

Let's dance... but how? Organising the dance party in export partner groups

Henrik Virtanen

Unit of Business Economics and Tourism
Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulu, University of Applied Sciences
Raastuvankatu 31-33, FIN-65100 Vaasa
Finland

Phone: +358 20 766 3555, fax: +358 6 326 3512
E-mail: henrik.virtanen@puv.fi

Åsa Hagberg-Andersson

Department of Management and Organization
Hanken School of Economics
P.O.Box 287, FIN-65101 Vaasa
Finland

Phone: +358 40 352 1753, fax: +358 6 353 3703
E-mail: asa.hagberg-andersson@hanken.fi

ABSTRACT

Earlier studies of export partner groups have revealed that a fundamental problem is limping cooperation between the companies in the groups, or using a dancing metaphor; the partners dance poorly or not at all with each other. Without cooperation the idea of export partner groups is undermined. Cooperation is strongly connected to the organisation and coordination of the groups. A change in organisation implies that the roles of the actors in the groups change. The question is how? How is it supposed the partners should dance, and how should the party be organised?

The purpose of this work-in-progress paper is to further elaborate the problem and challenge of organising export partner groups. In the study informants who have functioned as export managers in different export partner groups were interviewed. Problems and opportunities connected to organisation and different organisational forms of the export partner groups were discussed. The results show that different organisation forms have different benefits and fulfil different aims. In an export partner group, the final choice of organisation depends, e.g. on the companies' line of business, their products and services and the aim of the group. The conclusion is that there is not a single best way of organising export partner groups or organising the dance party.

Keywords: nets, export partner groups, organisation of cooperation, business dancing

Work-in-progress paper for the 25th IMP Conference in Marseille 2009

Let's dance... but how? Organising the dance party in export partner groups

ABSTRACT

Earlier studies of export partner groups have revealed that a fundamental problem is limping cooperation between the companies in the groups, or using a dancing metaphor; the partners dance poorly or not at all with each other. Without cooperation the idea of export partner groups is undermined. Cooperation is strongly connected to the organisation and coordination of the groups. A change in organisation implies that the roles of the actors in the groups change. The question is how? How is it supposed the partners should dance, and how should the party be organised?

The purpose of this work-in-progress paper is to further elaborate the problem and challenge of organising export partner groups. In the study informants who have functioned as export managers in different export partner groups were interviewed. Problems and opportunities connected to organisation and different organisational forms of the export partner groups were discussed. The results show that different organisation forms have different benefits and fulfil different aims. In an export partner group, the final choice of organisation depends, e.g. on the companies' line of business, their products and services and the aim of the group. The conclusion is that there is not a single best way of organising export partner groups or organising the dance party.

Keywords: nets, export partner groups, organisation of cooperation, business dancing

INTRODUCTION

During recent years the emergence of different forms of networks between companies has grown rapidly. Companies form different kinds of networks, with different purposes (Möller & Svahn, 2003). Relationships to other actors in a network can be seen as channels to resources (Hammarkvist, Håkansson & Mattsson, 1982) and knowledge (Möller & Svahn, 2006), which would be unavailable to the actors without the relationships. All relationships with other actors are filled with opportunities, formed by complex interactions as adaptations (Brennan & Turnbull, 1999; Brennan, Turnbull & Wilson, 2003; Hagberg-Andersson & Grønhaug, 2009) and investments within and between the companies over time (Håkansson & Ford, 2002). The actors can have both common and conflicting interests, but the relationships can still be rewarding and effective (Axelrod, 1984).

Companies have direct or indirect relationships to other companies in a network (Håkansson, 1982). Some of these companies are chosen for more intensive cooperation. Earlier literature has tended to consider networks as given contexts, rather than a structure, which can be deliberately designed (Lorenzoni & Lipparini, 1999). There is accumulating evidence that actors are intentionally trying to create what in research have been called e.g. business nets (Möller & Svahn, 2006), cooperative nets (Nyström & Hanttu, 2007), new service development nets (Heikkinen et al., 2007), strategic nets (Möller & Svahn, 2003) and value nets (Möller & Rajala, 2007).

The development of a network can follow an evolutionary life cycle path. Cooperation between actors evolves eventually from previous business relations and frequent personal interaction between them over a long period of time (Håkansson, 1982). Cooperation is a natural prolongation of previous activities. Intentional nets, on the other hand, are restricted groups of autonomous but interdependent actors, which are deliberately designed for specific purposes; both strategic and operative in nature. Intentional nets may also besides companies involve non-profit actors, such as governmental organisations. For an export partner group, or in other words an export circle, the term net is usable, as it refers to an intentional net of a restricted group of actors. Export partner groups can facilitate cooperation among SMEs with the intention of internationalisation (Nummela &

Pukkinen, 2004). The logic behind these nets is that the SMEs should be able to achieve more on foreign markets when acting as a group and not as single actors, with resources being pooled and costs as well as risks are being shared.

According to Finpro (2009) an export partner group usually includes four to six SMEs, led by a joint export manager. The aim is to initiate exports of the companies' complementary products or services to usually one named target market (or a few). Despite the potential benefits, cooperation does not always emerge evolutionary. Instead some level of intentionality is needed. In export partner groups cooperation is facilitated by external actors (e.g. project leaders, export managers, authorities etc.). Cooperation facilitation may be needed because of the lack of awareness of the benefits of cooperation among potential group members and/or their inability to find potential partners to work with. Export partner groups are organised as projects, and are funded by e.g. international, national, regional and local financiers. The project period lasts for usually one to three years.

Research on export partner groups has previously, to a limited extent, been carried out both in Finland and internationally. The idea of export partner groups, in the form they are used in Finland, seems not to be that common globally. Research published on export partner groups is therefore limited. Issues of interest in export partner group research have been e.g. development of internationalisation capabilities (Chetty & Patterson, 2002), the role of economic and non-economic relations (Welch et al., 1996), the development and structuring process of groups (Wilkinson et al., 1998) and finally identification of factors influencing the establishment and development of groups (Ferreira, 2003). Research in Finland has mainly focused on evaluation of activities and impact of several Finnish export partner groups (Nummela, 1999; Nummela & Pukkinen, 2004, Virtanen, 2008).

Virtanen's (2008) study of three Finnish export partner groups revealed some problems when it came to the focal groups' activities and the results of the activities. One fundamental problem was partly limping cooperation, or using a dancing metaphor; the partners danced poorly or not at all with each other. Without cooperation the idea of export partner groups is undermined. Cooperation is strongly connected to the organisation and coordination of the groups, and can be considered as an area of improvement.

Based on the results, Virtanen (2008) suggested alternative forms for organising export partner groups. A change from the common organisation form to alternative organisation forms implies that the role of the export manager and the role of the companies in the group changes. The question is how? How is it supposed the partners should dance, and how should the party be organised? This was not further discussed in Virtanen's (2008) report, and has not been in focus in other research of export partner groups.

Möller and Svahn (2003) argue for further research on issues of mobilizing and coordinating groups of autonomous but interdependent actors (cf. Ritter, Wilkinson & Johnston, 2004). The purpose of the paper is to further elaborate the problem and challenge of organising export partner groups. The paper aims at extending earlier theory as well as management concepts in the research area. Export partner groups are an important economic-political tool in supporting internationalisation of Finnish SMEs. Research that helps us to develop the activities in export partner groups is in that sense important. Further studies can give us more knowledge on outcomes and implications for the companies in the groups, as well as for third parties.

The paper is structured as follows. In the theoretical part, the reasons behind export partner groups are firstly discussed. This is followed by a discussion of the business dancing metaphor and organisation of export partner groups. In section two, the research method is introduced and the empirical findings, conclusions and managerial implications are presented. The paper is closed with a suggestion for further research.

Cooperation in export partner groups

Governments all over the world utilize a wide variety of programmes to encourage export development. This is also the case in Finland. Creation of networks is among other things in main focus when reading the Finnish Ministry of Trade and Industry's (2004) strategy for support of export and internationalisation of SMEs. One tool to encourage internationalisation and cooperation between SMEs is the use of export partner groups. According to Nummela and Pukkinen (2004) a clear majority of the companies who has participated in Finnish export partner groups regard the impact of the participation as significant. This programme is selected as an example of good practice when it comes to supporting internationalisation in SMEs in the EU (European Commission, 2008).

International business means that the SMEs face different problems. The SMEs' limited resources for e.g. researching, product development, manufacturing, marketing and export have increased the birth of different types of cooperation constellations in many industries. Ebers (2002) discusses motives for cooperation, for example cost reduction. Another motive can be better access to markets, technology, larger economies of scale or a possibility of benefiting from economies of scope (Contractor & Lorange, 1988). For the partners, cooperation can be a less risky and capital demanding alternative, when penetrating new markets. The benefits can also be related to gaining knowledge and learning (Chetty & Patterson, 2002; Nummela, 1999).

The expected future gains keep the parties motivated for ongoing cooperation. Resources are needed from the environment and actors depend on external parties for their activities (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Traditionally resource development has been thought to occur within companies, but to a large extent it also appears to take place between companies (Håkansson & Snehota, 1995). In today's' business world companies might be granted resources if they accept to be involved in intentional nets e.g. export partner groups.

In order to improve their competitive strength the SMEs can try to rationalise the division of work between them and try to put together and develop their limited resources. Through division of work the SMEs can concentrate on their own strengths. When combining and merging each company's strengths, the cooperation partners can offer competitive entiereities on the international markets. This is something they hardly achieve alone. The SMEs can also build up temporary cooperation constellations (projects) to rapidly take advantage of upcoming possibilities on international markets.

Research on cooperation with customers and suppliers is rather extensive. Cooperation with complementary companies has been given less attention by academics (Wilkinson, 2006). Cooperation with complementary companies focuses on potential synergy effects between firms who have common interests for markets, customers or suppliers.

Business dancing

One metaphor to characterise interfirm relations is that of a marriage (see e.g. Dwyer, Schurr & Oh, 1987). The use of this metaphor is rather limited to capture the relations in an export partner group. In this context the marriage metaphor would imply polygamy. Of course, different types of marriages can be successful. The marriage in an export partner group, i.e. an intentional net would also be characterised as arranged and for some of the partners nearly as a love affair, since the project period in export partner groups is not that long.

Another metaphor is that of business dancing (see e.g. Wilkinson & Young, 1994). We suggest that the dance metaphor is better in capturing the changing relations in export partner groups. This metaphor is used e.g. when describing the role of external facilitating actors in export partner groups (Wilkinson et al., 1998). Facilitating actors arrange the dance party, they invite the dance partners, they play the music in order to get the partners to dance and afterwards it is up to the partners if they want to continue to dance on the same or another dance floor or if they go separate ways.

In the beginning, the facilitators' role is to identify potential members and potential cooperative activities and ensure that the "right" types of SMEs have the opportunity to join the party. Then the function is to call to meetings, provide a neutral forum for discussions and contact, collect and share information and finally function as a broker to other key external partners. Ferreira (2003) found in

his research of Portuguese export networks that the facilitating actors gave substantial support in the establishment process. Their role and especially the export manager's role were judged as essential. The facilitators can only go as far as supporting the networking process. It is still up to the individual group members and their willingness to dance to make it work. It seems relevant that special attention should be paid to the roles and activities of the facilitators when government funded export partner groups are in focus.

Organising for success

According to Möller and Rajala (2007) management and organisation of nets involves a balancing dilemma. The balancing act will vary over time as circumstances change. It involves balancing with interdependencies and balancing with tight and loose couplings between actors. It also involves coordination of cooperation, work, responsibilities, dispersed resources and roles. A social dimension puts emphasis on the need for a trusting culture and a unified net identity. A key issue is to share the benefits of the activities, in order to commit the net members and counteract opportunism.

The mix of competitive and complementary companies in an export partner group is problematic (Wilkinson et al., 1998). Finpro (2009) recommends that the SMEs should come from the same line of business, but not compete with each other. On the other hand, if the companies are too far from each other when it comes to products and services, it is difficult to achieve any synergy effects. Striking the right balance is important. Strong compatibility is an antecedent to cooperation, which create better results in an export partner group (cf. Nummela & Pukkinen, 2004). With different niches, different products and services and different customers, i.e. with different points of interest, the need for and benefit of cooperation is undermined. This also means that the idea of export partner groups is undermined.

With compatibility in mind, Virtanen (2008) suggested alternative forms for how to organise export partner groups. A *market oriented* organisation form is commonly used in many export partner group projects, with focus on joint target *markets*. In export partner groups organised according to this form, the companies are aiming at different customers on the target markets. The problem with this organisation is that the companies do not necessarily have to cooperate since they have different customers. The common denominator is that the companies belong to the same group, they have employed a joint export manager and they are aiming at the same market. In the most important activity, or selling, they are acting alone.

A suggestion for overcoming the problems with lack of compatibility and cooperation is to organise the export partner group according to the customers, i.e. a *customer oriented* organisation form. In the customer oriented organisation form the group members are, with the aid from the joint export manager, aiming at the same customers or group of customers. The main focus is shifted from joint markets to joint *customers* (on the same or on different markets). A *system oriented* organisation form takes the idea of the customer oriented approach a bit further. In such a group, a majority of the members function as suppliers to a main firm, i.e. a hub-firm. This organisation is similar to traditional supplier-buyer networks, with the main characteristics of an export partner group included. This form of organisation puts focus on the opportunity to sell whole *systems* or projects to the customers.

The customer and system oriented organisation forms put different demands on the compatibility of the companies and their products and they also put different demands on the necessity to cooperate. In a customer oriented approach the group members still do not necessarily need to cooperate, but the situation creates more natural opportunities for it. In a system oriented export partner group the members are forced to cooperate intensively and strong compatibility between the members is a selection criterion for the group.

The above suggested organisation forms focus more on customers and cooperation. The suggested organisation forms are probably not ideal for all types of export partner groups. Other organisation forms may be relevant, depending on the goals of the export partner groups, e.g. learning.

THE STUDY

The purpose of the paper is mainly explorative, which supports a choice of a qualitative research approach. Qualitative data is rich and holistic, with a strong potential for revealing complexity, nested in a real context. In the study two informants who have functioned as export managers in different export partner groups were interviewed. Their latest missions as export managers were in export partner groups within the areas of products and equipment for professional use at sea and environmental technology. One of the informants has functioned as an export manager in a market oriented export partner group, while the second informant has experience from all the three different organisation forms of groups.

In the interviews the export managers' role and their view of the companies' role vis-à-vis the organisation of the groups was further elaborated. The interviews dealt with two main themes. They started with a discussion around the success factors in organising export partner groups and the export managers' and companies' role in contributing to success. The first theme was in the interviews later related to the different organisation forms. Moving from one organisation to another implies changing conditions, success factors and roles of the actors. The organisational challenges are different. This was discussed as the second theme in the interviews. The interviews took about one and a half hour to complete and were tape recorded for further analysis. The tentative conclusions will be validated by further interviews with other informants, chosen according to a theoretical sampling logic.

Problems and opportunities in organising for success

Problems and opportunities connected to organisation and different organisational forms of the export partner groups were discussed with the export managers. Different organisation forms have different benefits and fulfil different aims. In an export partner group project, the final choice of organisation depends, e.g. on the companies' line of business, their products and services and the aim of the group. The export managers were not of the opinion that there is a single best way of organising export partner groups.

A *market oriented* organisation is relevant when the aim of the export partner group is mainly to penetrate new markets and increase export volume, and not to establish deeper cooperation between the SMEs in the group. The companies should produce their own products or services, i.e. market orientation of an export partner group is not suitable if the group partners are suppliers. A market oriented organisation is relevant if the products and the product technology are simple. Therefore cooperation in e.g. production and product development is not needed. An example would be an export partner group in the food industry.

A *customer oriented* organisation is more efficient than a market oriented organisation since the export manager can focus on joint customers. It is beneficial if the customers also are located on the same market because of changing cultures and conditions when moving from one market to another. The choice of SMEs to the group is important. Competitors cannot participate in the same group since the aim is to find joint customers. A customer oriented organisation is most suited for complementary companies. A customer oriented organisation is useable for the same situations as for a market oriented organisation, i.e. establishment of deeper cooperation is not on the agenda.

A *system oriented* organisation of an export partner group is most suitable within the fields of high technology and knowledge-intensive industries. In these industries we can detect a significant growth in networking activities, and participation in an export partner group is a possible alternative. Networking is due to the fact that no actor alone can master all the technological bases needed in creating value for the end customers. The products, services or solutions must be combined. An example would be an export partner group around renewable sources of energy. A system orientation is more challenging than a market or customer orientation, since the potential customers' needs and the potential networking SMEs must in beforehand be thoroughly recognised. In practice, system oriented export partner group projects usually partly build on existing networks.

In an export partner group, the export manager's role is simply speaking to actively work with pre-sales preparations or to function as a door opener; the rest is up to the companies. The role is slightly changing depending on the organisation of the group. If the products are technologically simpler, e.g. in market oriented export partner groups, the role is more oriented towards selling. In such situations knowledge of the products technology is not needed and the main obstacle in the selling process is to get the customers to like the products. When the technology gets more complex, e.g. in system oriented export partner groups, the need for specific knowledge is increasing and the time from first customer contact to final deal is increasing substantially. Then the role of the export manager has more a social character; to continuously interact with the customers and to build up trust for the products and the sellers. In system oriented export partner groups the export managers is also more preoccupied with getting cooperation between the companies to work.

The role of the export manager is slightly changing also depending on how many culturally and contextually different target markets the export partner groups are working on, especially if the export partner group is lead by one export manager. A possibility is to increase the local presence on the target markets, by involving local export assistants with local expertise and connections to the export partner groups. This demands more resources, but would support the export managers, especially on e.g. complex markets in transition such as in East Europe.

The export managers mentioned a tight time frame as one practical problem in export partner group projects. A project period of maximum three years is often too short to get expected results. A continuation of additional years is needed in order to achieve results, especially in high-technological system oriented export partner groups. It usually takes time to start a business relationship, to develop it and to reach a deal. If the time expires for the export partner group there might not be enough time to reach a deal, at least during the project period.

The export managers wished for more support from the companies and from the project control group. First of all, the export managers are in need of more resources and input from the companies. They need more knowledge, e.g. about products, from the companies in the export partner groups, because they are dependent on the expertise. The support is needed in order to increase the export managers' credibility as a door opener abroad towards the customers. The companies do not always understand this need and they do not always have time for the project, which cause frustration among the export managers. The companies may think that the export manager should move forward in a faster pace according to another rhythm, and they expect results without their input or activity towards the customers. The export manager often feels that there is not enough time and patience for the work that is to be done.

A second important supporting actor is the project control group. The control group is often consisting of members from the project owner, the project financiers, the local chamber of commerce etc. The export managers mentioned that the composition of the group could rather consist of outside experts. These outside experts would add more expertise, e.g. technical and marketing expertise to the group, and this would again increase the export managers' credibility towards the customers.

A possibility with *open* export partner groups was discussed with the export managers as one alternative form of organisation. This would imply that some SMEs could leave during the project period and that other SMEs would join and continue within the group when the others leave. Companies who identify mutual synergy effects and produce compatible products and services have most potential for cooperation. The export group could in this way be an arena for further cooperation in longer lasting relationships after the project between the companies, the customers and other cooperation facilitating actors. If cooperation is the aim, then a short project period is an obstacle. In practice this means that changes in the constellations can happen after the project is over. With a three year project period, the idea with open export partner groups during the project is not relevant for system oriented groups, since the build up of the network needs time. Market and customer oriented export partner groups, where cooperation is looser, gives a better opportunity for the idea with open groups. In such groups it is easier to change constellations when the bonds between the companies are loose.

Dancing in export partner groups

Throughout the years different kinds of relationships in business networks has been studied. The complexity of changing relationships has received less attention. Interfirm relations can be characterised as a marriage (Dwyer, Schurr & Oh, 1987) or as business dancing (Wilkinson & Young, 1994). In both metaphors we have relationships which are characterised by changing conditions to act according to, but also a willingness among the partners to continue with their input according to which resources that are needed. In business relationships (Gadde & Håkansson, 1993) as well as on the dance floor we have unique partners. They have unique resources and they are chosen because the other party feels that they have promising potential that would be interesting to study further.

Business dancing needs the right rhythm and paste. Both dance partners need to follow the same paste. Sometimes the dancers have different temperament, but they need to adapt to the same rhythm. Both need to hear the music, but the interpretation may be different. That is also why they need to practice again and again in order to get an excellent dance program for a competition and for dances to come.

The composition of the band needs to be in balance. We need the singer, the guitar, the keyboard and the drums. Everyone is needed, everyone contributes and everyone needs to listen to the rest in order to contribute to the whole. If we have the best musicians we have the chance of reaching success. We are really lucky if we can get our hands on one of the best guitar players or singers. But, we can also reach success if the band members can learn from each other and create common experience to learn from. Practice makes masters if you begin in early years. And by giving support to each other you can reach new levels in terms of new inspiration and skill. Enough resources are also needed. In order to get a good band you need to pay them enough. If the dance party is not planned well in advance, then the results are not either as good as they could be.

Communication is also needed. Can everybody hear the music? The band also wants to know which songs the audience wants to hear. The dance partners also need to communicate with each other. What should be the dance program and what needs to be changed or improved? If the dance partners have practiced together for several years they also find each others' rhythm quite instantly without words.

The time on the dance floor need to be the precise one in order to give the dance partners enough time to show their strengths and best moves. If the music ends too soon both the dance partners and the audience will be upset. No one will know who won the dance competition, and no one will know the dance partners real ability, because it was all interrupted. That is too sad, both for the dance partners and the audience.

In order to organise successful business dancing all the above mentioned pieces should fall into its right place. The conditions should be organised well, and according to the dancers' wishes and well being. If these conditions are not the right ones, then it will be hard to get the dancers back into the dance floor and continue. The feeling should be right. The dancers want to have a feeling of a smooth dance, towards a successful result. Then they look forward to a new dance and they know that the next dance will be an even better that the previous one.

In the heading of this paper we asked a question; how should the dance party in an export partner group be organised? There is no true answer to this, since it depends on many factors. The organisations discussed in this paper represent different types of dance parties, requiring various types and degrees of coordination, varying from the close coordination of e.g. line or square dancing to a looser rave party. Dances are more or less intensive. They are easier or more difficult and require more or less interaction. Sometimes you change partners during the dance, and sometimes not. Dances can be performed individually, in pairs or in formation and lines. Some dances are free, other require that you follow the rules. Sometimes a DJ is playing the music, and sometimes the music is played by a band with a various number of musicians. The dancers can come and go, and depending on the party they are not always required to dance.

In the future, the concept of export partner groups could be further sharpened. Central development areas are still the choice of organisation form and the choice of the target group. The SMEs are in different phases in their internationalisation process and have different needs when it comes to export enhancing services. The SMEs is a heterogeneous group and the organisation of export partner groups could be further improved. In this study three organisation forms have been discussed. One line of further research could be of pragmatic benchmarking nature, e.g. to actually evaluate different organisation forms and the results of them. Evaluation research has previously looked upon export partner groups as a one-dimensional phenomenon.

REFERENCES

- Axelrod, R. (1984), *Från konflikt till samverkan*, SNS Förlag, Kristianstad.
- Brennan, R. & P. Turnbull (1999) "Adaptive Behaviour in Buyer-Seller Relationships", *Industrial Marketing Management*, 28(5), 481-495.
- Brennan, R., P. Turnbull & D. Wilson (2003) "Dyadic Adaptation in Business-to-Business Markets", *European Journal of Marketing*, 37(11/12), 1636-1664.
- Chetty, S. & A. Patterson (2002) "Developing Internationalization Capability through Industry Groups: The Experience of a Telecommunications Joint Action Group". *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 10(1), 69-89.
- Contractor, F.J. & P. Lorange (eds.) (1988), *Cooperative Strategies in International Business*, Lexington Books, Lexington.
- Dwyer, F.R., P.H. Schurr, & S. Oh (1987) "Developing Buyer-Seller Relationships", *Journal of Marketing*, 51(April), 11-27.
- Ebers, M. (2002), *The Formation of Inter-organizational Networks*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- European Commission (2008), *Supporting the Internationalisation of SMEs. Good Practice Selection*, Official Publications of the European Communities, Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry.
- Ferreira, L.M. (2003) "Walkshoes and Ivory Trade: Two Export Networks in Portugal", paper presented at the 19th IMP Conference, Lugano, Switzerland, September 4-6.
- Finnish Ministry of Trade and Industry (2004), *Viennin ja kansainvälistymisen edistämisen (vke) kansallinen strategia*, KTM Julkaisuja 37/2004, Helsinki.
- Finpro (2009), available on <URL:<http://www.finpro.fi>>. Reference 12.1.2009.
- Gadde L.-E. & H. Håkansson (1993), *Professional Purchasing*, Routledge, London.
- Hagberg-Andersson, Å. & K. Grønhaug (2009) "Adaptations in a Supplier-Manufacturer Network", *European Journal of Marketing*, 43(forthcoming).
- Heikkinen, M., T. Mainela, J. Still & J. Tähtinen (2007) "Roles for Managing in Mobile Service Development Nets", *Industrial Marketing Management*, 36(7), 909-925.
- Hammarkvist, K-O., H. Håkansson & L-G Mattsson (1982), *Marknadsföring för konkurrenskraft*, Liber, Malmö.
- Håkansson, H. (ed.) (1982), *International Marketing and Purchasing of Industrial Goods. An Interaction Approach*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester.
- Håkansson, H. & D. Ford (2002) "How Should Companies Interact in Business Networks?", *Journal of Business Research*, 55(2), 133-139.
- Håkansson, H. & I. Snehota (1995), *Developing Relationships in Business Networks*, Routledge, London.
- Lorenzoni, G. & A. Lipparini (1999) "The Leveraging of Interfirm Relationships as a Distinctive Organizational Capability: a Longitudinal Study", *Strategic Management Journal*, 20(4), 317-338.
- Möller, K. & S. Svahn (2003) "Managing Strategic Nets: A Capability Perspective", *Marketing Theory*, 3(2), 201-226.
- Möller, K. & A. Rajala (2007) "Rise of Strategic Nets – New Modes of Value Creation", *Industrial Marketing Management*, 36(7), 895-908.
- Möller, K. & S. Svahn (2006) "Role of Knowledge in Value Creation in Business Nets", *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(5), 985-1007.

- Nummela, N. (1999), Vientiyhteistyön onnistuminen ja siihen vaikuttavat tekijät – tutkimus Finpron vientirenkaista, Turun kauppakorkeakoulun julkaisuja, Sarja B5/1999, Turku.
- Nummela, N. & T. Pukkinen (2004), Nopeammin, tehokkaammin ja kauemmas? Vientirenkaat kansainvälistymisen tukena, Kauppa- ja teollisuusministeriön tutkimuksia ja raportteja 1/2004, Helsinki.
- Nyström, A-G. & N. Hanttu (2007) “Establishing a New Business Area through Cooperative Nets: The Case of Finnish Mobile TV”, paper presented at The 23rd IMP Conference, Manchester, United Kingdom, 30th August – 1st September.
- Pfeffer, J. & G. R. Salancik (1978), The External Control of Organizations. A Resource Dependence Perspective, Harper and Row, New York.
- Ritter, T., I.F. Wilkinson, & W.J. Johnston (2004) “Managing in Complex Business Networks”, *Industrial Marketing Management*, 33(3), 175-183.
- Virtanen, H. (2008), Promoting Export Cooperation – Experiences from Three Export Partner Groups, Vaasan ammattikorkeakoulu, University of Applied Sciences, Other publications C2, Vaasa.
- Welch, D., L. Welch, I. Wilkinson & L. Young (1996) “A Network Analysis of a New Export Grouping Scheme: The Role of Economic and Non-Economic Relations”, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 13(5), 463-477.
- Wilkinson, I.F. (2006) “The Evolution of an Evolutionary Perspective on B2B Business”, *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 21(7), 458-465.
- Wilkinson, I. & L. Young (1994) “Business Dancing: An Alternative Paradigm for Relationship Marketing”, *Asian-Australian Marketing Journal*, 2(1), 67-80.
- Wilkinson, I., L.C. Young, D. Welch & L. Welch (1998) “Dancing to Success: Export Groups as Dance Parties and the Implications for Network Development”, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 13(6), 492-510.