualitative and quantitative measures. The student can consider surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews, or observation studies of online consumers, incorporating the use of eye-tracking technology.

2. Consider the same research project above. Now you are required to recruit specialist researchers and form a team for your research project. What types of specialists are required in your team?

The range of answers will vary but should include researchers with experience in:

digital and social media research, focus-group facilitation, and survey design and implementation, including campaign tracking.

End vitalsource
Reporting and communicating research results

The objective of business research is to deliver a finding, or a set of findings related to solving a business challenge or issue, and then to convey that information to stakeholders for making informed business decisions. Regardless of the research outcome, if the final report assists the parties involved to formulate appropriate business strategies, the research can then be judged beneficial.

To achieve the full potential of the study, the report must speak to all stakeholders in the target audience, not only to a few interested parties. It is important to keep in mind that different audiences will have different interests and levels of understanding when evaluating the research outputs. Some audiences will have a solid background in the evaluation and will want to know specific elements related to the findings. Other stakeholders will be more interested in the snapshot report, which provides an overview of the key findings, rather than the specifics. A researcher needs to determine if each audience member is interested in the detailed hard facts or a more anecdotal narrative of the evaluation findings at a higher level.

When reporting research, several key points must be covered. First, the background, aim and scope of the study should be clear to the reviewer. This should identify why the research was conducted, what the questions the research is seeking to answer were and what the research outcomes will be used to inform. Then, the methodology should be described. What type of research was undertaken, what instrument was used and what was the sample size; for example, a focus group with ten
people or a larger-scale survey with a sample of 500 consumers. The detail in the methodology will help reviewers in their assessment of the research outputs.

Next is the statement of the actual research results in either a richly themed format or a mix of quantitative and qualitative information. This section should be clear, factual and comprehensive. The research report should then include an analysis, interpretation of findings and discussion relating to the implications of the findings. The research results section should not simply reiterate the results, rather it should provide critical reflection upon the results and the processes of data collection, especially in relation to the research questions.

Finally, the report should provide a conclusion, including how the study met the research questions, describing any challenges encountered in the study, and then stating clear, objective and actionable recommendations. Misleading or inaccurate reporting of information can create unrealistic expectations, and can put businesses at risk of unnecessary commercial harm. Follow-up procedures are an important component of all research studies and are generally undertaken to increase the overall effectiveness of the research effort. They can be conducted for several reasons:

- to review any new developments
- to further explore gaps identified in the current project
- to fulfil research promises
- to ensure compliance with institutional and government protocols
- to ensure milestones are being met
- to thank participants for their time
- to debrief stakeholders.
Follow-up studies may be conducted when time and cost are constraining factors that make ongoing longitudinal studies unfeasible. In some cases, follow-up may be conducted after the original research; this would be to ascertain if an intervention has had the desired result and to gauge the level of impact the change has generated. Follow-up research activities are often necessary and in some cases ongoing in international business operations. To ensure the reviewers have the appropriate information, the suggested research and time frame can be proposed in the recommendations section.

**Spotlight 8.3**

**Fresh produce innovation in export markets: challenges and opportunities**

Australian broccoli growers wanted to enter the Japanese market. First, they needed to understand and profile Japanese purchasing behaviours relating to vegetable and broccoli consumption, and then collect recommendations for the export of Australian broccoli to Japan. Desktop research was conducted to provide an overview of the current market, food sufficiency and consumer landscape in Japan, with data captured from a range of sources including trade journals, empirical studies, publications from Japanese government departments and Australia government informants. A quantitative in-market study was also used to gain an understanding of consumers’
vegetable habits, to examine key purchasing preferences related to consumption and to profile the Japanese broccoli consumer.

The exploratory study first involved computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI) of respondents and then employed an online questionnaire to investigate who purchased broccoli, establish the frequency of purchases and to profile the consumers’ socio-demographics. The survey instrument was developed in English, translated to Japanese and then back translated to English for confirmation. It was found that the dynamics of changing consumer behaviours, transformations in the retail trade environment and government interventions all play significant roles in shaping the characteristics of the Japanese market.

Four key insights into understanding the Japanese consumer of vegetables and broccoli were identified in the study. The study had six recommendations to build an understanding of Japanese consumer attitudes and motivations towards broccoli purchasing, and to advance the competitive position for Australia’s successful market entry into Japan. The analysis of the data captured from the in-market study enabled the Japanese broccoli consumer to be defined. Through this research phase, it was reasonable to propose that, with further research and collaboration with a supermarket chain, Australian broccoli would have an entry platform on which to build consumer acceptance and a sustainable market uptake in Japan.

Source: Adapted from RIMS No. 44665 Understanding Vegetable and Broccoli Consumption in Japan. Reproduced with permission of Griffith University.

<Insert img0804>

Questions
1. What research insights would be most helpful to increase the uptake by consumers in Japan of Australian broccoli?

Information relating to but limited to include: socio-demographics, purchase frequency, product attributes.

2. This was a new market for Australian broccoli exports. What secondary information would be available on-line to assist exporters to understand the Japanese market more broadly for fresh vegetables?

There is a range of information including Australian and Japanese Government statistical offices. Consider the Bureau of Statistics, export data from Australia and the import data from the Japanese Government. Information from the Japan Census would provide data about consumer and household spending.
Summary

The chapter opened with a discussion on the importance and relevance of international business research undertaken by the Australian Jamaica Blue brand to understand cafe patrons, and grow its business in mainland China.

**Learning objective 1:** Understand the international business research process.

Many companies do little research before entering a foreign market so that often their market entry and expansion decisions are made only after a cursory assessment.

International research is usually more formal and in-depth than domestic studies; six steps were highlighted as important when undertaking international research. The first step is defining the research problem, which is essential because a properly formulated research problem will underpin meaningful and actionable research results. The next five steps are: determining the information needs and output requirements; developing the research design; collecting the data; analysing and reporting; and presenting the findings. While not dissimilar to the domestic market research process, there are unique challenges in the international context, including: structuring the appropriate research design, availability of infrastructure and accurate data; time and cost implications; coordination of multi-country studies; establishing comparability; and managing language and cultural nuances.

**Learning objective 2:** Characterise secondary sources of information in international markets.

The collection of consistent information can be difficult in a multi-country environment. Attention was paid to locating appropriate secondary information. The internet
provides a rich source of secondary data gathered by government, research and private agencies. However, importance should be placed on information quality, including the reliability, validity, timeliness and comparability of such data, as it was not collected to answer the researcher’s current question. Various types of secondary data are considered in: selecting foreign markets for entry, estimating demand for products and services, and assessing the interconnectedness between a home market and foreign markets.

**Learning objective 3:** Examine approaches to undertaking primary market research.

Primary data collection in an international environment is fraught with difficulties. The importance of research instrument pre-testing and ensuring equivalence across countries was highlighted. The discussion outlined that primary research can be both qualitative and quantitative in nature, with focus groups and surveys the most common techniques for each type of research respectively. Technological advances are increasingly allowing greater access to more consumers online; it is facilitating and expediting research across the globe.

**Learning objective 4:** Appreciate the challenges and issues associated with conducting international business research.

In the international context, the key challenges faced by researchers include political, economic, legal and cultural differences. To make cross-country comparisons meaningful, firms need to adequately manage and coordinate their market research projects with an international lens. Engaging local research firms makes it easier to implement changes based on the results, and can also uncover country-specific individualities that cannot be discounted with over-standardised measurement
instruments. Engaging a professional research agency in a foreign market, rather than relying on inhouse services can significantly improve the quality and validity of the research outcomes.

**Learning objective 5**: Outline reporting methods to ensure effective communication of research results.

A research study is only meaningful if the results can be communicated clearly with the level of detail relevant to each stakeholder. The chapter concluded by providing an overview of the critical elements of research reporting. These include presenting the results in a concise and factual manner, providing an interpretation and discussion around the results in relation to the research problem, delivering a core set of insights and actionable recommendations, as well as key areas of follow up activities.

**Revision questions**

1. Describe and explain the six steps in the international research process.
   1. define the research problem
2. Researchers encounter a few challenges when collecting secondary data. Describe at least three of these challenges.

The efficacy of secondary information is underpinned by the quality of the data. This may present several challenges for the researcher.

The process of interpretation and analysis must be rigorous, and a review of data sources and criteria should be evaluated in the first instance, including qualification, accuracy, reliability and comparability, to ensure the validity for the data’s use.

Data discrepancies in terms of accuracy or equivalence may arise for several reasons, such as the way a unit of measure is defined, the frequency with which data has been captured, and the level of national industrialisation and taxation structures in the country the research is conducted. In some cases, the specific data may be missing or does not exist.

3. An Australian business is wanting to launch a new bike internationally. Provide step-by-step advice as to what issues they need to consider and the steps they should take in designing a primary research activity for a foreign market.

- determine which country to enter, consider secondary data sources
- understand what the product is used for in the country
- design the primary research approach (select a focus group or survey)
- prepare a research brief, including aim, purpose, background and outcomes to the research
- consult with local subsidiaries or research firms for involvement
- monitor and evaluate the research process.

4. What are the key advantages and disadvantages to the emic and etic approaches in cross-cultural research.

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<tr>
<th>Emic Approach</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Permits an understanding of the way in which a specific nation or culture is constructed.</td>
<td>• Subjected to systematic bias, which occurs when individuals represent or misinterpret their own behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assists the researcher to understand how individuals behave, and why they behave in the way they do.</td>
<td>• Subject to arbitrariness, which refers to the subjective status of scientific knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Etic Approach</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provides a broad perspective about different events around the world to ensure aspects of cultural impact. cultural differences and similarities can be recognised.</td>
<td>• Easy to overlook the differential aspect of cultural impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Techniques for recording differing phenomena are available.</td>
<td>• The definition of the phenomena variables being studied may itself be culturally bound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The only point of entry, as there is no other way to begin an analysis than by</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Begin Table
starting with a rough, tentative etic description.

• An etic comparison of selected cultures allows the researcher to meet practical demands, such as financial or time limitations.

End Table

5. Follow-up procedures are an important component of all international business research and are generally undertaken to increase the overall effectiveness of the research effort. Outline at least five reasons why this is conducted.

- to further a goal in a study
- to review any new developments
- to further explore gaps identified in the current project
- to fulfil research promises
- to ensure compliance with institutional and government protocols
- to ensure milestones are being met
- to thank participants and respondents for their time
- to debrief stakeholders.

End vitalsource

R&D activities

Begin margin-content
You are the marketing director for an Australian manufacturer of beer and wine. Your executive board has asked for a preliminary market scan to consider internationalising the firm. How would you go about quantifying the opportunity?

The following are suggested approaches:

a) Consider and write a list of the appropriate secondary information that would be useful for your report.

b) Collect retail trade data for beer and wine purchasing in Australia and your prospective countries for the last five years. Calculate per capita consumption for your country and compare the findings with other countries. Identify any trends and seek to understand what accounts for possible differences. Which countries present as beer markets and which are wine markets? Describe what the relative market position for beer versus wine over time is for each country?

In your answer, you will need to explain the following:

- where you will find this type of information.
- what your main criteria is for selecting sources of information.
- what your unit of analysis is in your study.
2. Airbnb is often portrayed as a game changer for the hotel industry. Describe the use of research and its role in their success. What recommendations would you make for further research activity? Explain your reasons.

The following links provide insights to assist:

- Airbnb
  www.airbnb.com
- ‘Airbnb market research part 1: who’s aware of Airbnb’
  www.ljresearch.co.uk/airbnb-market-research
- An analysis of proprietary data in thirteen global markets of Airbnb and hotel performance
  www.str.com/Media/Default/Research/STR_AirbnbHotelPerformance.pdf

3. Research and describe the role of the Asia Pacific Research Committee (APRC) and how this institution links with global networks (www.aprc-research.com).

The APRC was established in 2009 by Australia, China, Japan and South Korea. The APRC is a key network for exchanging information and knowledge regarding market research and related industries in the Asia–Pacific region. See the APRC Info Sheet (http://aprc-research.com/wp_aprcres/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/APRC_info_sheet-2013.pdf) for full details for the APRC.
Vietnam exports to mainland China and Hong Kong

This study presents a strategic analysis of China and Hong Kong as import markets for fresh mangoes to provide a better understanding of prospects for horticultural trade between Vietnam and China. The principal objectives are to understand import patterns and trends, assess key factors driving import trade, identify market growth opportunities, and assess the current competitive position of Vietnam.

China is a potentially lucrative and large market for Vietnamese mangoes. Hong Kong is one of the main import markets for mangoes and serves as an important gateway to China. While Hong Kong is a well-established market, there is limited knowledge regarding China’s mango market and its related import trends. By examining these issues, this study provides an informed perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing Vietnamese mango exporters in accessing the Chinese market.

Methodology

The study employed a two-phase research approach. The first phase comprised a detailed review of trade research, and country statistics provided government statistical information for China and its special administrative region of Hong Kong. Official international data on mangoes is captured by government agencies under a common harmonised code (HS 08045030), and represents an aggregation of fresh and dried mango statistics.
The second phase consisted of in-market business interviews with company executives engaged in the mango trade. Interviews were conducted onsite and covered issues such as market segments, distribution channels, seasonality of supply, importer opinions and consequential drivers of export opportunities for Vietnamese mangoes. For consistent information capture, a question checklist was developed and used to support interviews.

**Mainland China**

Despite a population of nearly 1.4 billion people in China, mango import figures in 2013 were equivalent to just 6 per cent of those in the US and less than half in countries such as Canada, the UK, Germany or Saudi Arabia (Tradedata, 2015). According to published Chinese government statistics, the country imported 31,621 tonnes of mango in 2013, accounting for 2.1 per cent of global imports.

The official data does not fully reflect actual imports owing to unrecorded product inflows from Hong Kong and Vietnam. For example, Chinese statistics in 2013 for mango imports from Vietnam were recorded at 11,760 kg, but sources suggest mango exports are far higher than documented (Nguyen, Nguyen & Tran 2013; Smith 2014). Moreover, during a 2014 Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research study into Vietnam’s tropical fruit sector, several key informants reported that between March and June mangoes are regularly shipped by road from southern Vietnam to China.
Import trends

Official figures for 2008–13 essentially reveal a flat line trend for mango imports into China (refer Figure 8.1). Official imports increased sharply in 2009, peaking at 33,000 tonnes, but have since stabilised around the 25,000 tonne mark. In value terms, however, imports continued to grow due to rising prices, reaching about US$12 million in 2013.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Begin Figure 8.1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Figure 8.1 Total mango imports in mainland China by volume, 2008–13</td>
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<td>Note: k = thousand; HS Code 08045030, fresh and dried</td>
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<td>End Figure 8.1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In the context of high economic growth in China, it is interesting that mango imports have remained relatively stable. This indicates that demand is not very responsive to income, a finding that is corroborated by consumption data collected in three large cities (Beijing, Shanghai and Chongqing) and three coastal provinces (Guangdong, Fujian, and Shandong) (FAO, 2009). According to the data, mango has an income-elasticity of demand of 0.32; meaning a 10 per cent rise in household income generates an estimated increase in demand of just 3.2 per cent. It is likely that the income elasticity of demand for the country is even lower.

Recent trends in mango imports are a consequence of demand conditions and supply factors. Mango imports peak during the Chinese harvest season (March to June). At that time, Myanmar has an abundant supply of mangoes that are sold across the
border at very competitive prices and there is an unreported cross-border trade in Vietnamese mangoes. Imports from Thailand and the Philippines do not follow a clear seasonal pattern; with both countries supplying small volumes throughout the year. Imports from Taiwan and Australia, in turn, exhibit seasonality like their exports to Hong Kong (refer Figure 8.2). Taiwanese mangoes are sourced from May to September, with volumes peaking in July and August. Supplies from Australia are concentrated during the months of December and January, although additional consignments may be sourced in November and February.

Begin Figure 8.2

<Insert img0806>

Figure 8.2  Top four total mango imports in mainland China, 2013

Note: k = thousand; HS Code 08045030, fresh and dried

End Figure 8.2

Quarantine regulations pose significant challenges for exporters, reducing their willingness or ability to ship mangoes to China. For example, a lack of vapour-heat treatment capacity has limited the ability of the Australian mango industry to increase exports to China (Fruitnet, 2010). Infrequent bans on imports from certain origins due to non-compliance with phytosanitary requirements have also impacted negatively on imports.

The way trading transactions are structured exposes exporters to significant price risks, further discouraging significant engagement with the Chinese market. Mango exports to China are typically conducted on a consignment basis, with prices
determined when importers sell the fruit, not when an export contract is signed (Fruitnet, 2015).

Seasonal import patterns

Mango imports into China have a marked seasonal pattern, with May and June imports far exceeding those during other months of the year (refer Figure 8.3). May and June accounted for 79 per cent of annual imports in 2012, and 86 per cent in 2013 (Tradedata, 2015). The figure for these months would be higher if cross-border inflows from Vietnam, which are concentrated during the second quarter of the year, were recorded. During other times of the year, imports are low, rarely exceeding 400 tonnes per month.

Begin Figure 8.3

[Insert img0807]

Figure 8.3 Total mango imports in China by average monthly price per kg, 2013

Note: HS Code 08045030, fresh and dried

End Figure 8.3

Exports to China are severely constrained by seasonal production patterns and available export surpluses in supplying countries. In China, mangoes are harvested from March to June, which coincides with the main production season in most countries with legal access to its market. From July to February there is limited supply from regional exporting countries. In-season mangoes from Taiwan are available from July to September, though the country has only a small surplus for export. Likewise, only limited quantities can be sourced from Australia during its November to January export
season. Australia exports less than 10 per cent of its production and tends to prioritise markets with low-entry barriers such as Hong Kong, Singapore and New Zealand.

Seasonality in import prices is closely linked to the level and origin of imports (refer Figure 8.4). CIF (cost, insurance and freight) import prices are very low in May and June, when significant volumes of cheap mangoes can be sourced from Myanmar. In July and August, the more expensive Taiwanese mangoes gain a significant market share. Prices peak in November or December and remain very high until March. During this period, Thailand is the main origin, followed by the Philippines and Australia, the three most expensive sources of mango imported into China. The fact that prices are high and imports low during this period is a strong indication that exporters face considerable supply constraints.

Begin Figure 8.4

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Figure 8.4 Total mango imports in China by average monthly CIF price per kg, 2013

Note: HS Code 08045030, fresh and dried

End Figure 8.4

Exports to China are severely constrained by seasonal production patterns and available export surpluses in supplying countries. In China, mangoes are harvested from March to June, which coincides with the main production season in most countries with legal access to its market. From July to February there is limited supply from regional exporting countries. In-season mangoes from Taiwan are available from July to September, though the country has only a small surplus for export. Likewise, only limited quantities can be sourced from Australia during its November to January export
season. Australia exports less than 10 per cent of its production and tends to prioritise markets with low entry barriers, such as Hong Kong, Singapore and New Zealand.

Seasonality in import prices is closely linked to the level and origin of imports (refer Figure 8.5). CIF import prices are very low in May and June, when significant volumes of cheap mangoes can be sourced from Myanmar. In July and August, the more expensive Taiwanese mangoes gain a significant market share. Prices peak in November or December and remain very high until March. During this period, Thailand is the main origin, followed by the Philippines and Australia, the three most expensive sources of mango imported into China. The fact that prices are high and imports low during this period is a strong indication that exporters face considerable supply constraints.

**Hong Kong**

Hong Kong is a free-trade port with an open economy and very few import barriers. No tariffs or taxes are charged on a range of imported foods including mangoes. As an important market access consideration, exporters do not have to comply with expensive phytosanitary regulations, including fruit fly disinfestation treatments. Mango exporters only need to submit a certificate of fitness for human consumption from the Department of Health of the originating country.

In 2013 Hong Kong imported 23,967 tonnes mangoes, making it the second largest export market in Southeast Asia and the fifth largest in Asia, after Malaysia (58,000 t), Saudi Arabia (49,000 t), the United Arab Emirates (42,000 t) and Yemen (26,000 t). The importance of Hong Kong as an export destination is also linked to its
role as a gateway to the Chinese market. A significant share of mango fruit imported into the region is subsequently re-exported to the mainland.

Import trends

Over 85% of mangoes imported into Hong Kong come from three nearby origins, with the more distant and higher-priced source of Australia accounting for most additional supplies (refer Figure 8.5). These spatial patterns are not specific to Hong Kong: geographical proximity is a major determinant of access to international mango markets; because it enables low-cost transportation by road or sea without major adverse impacts on quality.

Begin Figure 8.5

<Insert img0809>

Figure 8.5 Top four total mango imports, Hong Kong, 2013

Note: HS Code 08045030, fresh and dried

End Figure 8.5

Seasonal factors influence import trends. The Philippines accounts for more than two-thirds of mangoes exported to the region, reflecting exporters’ ability to deliver minimum volumes throughout the year at competitive prices. Taiwan is the second largest origin country, supplying an affordable source of mangoes from June to September (refer Table 8.5). Australia is the third largest supplier of mangoes to Hong Kong. While Australian mangoes are expensive because of high domestic market prices and distance to market, the country supplies premium quality fruit during the Christmas and Chinese New Year festive periods, two points of relatively high demand in Hong Kong and very limited supply across Asia.
Vietnamese mangoes have a marginal presence in Hong Kong. No mangoes were exported to this market in 2009. Less than three tonnes were exported in 2010 and levels peaked in 2012 at 207 tonnes, valued at US$323,080, but representing only 0.9 per cent of total imports in volume terms. Hong Kong is Vietnam’s main official destination market, which underlines the relatively small size of the Vietnamese mango export trade. In 2012, Hong Kong accounted for 29 per cent of official exports of mangoes, 26 per cent in 2013 and 19 per cent in 2014. These figures do not include cross-border flows to China (they do not feature in China or Vietnam’s customs data) so the official statistics fall into a grey trade category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vietnam mango exports to Hong Kong (volume &amp; CIF price/kg), 2010–13</th>
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<td><strong>Vietnam mango exports to Hong Kong (kg)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam mango exports to Hong Kong (kg)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share of official Vietnam mango exports (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Share of Hong Kong mango imports (%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average CIF price, Hong Kong Vietnam (US$/kg)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average CIF price, Hong Kong Philippines (US$/kg)</td>
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<td>Average CIF price, Hong Kong Taiwan (US$/kg)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average CIF price, Hong Kong Thailand (US$/kg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average CIF price, Hong Kong Australia (US$/kg)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** HS Code 08045030, fresh and dried

Vietnamese mangoes are slightly more expensive than those from the Philippines and Taiwan, but generally are more affordable than competing fruit from
Thailand. Though price is an important determinant of market access, quality considerations should also be factored into any analysis of competitive advantage, alongside end user and consumer preferences, and business linkages between exporters and importers.

Between 2008 and 2013, annual mango imports into Hong Kong varied between 18&500 and 24&500 tonnes, with no significant upward or downward trend, although growth potential should not be discounted (refer Figure 8.6). While this market has showed no consistent growth over the last decade, the value of mango imports has been rising due to increased purchases from Australia driving up average annual prices.

It is possible that a lack of growth in Hong Kong’s imported mango market may be due to either a stagnation of mango as a fruit of choice by consumers or a tightening of controls around the re-export trade to mainland China. Perhaps it is a combination of both.

**Seasonal import patterns**

Mango import trade in Hong Kong peaks from March to June, with a second, smaller peak in December and January (refer Figure 8.7). These seasonal patterns partly mimic
peak harvest time in Luzon, the main mango production area in the Philippines (Briones, Turingan & Rokatoar, 2013). As this source dwindles, Taiwanese mangoes from June to September and Australian mangoes from November to January assist in stabilising supply.

**Begin Figure 8.7**

*<Insert img0811>*

**Figure 8.7** Total mango imports in Hong Kong by average monthly price per kg, 2013

*Note: HS Code 08045030, fresh and dried*

**End Figure 8.7**

Demand factors also play a key role. Despite high prices, there is a significant increase in imports in December and January due to strong consumer demand during Christmas and Chinese New Year festive periods, when Hong Kong importers rely largely on off-season consignments from the Philippines and much costlier supplies from Australia.

Despite considerable monthly variations in supply, CIF import prices are fairly stable between February and October (refer Figure 8.8). There is a significant increase in prices only when Australian mangoes come into the market. These patterns provide strong indication that the cost of importing mangoes largely reflects price levels in countries of origin, particularly the Philippines, rather than quantity of fruit entering the market.

**Begin Figure 8.8**

*<insert img0812>*
In any given month, Hong Kong has a undiversified portfolio of supplying countries, importing mango from one or two main origins. Hong Kong relies largely on the Philippines to meet its consumption needs at different times of the year, with Taiwan and Australia providing additional supplies during their respective export windows, June to September and November to January.

**Conclusion**

This study highlights the complexity of the mango import market in mainland China in contrast to the well-established market of Hong Kong, with experienced professional supply chain partners willing to engage in the trade of mangoes. The main conclusions from the study are outlined below.

- Most mainland Chinese and Hong Kong chain intermediaries (wholesalers, importers, distributors and retailers) could not recall the last time they had seen a mango from Vietnam.

- The buoyant Chinese market environment provides a strong opportunity to increase smallholder welfare by further expanding mango supply opportunities.

- Opportunities exist for supply of first-grade quality mangoes to the retail grocery sector, and for second-grade mangoes to the food service and processing sector.
• Regional cross-border markets near Vietnam may provide an opportunity for an increased trade of Vietnam mangoes.

• A planned program to extend the production season will provide a larger window for seasonal opportunities to supply lucrative markets.

• In recent years, Vietnamese mango exports to Hong Kong have peaked during the September to December months, not during the April to June main harvesting season, further supporting the need to evaluate extended season production R&D.

Source: Adapted from RIMS No. 46530 Vietnam Mango Exports to mainland China and Hong Kong. Reproduced with permission of the University of Adelaide, ACIAR and Griffith University.

Questions

1. What are some of the key factors that may influence import trends of mangoes to mainland China and Hong Kong?

2. Despite Hong Kong’s liberal import environment and proximity, mango exports from Vietnam to Hong Kong and China are low. Discuss what factors may be causing this situation.

3. What could Vietnamese mango exporters do to better access these markets?

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Useful websites
## Useful websites

### Country Information

#### UN Yearbook of Industrial Statistics


A comprehensive database of industrial statistics.

#### UN Statistical Yearbook


A comprehensive description of social, economic and environmental conditions and activities.

#### OECD Economic Surveys

[www.oecd.org/economy/surveys](http://www.oecd.org/economy/surveys)

The latest reports and surveys by country.
The Economist Intelligence Unit Unit Country Reports

www.eiu.com/home.aspx

The EIU presents global business intelligence.

UN Demographic Yearbook


The statistics on various topics for over 230 demographics.

ADB, statistics

www.adb.org/data/statistics

The economic and poverty statistics of Asian and Pacific countries.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAOSTAT)

www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data

Food and agriculture data for over 245 countries from 1961 to the most recent year available.
Global Edge

www.globaledge.msu.edu

A comprehensive description of international business questions.

Country Watch

www.countrywatch.com

Ten years of raw data for over 250 variables for all countries.

Centre for International Development (CID)

www.cid.harvard.edu/cidtrade/

A focus on prosperity in developing countries.

DFAT

www.dfat.gov.au

Foreign, trade and development policy advice from Australia.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

www.mofa.go.jp

Up-to-date information about Japanese foreign affairs.
Ministry of Commerce, People’s Republic of China

http://english.mofcom.gov.cn

Information and statistics on China’s regional and foreign trade.

Gove HK, market information and statistics, Hong Kong


A focus on economic and social indicators of Hong Kong’s economy.

UN International Trade Statistics Yearbook


International trade in merchandise, services and tourism statistics.

World Chambers Network

www.worldchambers.com

Business and market data for most countries from 1997–2016.

International Chamber of Commerce

https://iccwbo.org

A focus on international trade and responsible business conduct, with good resources.
International Trade Centre

www.intracen.org

A focus on using trade to improve developing countries’ economies.

Hong Kong Trade Development Council

www.hktdc.com

Online marketplace for all Hong Kong trade.

European Trade Study Group

www.etsg.org

Comprehensive discussions of international trade among universities and research institutes.

Austrade

www.austrade.gov.au

Information on export markets, grants and assistance, and expanding businesses outside Australia.

ADB

www.adb.org

Asian infrastructure statistics.
**WB**

www.worldbank.org

World income statistics.

**WTO**

www.wto.org

Comprehensive description of the global rules of trade between nations.

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### References


FAO (2009). *Demand responses to prices, income and other factors in the Chinese banana and selected tropical fruits markets*. Committee on Commodity Problems,


