



Network market and entrepreneurial orientations as facilitators of international performance in born globals. The mediating role of ambidextrous dynamic capabilities[☆]

Diego Monferrer^{a,*}, Miguel Ángel Moliner^a, Beatriz Irún^b, Marta Estrada^a

^a Business Administration and Marketing Department, Universitat Jaume I, Avenida Sos Baynat s/n 12071, Castellón, Spain

^b ESIC Business and Marketing School, Avenida Blasco Ibáñez 55 46021, Valencia, Spain

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Network market orientation
Network entrepreneurial orientation
International performance
Dynamic capabilities
Ambidexterity
Born globals

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to propose an integrating model that can explain firm international competitiveness through the dual lens of network and firm behaviour. The research examines the case of born globals (BGs) created during the last financial crisis in a sample of 306 Spanish BGs using structural equation modelling. Results show that in today's highly competitive and dynamic globalised markets, developing strategic orientations (market and entrepreneurial) in a network context helps build an optimal antecedent interfirm environment. This environment channels values generated through joint efforts to strengthen an individual BG's international performance. Capabilities play an essential mediating role to achieve this effect through the integrated application of dynamic capabilities and ambidexterity theories. Thus, exploratory (adaptation and absorption) capabilities will influence the capacity to exploit knowledge through innovation capability and lead to higher performance. Findings provide practical insights into the hierarchisation of the sources of influence on BGs' performance.

1. Introduction

Traditionally, firms' international performance has tended to be explained by classic internationalisation theories in contexts characterised by moderately dynamic market conditions and large firms, whose gradual entry into foreign markets was often considered an extension of their domestic activity (Bilkey & Tesar, 1977; Cavusgil, 1980; Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). International performance is thus subject to an incremental process linked to variables such as size and experiential knowledge about specific markets acquired by these firms over time (Paul & Rosado, 2019; Ripollés & Blesa, 2021; Wadeson, 2020).

In contrast to this traditional position, the recent literature highlights the growing importance in international contexts of a business phenomenon with distinguishing characteristics: born globals (BGs), which clearly breaks away from the classical determinants outlined above (Etemad, 2021; Paul & Rosado, 2019; Wadeson, 2020). Born globals are defined as recently created SMEs with clear entrepreneurial and international aspirations from the outset (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). These firms are characterised by taking advantage of the opportunities

generated in the markets, opportunities favoured by the open conditions and global competition that govern international markets today (Monferrer, Blesa & Ripollés, 2015). By definition BGs are companies of limited size and foreign experience, as they are recently created companies. Therefore, their capacity to generate new market knowledge to sustain their international competitiveness would be limited a priori (Ripollés & Blesa, 2021; Wadeson, 2020).

How then can these firms of limited size and lesser experiential knowledge successfully perform international business activities so quickly? In the intense continuing debate on what these variables might be three emerging approaches can be considered. First, the international entrepreneurship approach points to firms' entrepreneurial character (Etemad, 2021; Martínez, 2015). The resources and capabilities approach highlights access to knowledge-based resources and capabilities (Koch & Windsperger, 2017; Monferrer, Moliner & Estrada, 2019; Muñoz & Fischer, 2021). Finally, the relational approach focuses on strategic behaviours shared in network contexts (Lusch, Vargo & Gustafsson, 2016; Windsperger, Cliquet, Hendrikse & Srećković, 2019).

However, the literature in this field remains scarce and contains gaps associated mainly with three complementary aspects. First, there is a

[☆] This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: dmonferr@uji.es (D. Monferrer), amoliner@uji.es (M.Á. Moliner), beatriz.irun@esic.edu (B. Irún), estrada@uji.es (M. Estrada).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.08.058>

Received 26 May 2021; Received in revised form 15 August 2021; Accepted 26 August 2021

Available online 2 September 2021

0148-2963/© 2021 The Author(s).

Published by Elsevier Inc.

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

lack of theoretical consensus on the specific and applied conceptualisation of variables associated with these different theoretical approaches (Koch & Windsperger, 2017). Second, there is a lack of an integrative perspective on how to jointly interpret these variables' contribution to the international performance of BGs (Koch & Windsperger, 2017; Lusch et al., 2016; Monferrer et al., 2015), as their effects have tended to be studied in isolation. Taking into account that antecedent effects are considered at different levels, it is especially relevant to offer new contributions concerning the existing tension among network-level and firm-level antecedents of international performance (Aarikka & Rittala, 2017; Amjad, Rani, & Sa'atar, 2020; Forkman, Henneberg & Mitrega, 2018; Koch & Windsperger, 2017; Windsperger et al., 2019; Zafar, Sreckovic, Cliquet, Hendrikse & Windsperger, 2020). Third, there is an absence of empirical support regarding their modelisation, even more so when integrating these different variable levels.

These gaps in the literature motivate the present study. The general objective is to present an integrated model of effects to theoretically define and empirically test fundamental areas of influence on BGs' international performance in a crisis environment through the dual lens of network and firm behaviour. First, the context of the network in which BGs operate is through the formal adoption of strategic orientations based on managing market knowledge and entrepreneurial behaviour (network market and entrepreneurial orientations). Second, at the internal level, through dynamic capabilities development (adaptation, absorption and innovation), ambidexterity theory is defined as factors that foster the individual channelling of value flows generated at the network level from a double exploration and exploitation function (Fig. 1).

In addition, this study is done in a markedly dynamic, complex and competitive international market context of extreme conditions, the recent global economic crisis (Great Recession, 2008), which was a critical test of sustainability in the business sector, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Estrada, Monferrer & Moliner, 2020; Monferrer, Estrada, Fandos, Moliner & Sánchez, 2016). In light of what is expected to be an unprecedented new crisis caused by COVID-19, this may be an ideal experimental context to determine the extent to which these factors were pivotal in maintaining the international performance of BGs created during the crisis of 2008 that successfully overcame these negative conditions (Estrada et al., 2020; Etemad, 2021; Monferrer et al., 2016, 2019).

The paper is organised as follows. First, we present the theoretical framework underlying the hypotheses used to construct the model of the effects of strategic network orientations on BGs' international performance, drawing on the interrelationships among dynamic capabilities.

We then describe the empirical study carried out to test the model and analyse the results. Finally, the main conclusions are presented along with the study's limitations and future lines of research.

2. Theoretical framework: The contexts of the phenomenon

2.1. The network context: Strategic orientations from a relational perspective

The Theory of Economic Development (Schumpeter, 1934) maintains that innovation inherent in entrepreneurial behaviour contributes to positive results and economic development. However, in the current context, dynamics of knowledge and capabilities under hyper-competition mean that innovation must be contemplated through an interfirm collaboration approach (Forkmann et al., 2018; Zafar et al., 2021). Thus, in the context of a complex, dynamic and interconnected market, the importance of business networks is growing exponentially, improving the competitive position of network members thanks to the possibility of accessing knowledge and resources that would otherwise be unavailable if they acted alone (Koch & Windsperger, 2017).

Based on this idea, two main perspectives have traditionally been considered to study business networks and their effects (Irún, Monferrer & Moliner, 2020): the structural and the managerial. The structural perspective explores how network structures and the quality of their relationships influence firms' resources and behaviours (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003; Koch & Windsperger, 2017; Windsperger et al., 2019). The main hypothesis underlying this perspective is that firms with better quality connections and an enhanced structure at the centre of their networks have access to more valuable resources (Koch & Windsperger, 2017; Zafar et al., 2020).

Regardless of the network structure adopted, the managerial perspective focuses on the activities managers undertake to create and shape their business networks. The general assumption underlying this perspective is that simply belonging to a network does not create value for firms; rather, value is only created through the positive and appropriate use of the network's resources (Martínez, 2015; Vissa & Bhagavatula, 2012). The management of business networks through specific tasks designed to initiate, develop or end relationships and to create routines will be a key element in determining the competence of the network and the performance of the firms in it (Monferrer et al., 2015; Ritter, Wilkinson & Johnston, 2004; Slotte & Coviello, 2010).

The main criticism of current research is that it tends to treat relationships as unconnected by proposing strategies to manage each contact individually rather than managing the network as a whole

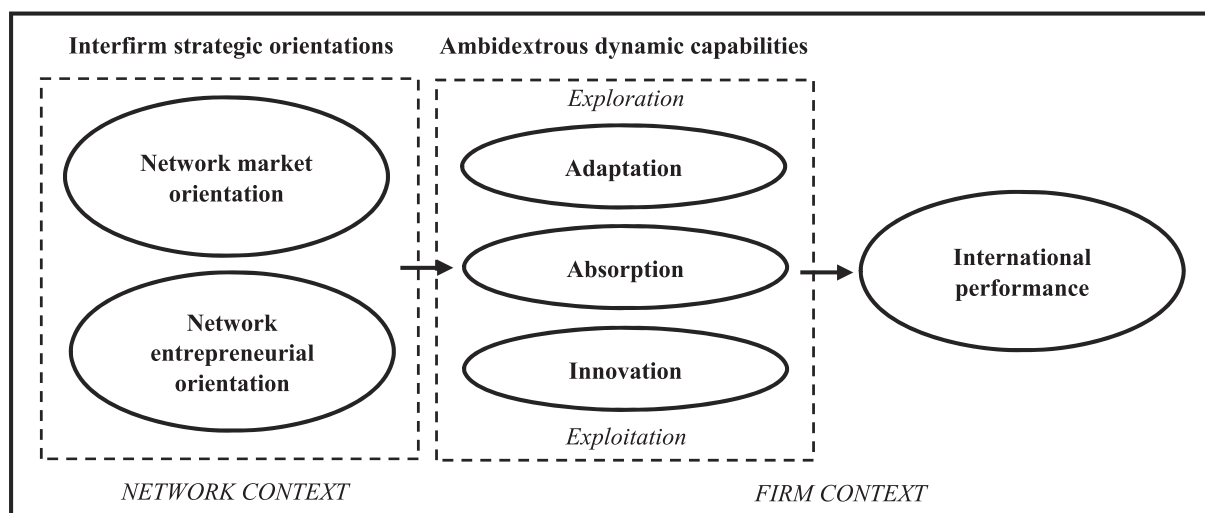


Fig. 1. General causal relationships.

(Ripollés & Blesa, 2021; Irún et al., 2020). Suppose we focus on the individual behaviours in network activities. In that case, we will only learn about the benefits a firm gains unilaterally by taking advantage of its partners' skills and through its activity. We will not discover the benefits derived from the synergetic effects of networking (Blielmel, McCarthy & Maine, 2016). These benefits result from the collective application of processes that all firms adopt as a consequence of belonging to the same network (Irún et al., 2020). Nonetheless, despite recent calls for greater attention to this area of study (Aarikka & Rittala, 2017; Forkmann et al., 2018; Irún et al., 2020; Windsperger et al., 2019; Zafar et al., 2020), there are still considerable gaps in our knowledge about how firms in networks trigger the joint development of management activities to effectively reap the benefits resulting from the synergetic actions typical of these forms of organisation.

In this regard, business networks are understood to participate in self-organisation, applying planned strategies arising from the need to integrate the various network actors' contributions to develop shared benefits (Ritter et al., 2004). In these situations, all network firms will participate simultaneously in managing the strategies that derive from their joint actions, of which the strategic orientation shared by all network firms is especially important (Irún et al., 2020; Monferrer et al., 2015). BGs will try to ensure that all the firms in their network share a strategic orientation favouring their international growth from a market knowledge management and a clearly entrepreneurial stance (Ripollés & Blesa, 2021). In this paper, we argue that jointly developing a market and entrepreneurial orientation in their networks is of crucial importance to BGs.

2.1.1. Network market orientation

In line with what has been outlined above, the importance of relationships in complex, dynamic environments like the current one is crucial if we are to understand firms' success (Irún et al., 2020; Ripollés & Blesa, 2021). Based on this idea, several authors proposed adding this relational component to the traditional theoretical concept of firms' market orientation. Several streams address this issue.

In the first, despite emphasis being placed on the importance of relationships between firms, there is no analysis of market orientation as an interfirm phenomenon in itself, but rather as the sum of the market orientations of individual firms (Beverland & Lindgreen, 2007; Chung, Jin & Sternquist, 2007). For example, in a study targeting the Korean department store industry, Chung et al. (2007) point out that the market orientation of retailers positively influences the market orientation of their suppliers, thereby reducing the latter's potential use of coercive strategies. In turn, the supplier's market orientation increases the retailer's reliance on them, along with the retailer's compliance with their financial obligations to the supplier. Thus, the channel's market orientation will consist of the sum of the individual activities of each member.

In a second stream of authors, we encounter proposals that do attempt to define interfirm market orientation by valuing activities carried out jointly by two or more independent firms. However, these proposals are based on the mere adaptation of seminal behavioural and cultural approaches of individual market orientation. Thus, Elg's (2002) work is based on the three behavioural components of Kohli and Jaworski's (1990) approach, so that network market orientation will involve the generation, dissemination and response to market information produced within the network. Evanschitzky (2007) follows Narver and Slater's (1990) cultural approach. In his proposal, he uses the dimensions that comprise market orientation according to this approach (consumer orientation, competition and interfunctional coordination orientation) to define it within the scope of the network.

Bearing in mind the criticism levied at these two streams, the work of Helfert, Ritter and Walter (2002), on which our research is based, takes a crucial step in this direction from the theoretical specification of a first defining factor. This first factor is relational management tasks and is composed of four dimensions related to four basic behaviours for relational management. Derived from the joint application of market

orientations in the network context, it includes the following: (1) coupling, referring to the shaping of diverse areas (production processes, logistics, delivery and means of payment, products/services) to match the needs and capabilities of the network's members in order to better serve the market (Holma, 2014; Sales, 2014). (2) Interfirm coordination is associated with establishing formal and informal procedures to improve synchronisation of its members' relational activities (da Silveira & Arkader, 2007; Galkina & Chetty, 2015). (3) Conflict resolution, concerning the willingness of network members to take a fair position based on compromise in order to facilitate the rapid and effective adoption of resolutions in any extraordinary situations that could arise while managing relationships (Mwesumo & Halpern, 2016; Van de Graaff, 2016). (4) Exchange, including aspects related to product and services (the exchange of goods or information on product or service specifications, logistics, payment and delivery, and the need for advice about delivered products or services), as well as aspects of a personal nature (building personal relationships that help to improve internal knowledge among members and the development of social bonds), aimed to meet the requirements of all parties (Frankort, 2014; Helfert et al., 2002).

Furthermore, Helfert et al. (2002) add another factor that would act as a precedent to the performance of the relational tasks described above. This is, in particular, resource availability, and concerns the expectation that market-oriented companies will also have to provide financial, informational, physical and technical resources for their relationships, as they value these relationships in terms of the generation and dissemination of these elements (Ritala & Ellonen, 2010). Thus, to develop these relational tasks, the provision of shared resources among the agents would be required (Irún et al., 2020). In this sense, the conceptualisation of the network market orientation itself leads to the proposal of the first of the hypotheses of this study, associated with the causal relationship between the two defining factors:

H1: *Market orientation at the relational level contemplates two chained defining factors: resource availability and relationship management tasks. In this circumstance, the former acts as an antecedent of the latter.*

2.1.2. Network entrepreneurial orientation

Network entrepreneurial orientation can be defined as the promotion of collective routines and activities that open up opportunities for network firms by encouraging joint participation in proactive initiatives to develop innovations and commit to risky projects through the efficient use and combination of new resources (Wincent, Thorgren & Anokhin, 2014). Once again, the main difference between firm-level entrepreneurial orientation and network-level entrepreneurial orientation is that the latter is based on collective participation and the combined forces of network members in questions of innovation, proactivity and the willingness to take risks for the benefit of the whole network (Martínez, 2015; Morgan, Anokhin & Wincent, 2016; Ripollés & Blesa, 2021). Innovation in this interfirm context refers to the fact that new businesses are created by reworking a product or service and identifying new markets and that all members participate and benefit from these advances (Fisher & Qualls, 2018; Frankort, 2014). Proactivity covers the processes undertaken jointly to explore new market opportunities that the network can exploit (Cowden & Tang, 2021; Wincent et al., 2014). Risk-taking refers to the willingness to take up new challenges together, despite the uncertainty associated with them (Cowden & Tang, 2021; Wincent et al., 2014).

2.1.3. Network entrepreneurial orientation as a consequence of network market orientation

From a relational approach, the links BGs build with other network members (whether customers, suppliers, distributors, and other private or public institutions) are based on adopting relational management processes, mechanisms and routines accepted and shared by all (coupling, coordination, conflict resolution and exchange). This shared strategic orientation means that managers are guided by a common

pattern of behaviour which will be decisive when accessing information and knowledge about new market opportunities and trends, the best ways of exploiting them, and the resources and capabilities necessary for this purpose (De Clercq, Dimov & Thongpapanl, 2013; Koch & Windsperger, 2017; Martínez, 2015; Perks & Hughes, 2008).

Grounded on the basic assumptions of uncertainty reduction theory (Berger, 1979), these mechanisms help mitigate the uncertainty associated with implementing joint actions in highly dynamic and competitive conditions and facilitate the development of an entrepreneurial mindset open to new formulas to address the market. These also remove obsolete processes, systems and perspectives, preventing the consolidation of rigid and inflexible barriers (Atuahene-Gima, 2005; Monferrer et al., 2019). In this line, network members collaborate voluntarily to create processes oriented to the efficient management of interfirm knowledge in which spaces are generated for the flow of new ideas and points of view, with a clear focus on innovative solutions to problems and the pursuit of joint synergies, advantages and entrepreneurial actions (Martínez, 2015; Wincent et al., 2014). This voluntary collaboration facilitates adopting a complementary strategic entrepreneurial orientation in the network context to exploit the resource and knowledge capital markets together. This is generated from a more proactive, innovative and risk-taking stance, a more entrepreneurial position.

H2: *Relationship management tasks derived from a network market orientation positively influence the network's entrepreneurial orientation.*

2.2. Firm context: Dynamic capabilities from an ambidextrous approach

Recent interest in how inter-firm networks contribute to firms' competitiveness has spawned new suggestions for future research lines. Among these, many authors have called for responses on how these relational forces in inter-firm environments help to strengthen firms' performance through their effects on business models for innovation (Aarikka & Ritala, 2017; Forkmann et al., 2018; Lusch et al., 2016).

Our study attempts to respond to this question from the premise that firms cannot benefit from increased external knowledge flows channelled towards entrepreneurial behaviours by mere exposure to them. To reap such benefits, firms must be capable of recognising the value associated with this knowledge, assimilating it internally and using it for commercial ends (Martínez, 2015; Monferrer et al., 2015). Thus, the firm needs to develop competencies in the individual context to channel the value generated jointly at the inter-firm level to improve its performance eventually.

This circumstance is even more relevant in today's highly competitive and changing context, characterised by the shortening of the useful lifecycles of these resources and capabilities (Lusch et al., 2016). On this question, the sustainable performance of BGs will depend on their permanent commitment to adapt to market trends and demands by developing new resources or capabilities and reconfiguring existing ones (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Rindova & Kotha, 2001; Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997; Wu, 2007; Zhang, 2007), that is, the degree to which they develop their dynamic capabilities.

Three knowledge-based dynamic capabilities are broadly accepted in the literature (Hou, 2008; Monferrer et al., 2019; Wang & Ahmed, 2007): adaptation, absorption and innovation. Adaptation capability is the degree of strategic flexibility a firm possesses and its ability to make the necessary organisational changes to adapt to the new environmental conditions in which it operates (Ansoff, 1965; Chakravarthy, 1982; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Miles & Snow, 1978; Wang & Ahmed, 2007). Absorption capability refers to the internalisation of external knowledge available to the firm in its existing internal knowledge base (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Van den Bosch, Volberda & de Boer 1999; Zahra & George, 2002). Innovation capability concerns the firm's ability to respond to the market by exploiting knowledge in the form of different innovation outputs generally associated with the development of new products or variants of existing ones (Danneels, 2002; Dougherty, 1992; Hurley & Hult, 1998; Wang & Ahmed, 2007).

Based on these definitions, we acknowledge that firms must focus on exploiting current knowledge innovatively, but in today's environment, this focus on its own is not sufficient. To achieve sustainable performance, firms must also generate capabilities that enable them to explore other knowledge sources (Rindova & Kotha, 2001). This is the underlying principle of organisational ambidexterity theory, which advocates that firms develop a dual function of knowledge exploration and exploitation (Holmqvist, 2004; Jansen, Tempelaar & van den Bosch, 2006; Lin & Si, 2019; March 1991; Monferrer et al., 2019; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Peng, 2019; Reese, 2019). Exploration is related to organisational learning and increases the firm's value by internally searching for new knowledge that it does not possess and managing it. In turn, exploitation is transforming existing knowledge to create value for the firm's customers (Jansen et al., 2009; Monferrer et al., 2015; 2019; Peng, 2019; Reese, 2019).

In sum, our study adopts a novel focus that complements and integrates with the existing literature by considering a firm's innovation capability that is not isolated but rather integrated into the theory of dynamic capabilities. The study simultaneously highlights the need to classify each capability according to whether it is exploratory or exploitative in line with ambidexterity theory. This approach will enable us to formulate a general assumption about how mediation occurs between network entrepreneurial orientation and individual BG performance. First, adaptation and absorption capabilities, representing exploratory capabilities, give BGs the necessary flexibility to accept changes and the skills to internally assimilate new external resources and knowledge into those they already possess. Second, merely making valuable knowledge and resources available internally will not be enough for BGs to increase their competitiveness. The firm will also need to have the capacity to exploit them to improve internal processes, making them more efficient, and to design an offering of products and services that is more attractive to markets, thereby strengthening the firm's innovation capability (Lichtenthaler & Lichtenthaler, 2009; Monferrer et al., 2015, 2019).

2.2.1. Network entrepreneurial orientation and ambidextrous dynamic capabilities

In a study on the company Smith & Nephew, Petroni (1998) noted that the ability shown in managing the evolution of the company's knowledge stock represents the essence of adaptation capability. In this regard, the joint adoption of a relational entrepreneurial attitude by members of the network provides them with a differentiated understanding of the market environment, subject to continual evolution, constructed using different sources of information and opinions from multiple external agents. This circumstance results in the need to generate, at the individual level, certain adaptation mechanisms that make it possible to considerably reduce response time and increase efficiency when experimenting with or directly implementing novel techniques and processes (Monferrer et al., 2015). We, therefore, propose that:

H3: *Network entrepreneurial orientation positively influences the adaptation capability of BGs.*

A firm's absorption capability lies in its ability to generate substantial sources to obtain external knowledge (Flechas, Kozesinski & Salles, 2021; Tsai, 2001).

The combined relational efforts within the network in which the firm interacts play a key role in this endeavour, as network entrepreneurial orientation involves implementing proactive, innovative and risky activities and behaviours based on relational knowledge (Belso, Expósito & Tomás, 2016; Nätti, Hurmelinna & Johnston, 2014). However, merely enjoying access to this external inter-firm knowledge does not guarantee that it will be used effectively. For this to occur, the firm must be able to optimise its internal assimilation and integration of the new external knowledge facilitated through its relational learning, as well as the transfer of this knowledge to its products, processes or personnel so it can be successfully applied commercially (Lenox & King, 2004; Nätti

et al., 2014; Tsai, 2001; Wang & Ahmed, 2007). This can be achieved by developing a particularly high level of absorption capability. For this reason, we propose that:

H4: *Network entrepreneurial orientation positively influences the absorption capability of BGs.*

Following the same argument, we consider that the possibilities of innovatively exploiting knowledge generated in the relational context can only be guaranteed if, in their particular context, firms previously integrate explorative mechanisms and processes that enable the possible adaptation and absorption of this knowledge to ensure its assimilation, integration and transformation into knowledge that can be applied internally (Holtzman, 2014; Kearney, Harrington & Kelliher, 2014; Mellet, Kelliher & Harrington, 2018; Reiln & Kelliher, 2010; Wang & Ahmed, 2007). For this reason, we propose that the influence of network entrepreneurial orientation will not have a direct effect on exploitative innovation capability but will be established indirectly through the mediation of dynamic exploratory capabilities. We, therefore, suggest that:

H5: *Network entrepreneurial orientation has no positive significant direct influence on the innovation capability of BGs.*

2.2.2. Interrelationship among dynamic capabilities and international performance

Based on ambidexterity theory, obtaining positive outcomes under a cross-cutting lens will be determined by the firm's exploitation function (Lin & Si, 2019; Monferrer et al., 2019; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008; Peng, 2019). Complementarily, the exploration function will contribute to the long-term sustainability of these outcomes (Lin & Si, 2019; Monferrer et al., 2019; Peng, 2019). As a result, only innovation capability – through the exploitation of valuable assimilated knowledge – will directly affect BGs' international performance (Monferrer et al., 2015). Then, we propose two further hypotheses based on the need to develop exploratory capabilities (adaptation and absorption) that enable new knowledge to be permanently managed within the firm to maintain its innovative exploitation sustainably.

First, firms should adopt an evolutionary attitude that allows them to be constantly alert to changing environmental conditions and show flexibility and openness to take on any necessary adaptation longitudinally (Han & Li, 2015; Liao, Kickul & Ma, 2009; Teece, 2007). This will enable them to avoid the build-up of organisational rigidity and promote the generation of mechanisms for innovative management of knowledge that are not associated with obsolete and outdated conceptions (Monferrer et al., 2015). We, therefore, propose that:

H6: *The adaptation capability of BGs positively influences their innovation capability.*

Second, improving innovative activity in any new firm will depend on its willingness to link its internal knowledge-based resources with other external knowledge sources, thus developing its capacity to assimilate and apply them to that purpose (Flechas et al., 2021; Monferrer et al., 2015; Tseng, Chang & Hung, 2011). In this way, innovation capability will depend on the firm achieving an optimal balance between internal concentration and external openness (Davids & Tjong Tjin Tai, 2009; Koch & Strotmann, 2008; Wang, Guo & Yin, 2017), in which the role of absorption capability is pivotal (Flechas et al., 2021; Fosfuri & Tribó, 2008; Liu, Shen, Ding & Zhao, 2017; Vinding, 2006). In fact, sustaining a closed and exclusionary approach focused on the firm's internal resources, knowledge and experience can lead to an organisational short-sightedness that tends to place less value on external than internal resources, therefore directly limiting the scope of its innovations (Laursen & Salter, 2006). We, therefore, propose that:

H7: *The absorption capability of BGs positively influences their innovation capability.*

Finally, the direct relationship between innovation capability and performance has been widely attested to in the literature (Akman & Yilmaz, 2008; Bashir & Verma, 2019; Chen, Lin & Chang, 2009; Monferrer et al., 2019; Zafar et al., 2020) to the point that strengthening the

former is no longer regarded as a strategic option but as a necessity for firms to compete in their markets (Akman & Yilmaz, 2008; Guan & Ma, 2003). This relationship is grounded on the fact that innovation capability entails (1) a better fit between the products and services developed, the market, and the environmental conditions (Meeus & Oerlemans, 2000) and (2) the generation of isolation mechanisms that limit the potential external imitation of the firm's sources of competitive advantage (Lavie, 2006). Thus:

H8: *The innovation capability developed by BGs has positive effects on their international performance.*

Fig. 2 shows the model to be analysed.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample selection and information gathering

We started with a total of 1932 Spanish industrial firms engaged in international business activities and created since 2010; these firms were taken from the Dun and Bradstreet and SABI databases. Five selection criteria were then applied to these firms to guarantee their condition as BGs (Monferrer et al., 2015). The first two criteria were based on secondary data gathered prior to the fieldwork and reduced the initial population to 976 firms: (1) they were not subsidiary companies and made their own strategic decisions, and (2) they had between 5 and 250 employees, thus excluding micro and macro firms.

The other three criteria were applied during the fieldwork and were based on primary data: (3) they began their international activity within three years of their creation, (4) >25% of their turnover came from their international activity, and (5) they formed part of an inter-firm network with at least three agents.

A pretest was initially carried out on a pilot sample of 25 firms before administering the questionnaire to prevent any difficulties in comprehension; the questionnaire was given on an electronic platform. Finally, the fieldwork took place in the autumn and winter of 2015. A total of 306 valid responses were obtained, reflecting a response rate of 31.35%.

The primary data obtained permitted the principal characteristics of the sample to be analysed (Table 1). The final sample comprised BGs mostly from the industrial sector (68.4% of the total), notably the metal, chemical, agrifood and textile sectors. Commerce was represented by 25.3%, including firms that exported and imported products related to the aforementioned industrial sectors. Finally, we found <6.3% of firms from the services sector; these were mostly financial, tourism, communication, technical and information agencies. They had an average of 31 employees (31.24), 53.08% of their turnover was international, and their average age was three years (3.02).

The firms in the final sample belonged on average to networks of six firms (5.91). Practically all of the firms interviewed had participated in the networks since the firm's creation (97.3% during their first year). See Table 2.

3.2. Measurement instruments

All the scales used to measure the constructs correspond exactly to their theoretical definitions. Regarding the network context, we measured network market orientation from a two-factor approach following Helfert et al. (2002). Specifically, resource availability included four items, and relationship management tasks comprised the following four dimensions: coupling (2 items), coordination (3 items), conflict resolution (3 items), and exchange (3 items). To measure network entrepreneurial orientation, we used an adaptation of the scale proposed by Jantunen, Nummela, Puumalainen & Saarenketo (2008); these authors based their scale on previous studies by Naman & Slevin (1993) and Wiklund (1998). The scale has nine items covering the proactive, innovative and risk-taking perspectives of the business networks analysed.

In the firm context, adaptation capability was measured using Gibson

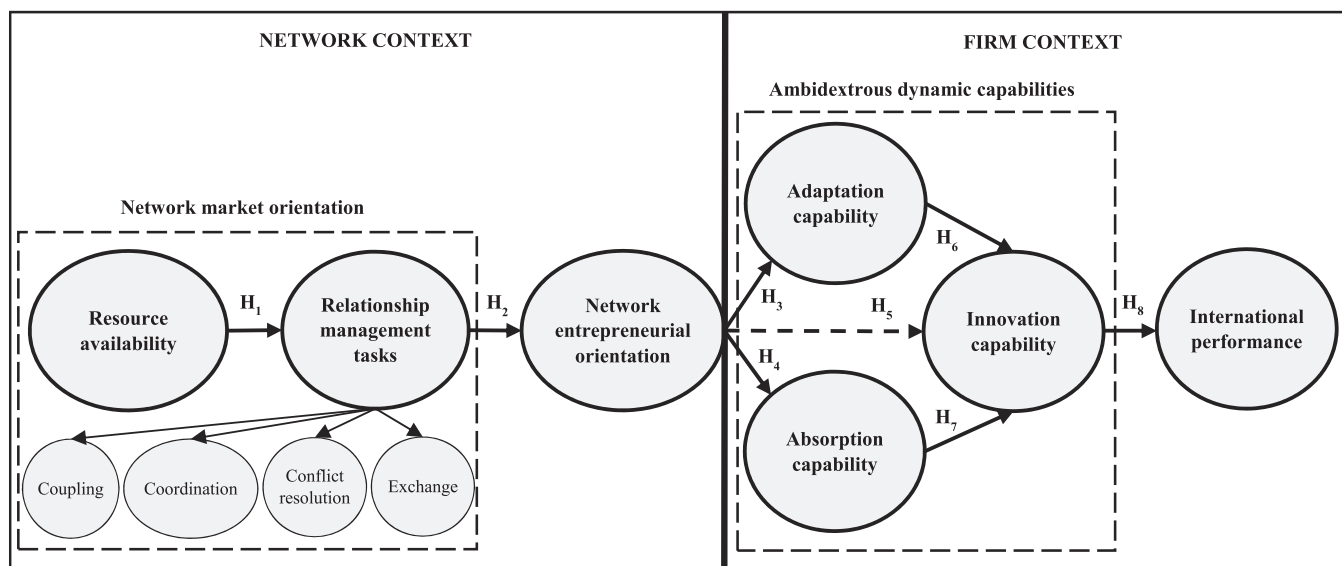


Fig. 2. Model of effects.

Table 1
General characteristics of the firms.

Age		Years of international experience*		Total number of employees		International turnover		Economic sector	
Years old	%	Years elapsed	%	Employees	%	Percentage	%	Sector	%
1	16.0	0	74.5	3–10	36.3	26–50	69.3	Industrial	68.4
2	16.7	1	20.9	11–20	17.6	51–75	16.2	Commercial	25.3
3	32.7	2	2.8	21–30	12.8	76–100	14.5		
4	18.6	3	1.8	Over 30	33.3	Average international turnover = 53.08		Services	6.3
5	16.0	Average years elapsed = 0.32		Average employees = 31.24					
Average years old = 3.02									

Note: *The figure corresponds to the difference between 2015 and the date of the first international activity.

Table 2
General characteristics of the networks.

Years since creation to entry in the network*		Network size	
Years elapsed	%	Number of firms	%
0	84.6	3	52.5
1	12.7	4–6	23.7
2	1.6	6–8	9.4
3	1.1	Over 9	14.4
Average years elapsed = 0.19		Average employees = 5.91	

& Brikinshaw’s (2004) 3-item scale. To measure absorption capability, we used Chen et al.’s (2009) 3-item scale. Innovation capability was measured using an adaptation of the 5-item scale by Akman & Yilmaz (2008). Finally, we used an adaptation of the scale proposed by Jantunen et al. (2008) to measure international performance. These measurements’ general nature means that their applicability should not differ, nor should they be subject to any influences from sample characteristics or other variables in the proposed model. Based on this scale, BG managers were asked to express their degree of satisfaction with the results for various aspects of their international activity.

For the translation of the measurement instrument from English into Spanish, the back-translation method proposed by Brislin (1970), which is widely used in specialised literature, was followed to ensure that the items were comparable to other language versions of the scale.

3.3. Validity and reliability of the scales

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was then run using the structural equation model (SEM) technique with version 6.1 of the EQS multi-variate software package. The maximum likelihood approach was adopted to estimate the parameters. We adopted a model development strategy (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). Hence, following Jöreskog and Söbom (1993), we first removed indicators that did not satisfy the strong convergence condition, with individual standardised coefficients (λ) under 0.6 and an average value of the standardised factor loadings below 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010; Steenkamp & Van Trijp, 1991). Compliance with the weak convergence condition was then verified (Steenkamp & Van Trijp, 1991) by analysing the significance of the factor regression coefficients between indicators and their corresponding latent variables. To do this, we revised Student’s t value by imposing the maximum requirement ($t > 2.58$; $P = 0.01$). This process led us to eliminate four indicators: ADA1, INN4, INN5 and EXC3. Finally, the evolution of the main model fit measurements was monitored as the indicators were removed.

The scale reliability was then examined. Internal consistency was tested with Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha > 0.7$). Construct composite reliability ($CR > 0.7$), and analysis of variance extracted (AVE > 0.5) tests were also applied (Churchill, 1979; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Nunnally, 1979). A summary of the results after the factor and reliability tests is shown in Table 3.

Convergent and discriminant validity were then analysed. Convergent validity was tested by returning to the confirmatory factor analysis performed at the start of the process and confirming the high estimated value and significance of the correlations between the scales’

Table 3
Summary of the results after factor, reliability and validity analysis.

Items	Factor loads	t-value
NETWORK CONTEXT:		
<i>Extent to which the firms in my main relationship network...</i>		
RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT TASKS (CR = 0.94; AVE = 0.79)		
<i>COUPLING (α = 0.894; CR = 0.89; AVE = 0.81)</i>		
COU1: ...update our offers to meet customer's needs.	0.894	16.053*
COU2: ...update delivery and usage of our offers to meet customers' demands.	0.905	21.362*
COORDINATION (α = 0.910; CR = 0.91; AVE = 0.78)		
COO1: ...discuss each member's tasks in a collaborative context.	0.806	14.261*
COO2: ...ensure that the commitments agreed by both parties are fulfilled.	0.912	19.172*
COO3: ...discuss the steps required to achieve the network's joint objectives.	0.924	19.494*
CONFLICT RESOLUTION (α = 0.905; CR = 0.91; AVE = 0.76)		
CON1: ...when there are conflicts we try to impose our individual interests at all costs (reverse scored).	0.890	Fixed
CON2: ...wait a considerable length of time in order to calm down conflict situations (reverse scored).	0.803	18.248*
CON3: ...try to reach a compromise which is acceptable to all parties when a conflict arises.	0.921	23.465*
EXCHANGE (α = 0.890; CR = 0.90; AVE = 0.74)		
EXC1: ...engage in shared learning about specific members' needs.	0.884	17.804*
EXC2: ...react quickly in the event of customer problems with the products or services we offer.	0.900	22.557*
EXC3: ...facilitate face-to-face relationships among members of each firm.	Deleted	
EXC4: ...jointly develop solutions for members.	0.796	17.877*
RESOURCE AVAILABILITY (α = 0.906; CR = 0.91; AVE = 0.72)		
RES1: ...have access to technical systems and teams that other members can use.	0.710	13.960*
RES2: ...have access to information about customers that other members may possess.	0.921	20.694*
RES3: ...have access to market information that other members may possess.	0.881	19.226*
RES4: ...have access to information on the strategic objectives of other members.	0.871	18.866*
NETWORK ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION (α = 0.913; CR = 0.91; AVE = 0.55)		
NEO1: ...initiate the implementation of innovative production processes.	0.618	11.676*
NEO2: ...support projects expected to generate higher profits, accepting the risks they entail.	0.651	12.478*
NEO3: ...adopt the best working methods in the sector.	0.784	16.102*
NEO4: ...apply new practices developed in other sectors.	0.716	14.156*
NEO5: ...quickly identify technological changes that may affect them.	0.834	17.661*
NEO6: ...are able to exploit new opportunities.	0.825	17.382*
NEO7: ...are constantly looking for new working methods.	0.785	16.123*
NEO8: ...prefer to take risks to ensure they exploit market opportunities in situations of uncertainty.	0.686	13.348*
NEO9: ...allocate resources to new promising operational areas.	0.721	14.276*
FIRM CONTEXT:		
ADAPTATION CAPABILITY (α = 0.719; CR = 0.72; AVE = 0.56)		
ADA1: The workers in our firm are able to find alternative ways of doing their work.	Deleted	
ADA2: Our firm is able to develop flexible processes to respond rapidly to changes and opportunities detected in our markets.	0.707	12.274*
ADA3: Our firm is able to change strategy rapidly according to our business priorities.	0.793	13.755*
ABSORPTION CAPABILITY (α = 0.744; CR = 0.79; AVE = 0.56)		
ABS1: Our firm is able to apply external knowledge commercially.	0.663	12.086*
ABS2: Our firm is able to understand, analyse and interpret information from the environment.	0.813	15.788*
ABS3: Our firm is able to combine its internal knowledge with external information.	0.763	14.522*
INNOVATION CAPABILITY (α = 0.800; CR = 0.82; AVE = 0.60)		
INN1: Our firm has an organisational culture that promotes innovation.	0.635	11.677*

Table 3 (continued)

Items	Factor loads	t-value
INN2: Our firm is able to use knowledge from various sources to develop products efficiently and rapidly.	0.868	17.771*
INN3: Our firm is able to identify changes in the market and rapidly apply them to its own products and processes.	0.808	16.076*
INN4: The employees in our firm are able to contribute to activities such as product development, improving the innovation process and developing new ideas.	Deleted	
INN5: Our firm is able to evaluate new ideas from customers, suppliers, etc. and take them into account in product development.	Deleted	
INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE (α = 0.908; CR = 0.91; AVE = 0.59)		
PER1: Turnover.	0.720	14.145*
PER2: Market share.	0.737	14.616*
PER3: Profitability.	0.718	14.096*
PER4: Market access.	0.772	15.611*
PER5: Image development.	0.772	15.596*
PER6: Know-how development.	0.773	15.652*
PER7: Global satisfaction.	0.879	19.057*

Note: Fit of the model: $\chi^2 = 688.960$, $df = 638$, $p = 0.079$; $NFI = 0.911$; $NNFI = 0.987$; $IFI = 0.989$; $CFI = 0.989$; $RMR = 0.038$; $RMSEA = 0.016$.

* $p < 0.01$.

dimensions. Table 4 shows the discriminant validity of the constructs considered, assessed by the AVE test (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and the confidence interval test (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). In all cases, discriminant validity was ratified.

3.4. Additional analyses

Further tests were also carried out. We first looked for signs of sample bias (Armstrong & Overton, 1977). To this end, we applied several tests and estimation methods commonly used in the nonresponse bias literature (Armstrong & Overton, 1977; Kish, 1965; Stephan & McCarthy, 1958). The first point to note is the response rate (31.35%) is higher than usual rate similar studies. Second, we applied the method of comparisons (Gallup, 1972) with known values for the population available in the Dun and Bradstreet and SABI databases. The comparison of means (t -test) between employees and age for the sample (31.24 and 3.01) and the population (32.67 and 2.94) revealed no significant differences between groups at the 0.05 level. Third, we applied the extrapolation method based on the time trends criterion (Ferber, 1949; Pace, 1939), which assumes that firms responding later will be more similar to nonrespondents. We classified the respondents according to the time they took to respond and then we ran a t -test of independent means on the different items using the first 45 and last 45 respondents. Again, no significant differences were found at the 0.05 level.

Second, if the dependent and independent variables are gathered with a common instrument, common method bias may occur (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2003). Three different methods were therefore used to rule out common method data collection bias. First, we checked for multicollinearity by testing the variance inflation factor (VIF) among latent variables in our proposed overall model (Kock, 2015). Values were below 5, suggesting that multicollinearity was not an issue in our study (Diamantopoulos & Sigauw, 2006). Second, we ran Harman's (1976) test. Following Friedrich, Byrne and Mumford (2009), MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012), and Podsakoff et al. (2003), a factorial analysis was carried out on the indicators resulting from refining the process using principal component analysis (Velicer & Jackson, 1990), in which the unrotated factor solution was examined. As expected, the results confirmed that the first factor did not accumulate most of the variance (36.682%). Finally, we applied the marker variable technique (Richardson, Simmering & Sturman, 2009; Williams, Hartman & Cavazotte, 2010). Firms' social responsibility, with three items developed in Maignan (2001), was chosen as a marker variable, as it was theoretically unrelated to the theoretical model. The results of the comparisons

Table 4
Scale discriminant validity.

1 ST order	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. COU	0.90									
2. COO	0.70*	0.88								
3. CON	0.68*	0.79*	0.87							
4. EXC	0.85*	0.78*	0.81*	0.86						
5. RES	0.40*	0.51*	0.47*	0.49*	0.85					
6. NEO	0.71*	0.79*	0.71*	0.73*	0.52*	0.74				
7. ADA	0.29*	0.25*	0.27*	0.28*	0.16*	0.34*	0.75			
8. ABS	0.24*	0.26*	0.25*	0.18*	0.15*	0.35*	0.68*	0.75		
9. INN	0.26*	0.31*	0.25*	0.24*	0.16*	0.35*	0.71*	0.74*	0.78	
10. PER	0.26*	0.34*	0.35*	0.30*	0.35*	0.47*	0.28*	0.33*	0.28*	0.77

Note: Below the diagonal: correlation estimated between the factors.
 Diagonal: square root of AVE.
 * $p < 0.05$

between the models revealed no significant cases (Table 5). Then, as Method-C did not fit significantly better than the baseline model, there was no evidence of shared CMB between the indicators of the substantive variables and the latent marker variable. As Method-U did not fit significantly better than Method-C, CMB was the same for all indicators. As Method-R was not significantly different from Method-C or Method-U, CMB's presence did not skew the relationships among the substantive variables (Williams et al., 2010). In sum, the three methods used to evaluate common method data collection bias all indicated the possible absence of this bias in collecting the data.

4. Results

The hypotheses were also tested using structural equation models, which enabled us to simultaneously explore a series of dependence relationships (Hair et al., 2010). Fig. 3 shows the step diagram of the resulting relationship model after its specification and identification.

As is shown in Fig. 4 all the hypotheses are confirmed. Thus, the network's market orientation comprises two connected factors, in which resource availability is an antecedent of relational management tasks (H1: $\lambda = 0.578$, $t = 9.048$). These relational management tasks (coupling, coordination, conflict resolution and exchange) favour a network entrepreneurial orientation (H2: $\lambda = 0.857$, $t = 10.184$). At the same time, network entrepreneurial orientation is shown to positively and significantly affect firms' exploratory capabilities of adaptation and absorption (H3: $\lambda = 0.343$, $t = 4.511$ and H4: $\lambda = 0.351$, $t = 4.895$, respectively), which in turn has positive effects on their innovation

Table 5
Model fit indices and model comparisons for CFA models with marker variable.

Model	χ^2 (df)	CFI	RMSEA
1. CFA with marker variable	1132.368 (764)	0.929	0.040
2. Baseline	1142.049 (780)	0.919	0.039
3. Method-C (constrained)	1140.110 (779)	0.919	0.039
4. Method-U (unconstrained)	1103.150 (741)	0.919	0.040
5. Method-R (restricted)	1102.507 (786)	0.929	0.036
Chi-square model comparison tests			
Chi-square (df) and p-value: 0.05			
1. Baseline vs. Method-C	1.938 (1)	3.841	
2. Method-C vs. Method-U	36.960 (38)	53.383	
3. Method-U vs. Method-R	0.643 (45)	61.656	

Note: * $p < 0.05$.

capability (H6: $\lambda = 0.608$, $t = 6.763$ and H7: $\lambda = 0.723$, $t = 7.287$, respectively). The relationship between network entrepreneurial orientation and innovation capability is not significant, as expected in hypothesis H5. Finally, exploitative innovation capability is confirmed to directly affect BGs' international performance (H8: $\lambda = 0.352$, $t = 4.933$).

In addition, the above results were further analysed through a review of the indirect and total effects derived from the proposed model of effects (Fig. 5). First, in general terms, the indirect and total effects between strategic network orientations (network market orientation and network entrepreneurial orientation) and BGs' dynamic capabilities and international performance were positive and significant. This outcome confirms the need to adopt an integrating perspective when analysing the constructs posed in this study, both at the network and the individual level, to better understand BGs' international competitiveness from an antecedent relational context.

Second, and in more specific terms, the mediating role of exploratory capabilities was especially relevant. These capabilities are crucial to understanding the potential effect that the entrepreneurial orientation adopted jointly by the network agents might have on the BGs' innovation capability. This influence would be an indirect-only mediation (Zhao, Lynch & Chen, 2010) that considers the indirect effect on innovation capability through adaptation capability and absorption capability ($\lambda = 0.462$, $t = 4.835$). Thus, although the direct effect between network entrepreneurial orientation and innovation capability was not significant, the total effect between the two variables was ($\lambda = 0.463$, $t = 5.917$) because of the aforementioned mediating effect.

5. Discussion and conclusions

5.1. Theoretical implications

The current market context, characterised by highly competitive, dynamic and complex globalised markets, has led to a change in firms' conceptions of how to do business (Etemad, 2021; Koch & Windsperger, 2017; Lusch et al., 2016; Monferrer et al., 2019; Windsperger et al., 2019). A clear example is the phenomenon of BGs. Despite their presumed lack of knowledge and experience, owing to their liabilities of newness (Aldrich & Yang, 2012) and foreignness (Denk, Kaufmann & Roesch, 2012), BGs present a markedly accelerated international

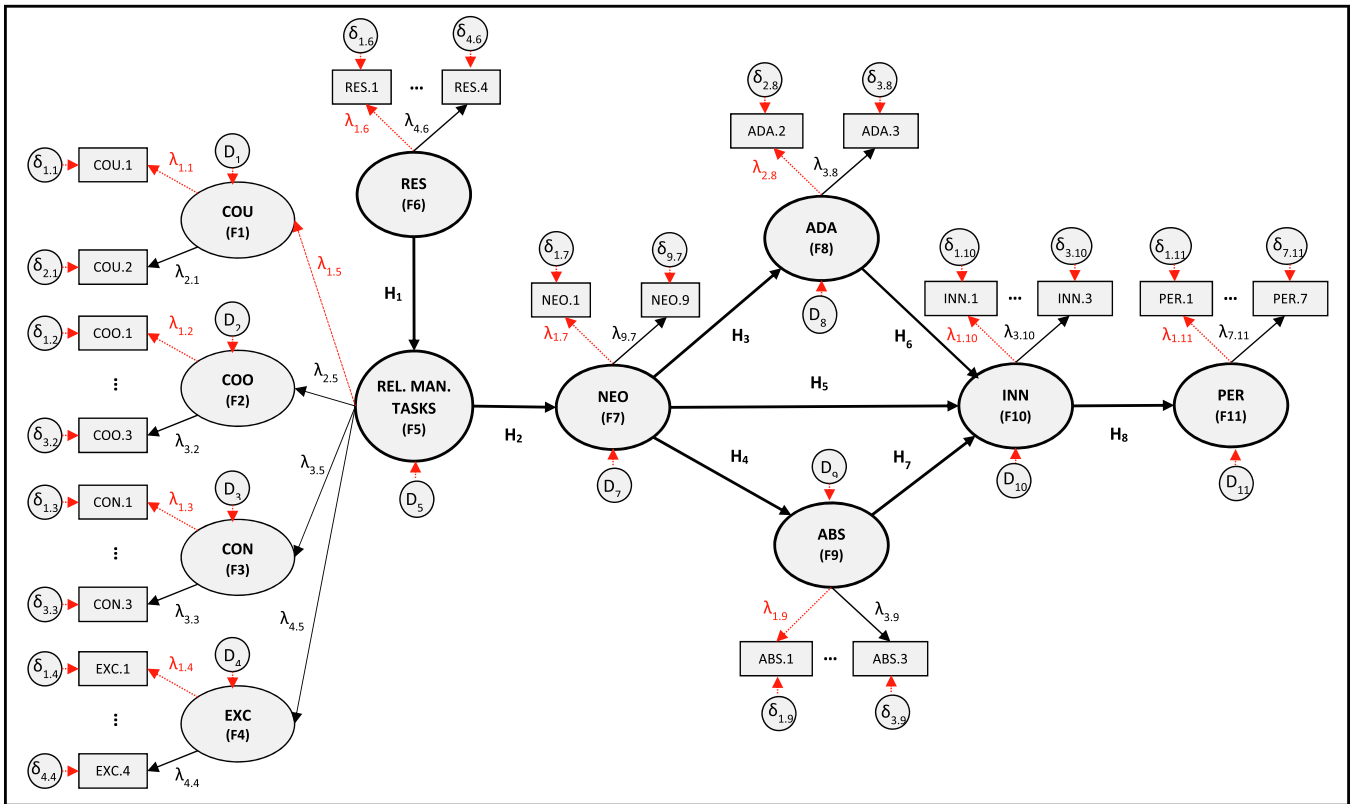


Fig. 3. Structural equation model diagram.

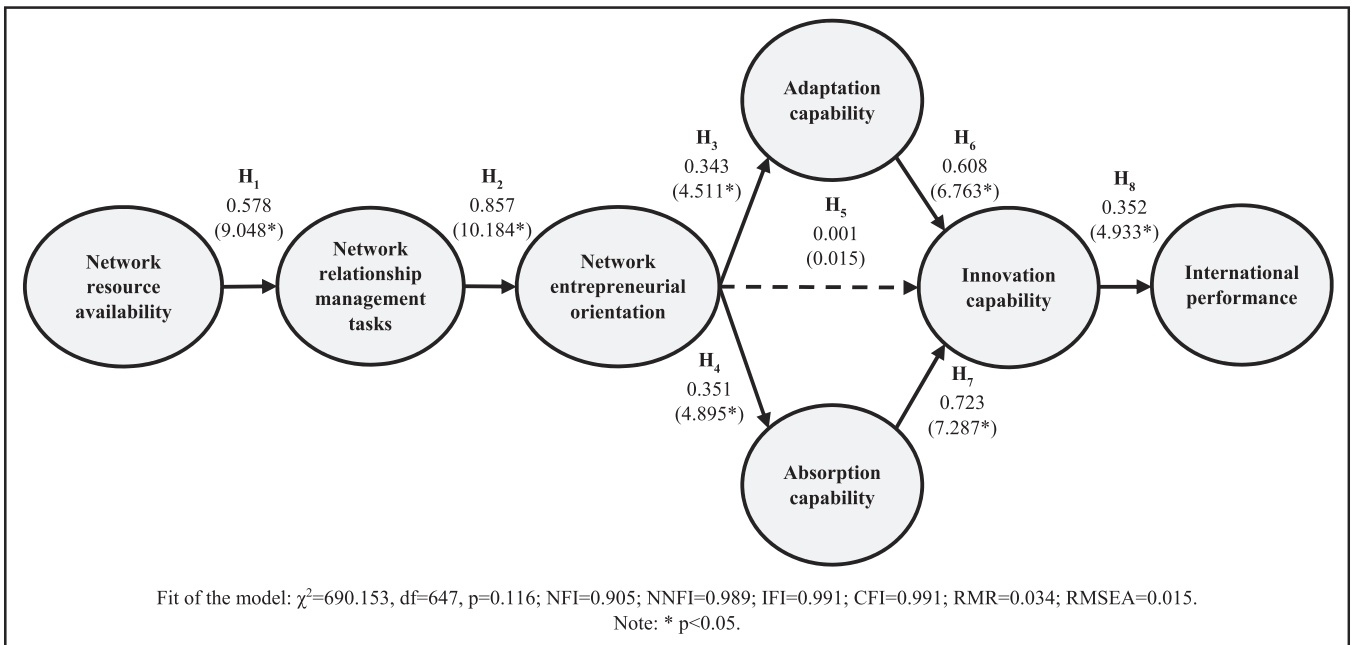


Fig. 4. Results of the structural model.

vocation (Lin & Si, 2019). Their international behaviour entails breaking away from the traditional models of internationalisation linked to slow processes by which performance in an international context is intrinsically subject to the gradual accumulation of experience in foreign markets as the firm’s original activity in the domestic market expands steadily (Paul & Rosado, 2019; Wadeson, 2020). This circumstance has spawned several research streams focusing on specific sources of

influence on the international performance of these firms, such as entrepreneurial character (Amjad et al., 2020; Etemad, 2021; Martínez, 2015), access to knowledge-based resources and capabilities (Koch & Windsperger, 2017; Monferrer et al., 2019; Muñoz & Fischer, 2021) and adopting shared strategic behaviours and conduct in a network context (Irún et al., 2020; Lusch et al., 2016; Monferrer et al., 2015; Windsperger et al., 2019; Zafar et al., 2020). Based on these research streams, this

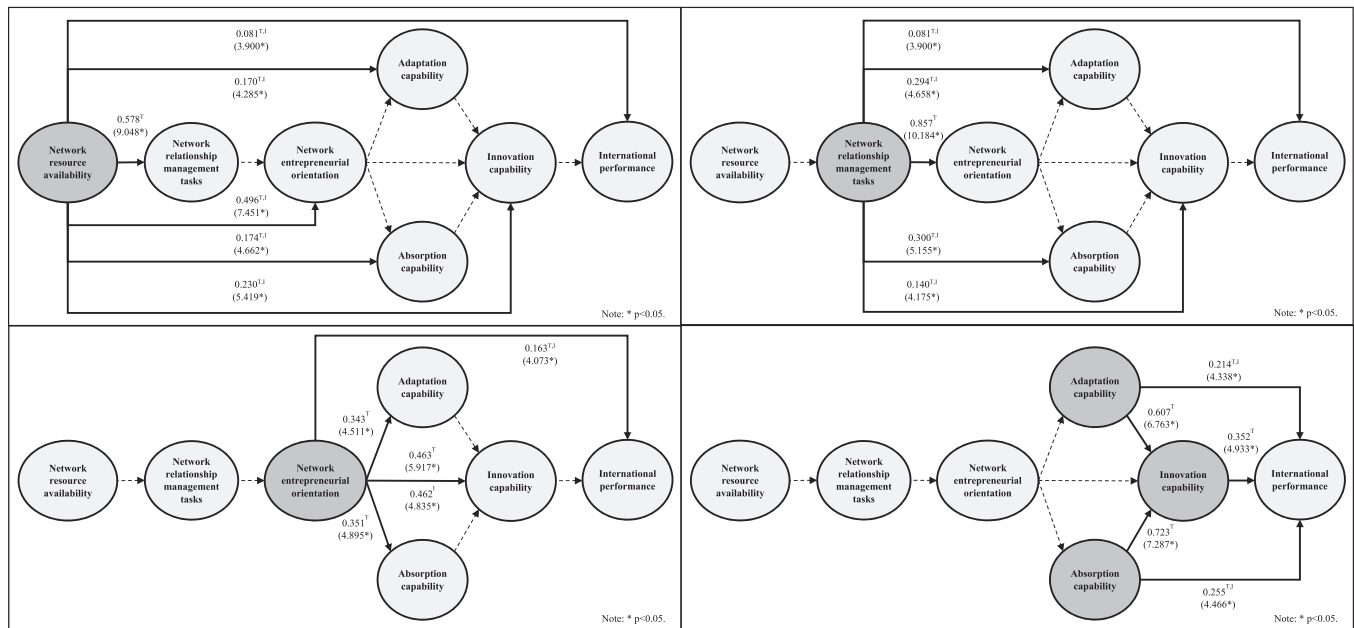


Fig. 5. Total (T) and indirect (I) effects derived from the results of the structural model.

study’s general aim was to propose a model of effects that can integrate these basic areas of influence on BG’s international performance through a dual lens of inter-firm and individual behaviour.

Our study’s overall contribution lies in its hierarchisation of the effects associated with these sources of influence. Specifically, our model is framed within a research stream that in recent years has identified three types of basic factors on which to define this structure of sequential relations: strategic factors based on knowledge management, organisational capabilities, and performance (Chien & Tsai, 2012; Jin, Wang, Chen & Wang, 2015; Monferrer et al., 2019; Tseng & Lee, 2014; Wu & Chen, 2014; Zhang & Duan, 2010).

Examining our hierarchisation in greater depth, first, and in line with broad consensus in the literature, innovation capability is identified as a direct source of influence on company results (Bashir & Verma, 2019; Monferrer et al., 2019). The case of BGs is particularly important since they are intensive knowledge-based firms that need to develop innovations on which to consolidate their business projects (Lin & Chen, 2006). Although BGs have limited skill, resource and knowledge stocks due to their recent creation, they tend to operate in high-risk external environments, with considerable R&D&I and technology investments, high complexity and shortened product and market lifecycles (Monferrer et al., 2015). These conditions mean that to guarantee their innovation capability through the exploitation of valuable knowledge, they must identify new alternative sources to generate and access external knowledge that complements their internal sources, thereby offsetting the limitations mentioned above by creating common spaces in which to manage them (Mellet et al., 2018; Windsperger et al., 2019; Zafar et al., 2020).

Our study makes a second contribution by identifying antecedent levels of influence that, through an inter-firm and individual lens, guarantee that value generated in the network context is channelled into the firm’s innovation capability. On the one hand, inter-firm influence is represented through joint acceptance in the network of a dual strategic orientation – market and entrepreneurial – that facilitates the construction of an appropriate prior relational context. In this regard, the network market orientation guarantees access to and efficient management of extended market knowledge, to which it would not have had access if it were operating in isolation (Fisher & Qualls, 2018; Irún et al., 2020; Monferrer et al., 2015). This would guarantee the joint adoption by all the members of mechanisms and routines oriented to resource

availability (Ritala & Ellonen, 2010), which, in turn, would favour the performance of up to four relational management tasks (traditionally analysed in isolation in the framework of relational knowledge management): coupling (Holma, 2014; Sales, 2014), coordination (da Silveira & Arkader, 2007; Galkina & Chetty, 2015), conflict resolution (Mwesumo & Halpern, 2016), and exchange (Frankort, 2014). Complementarily, this extended and enhanced market knowledge will encourage the network to take advantage of shared benefits deriving from the synergetic effects of jointly implementing proactive, innovative and risk-taking entrepreneurial actions (the defining elements of entrepreneurial orientation) designed to exploit the latest trends and opportunities arising in the business environments in which they operate (Amjad et al., 2020; Martínez, 2015; Morgan et al., 2016; Wincent et al., 2014).

From this proposal, we provide a specific response to recent calls in the literature for greater attention to how firms belonging to a network activate the joint development of management activities to effectively reap benefits deriving from the characteristic synergies of networks (Amjad et al., 2020; Aarikka & Ritala, 2017; Forkmann et al., 2018; Irún et al., 2020; Monferrer et al., 2015; Windsperger et al., 2019; Zafar et al., 2020). Moreover, the conception of such strategic orientations, based on collective participation and joint development efforts in a network context, represents a significant contribution to updating their critical conceptions, from the interfirm context (market orientation: Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990; entrepreneurial orientation: Oviatt & McDougall, 1994), exclusively bound to the firm’s behaviour. The study, therefore, mitigates the main limitation in recent research associated with its restriction of interfirm conceptualisation to the mere adaptation of these critical approaches or the summative consideration of individual orientations of the firms in the network (Irún et al., 2020; Martínez, 2015; Monferrer et al., 2015).

An additional fundamental factor is the individual firm’s influence in channelling the value generated through networks into its innovation capability. This influence arises from the firm’s acknowledgement that adopting a dual inter-firm orientation based on knowledge management and entrepreneurialism cannot directly strengthen its capacity to exploit innovative outputs at the individual level if it has not previously taken steps to ensure that it will assimilate inputs generated in the network context. In an attempt to address the lack of consensus on this question in the literature (Lusch et al., 2016), our study integrates two theoretical

streams: dynamic capabilities theory (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997) and ambidexterity theory (March 1991).

Regarding the first of these theories, we recognise the need to integrate the concept of innovation capability in a broader theoretical model – that of dynamic capabilities – based on the sustainable maintenance of firms' competitiveness. This gives us a better understanding of the essence on which the contribution of this specific capability is defined as compared to other capabilities – adaptation and absorption – that are also linked to knowledge management (Hou, 2008; Monferrer et al., 2015; 2019; Wang & Ahmed, 2007).

To this end we draw on the fundamental assumption of ambidexterity theory, which advocates that firms adopt a dual exploration/exploitation function (Lin & Si, 2019; Monferrer et al., 2019; Peng, 2019; Reese, 2019), to understand each one of the three dynamic capabilities considered in terms of its own specific contribution to this dual function. In this line, our study demonstrates the importance of developing exploratory capabilities that facilitate organisational learning in the firm through, on one hand, greater organisational flexibility and willingness to make the changes necessary to effectively manage the valuable knowledge generated in the antecedent context of inter-firm relationships (adaptation capability) (Han & Li, 2015); and on the other, the ability to assimilate and internalise to maximum effect the new external knowledge in the firm's existing knowledge base (absorption capability) (Flechas et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2017). As our results show, these two capabilities help to transform external knowledge inputs into internal knowledge which can be applied to construct innovative outputs that eventually lead to better results for BGs in their international markets (Holtzman, 2014; Kearney et al., 2014; Mellet et al., 2018).

At the same time, several contributions to the literature can be made by jointly applying these two theoretical streams. Applying the dynamic capabilities theory as the theoretical justification for business performance completes the traditional theoretical perspective of resources and capabilities, which has received criticism in recent years for being too static (Barney, Ketchen & Wright, 2021; Han & Li, 2015; Monferrer et al., 2019). In fact, the extensive use of this theory in the literature is restricted exclusively to firms' possession of certain substantive capabilities of an exploitative nature, on the assumption that their contribution to the firm's competitiveness is stable and permanent (Zahra, Sapienza & Davidsson, 2006). The dynamism and complexity of today's markets is clearly a challenge to such applications; indeed, the complementary view of dynamic capabilities is more congruent because it precisely reflects the evolutionary nature of resources and capabilities. Regarding the application of ambidexterity theory, our study contributes in three ways. First, it ameliorates the implicit tension associated with the two exploration/exploitation functions (Eltantawy, 2016; Carter, 2015; Lee & Rha, 2016; Peng, 2019; Reese, 2019). Hence, although its seminal definition attends to different configurations in knowledge management, with different associated costs and benefits (March, 1991), this study empirically tests the need to develop the two functions simultaneously, rather than adopting an exclusionary approach (Lin & Si, 2019). The second contribution lies in the applied view of the purely theoretical definition of the two functions, which our study covers in the specific dynamic capabilities generated at the internal level (Lin & Si, 2019; Monferrer et al., 2019; Peng, 2019). Thirdly, it analyses the interrelationships between the dynamic capabilities considered, an area that has been overshadowed by other analytical perspectives that merely study their isolated and direct effects on performance (Monferrer et al., 2015).

5.2. Managerial implications

Betting on market-oriented innovation as an internationalisation strategy is the main managerial implication for a BG. It is essential to establish an environmental surveillance system that allows the monitoring of needs and trends not to lose sight of the market's reality.

Currently, technology is outshining management fundamentals that establish the importance of information analysis to make decisions. Currently, firms have access to large amounts of data, unlike just a few years ago. However, it is necessary to transform these data into useful information for decision-making, for which expert analysts in the field of market and environmental behaviour are needed.

Integration in a network allows technology-based companies to overcome weaknesses of this type. This study concludes that networking is one of the key factors that determine the success of BGs, but being present in a network is not enough to achieve international success. The involvement of all agents is necessary through the commitment of financial, human and information resources. It is necessary to establish formal coordination mechanisms and work on informal relationships so that the exchange of knowledge can be transformed into innovation. In this sense, given the informal links that usually exist in this type of network, it would be interesting to formalise the relationships through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that establishes shared values (among which should be market orientation and an entrepreneurial culture) and some coordination rules. Along with this, special attention must be paid to informal ties. The pillars for building lasting ties should be mutual trust and commitment. It is necessary to promote relationships between the different agents through bilateral or multilateral meetings where personal ties are strengthened. The involvement of all agents in the network, establishing win-win relationships and promoting a sense of belonging should be shared values.

Therefore, it is essential to select network partners correctly. The inclusion of a partner who does not share the network's values can cause problems to the point of breaking the network. Consequently, new additions to the network should be carefully studied, analysing the applicant's corporate values (along with the assets that they will contribute with). Likewise, in the case of unwanted behaviour, a partner's exclusion must be considered through a network agreement.

Along with mutual trust and commitment to the network, the BG must be prepared to take advantage of shared knowledge. The BG innovation system must share its knowledge and must be able to imbibe knowledge from partners. The permeability of the frontiers of knowledge is another key to success for the BG. In such a dynamic world and fast-changing environment, innovation must continuously be evolving. Firms must be able to develop flexible internal mechanisms and routines that will facilitate adaptation and enable the internal absorption of the knowledge generated.

In sum, in the moments of crisis that lie ahead of us as a consequence of COVID-19, the recommendation is that the BGs strengthen ties with network partners. This is one of the pillars of its international success. The network allows for solving some weaknesses related to this type of company's size and can enhance their innovative capacity. It is important to analyse the network as a formal organisation, identifying its weaknesses and strengths in light of the environment's opportunities and threats. It is advisable to establish formal and informal governance mechanisms that can identify suitable potential partners and remove toxic agents.

6. Limitations and future research

The study is not without its limitations, which suggest proposals for possible future research lines. First, analysing only Spanish BGs may preclude the generalisation of the results to different international contexts. New studies could test the proposed relationships in other countries, thus enhancing the generalisability of the results. Second, our study was based on answers from a single respondent in each firm and each network in the sample, which raises two questions: (1) a single respondent may not represent the whole organisation's views; (2) the questionnaire was addressed to the manager of just one firm who responded to questions about the workings of a whole network of firms. Third, the use of cross-sectional data may be regarded as a limitation to drawing causal inferences. Future research could therefore study the

relationships proposed with longitudinal data and develop qualitative studies at different levels that take into account the responses from agents at different levels in the firm hierarchy and from a range of members in the network to which the firm belongs. Studies of this nature would allow for exploration of the model's specific points, providing more accurate explanations to questions like the following: (1) a more precise understanding of how knowledge is created in a network context; (2) the relative importance of each of the secondary variables that comprise relationship management tasks; and (3) a comparative analysis of the effects in different innovation contexts (incremental and radical).

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

References

- Aarikka, L., & Rittala, P. (2017). Network management in the era of ecosystems: Systematic review and management framework. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 67, 23–36.
- Akman, G., & Yilmaz, C. (2008). Innovative capability, innovation strategy and market orientation. *International Journal of Innovation Management*, 12(1), 69–111.
- Aldrich, H. E., & Yang, T. (2012). What did stinchcombe really mean? Designing research to test the liability of newness among new ventures. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal*, 2(3), 1–12.
- Amjad, T., Rani, S. H. B. A., & Sa'atar, S. B. (2020). Entrepreneurial Marketing Theory: Current Developments and Future Research Directions. *SEISENSE Journal of Management*, 3(1), 27–46.
- Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103(3), 411–423.
- Ansoff, H. I. (1965). *Corporate Strategy*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Armstrong, J. S., & Overton, T. S. (1977). Estimating non-response bias in mail surveys. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14(3), 396–402.
- Atuahene-Gima, K. (2005). Resolving the capability-rigidity paradox in new product innovation. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(4), 61–83.
- Barney, J. B., Ketchen, D. J., & Wright, M. (2021). Resource-based theory and the value creation framework. *Journal of Management*. Article first published online: June 2021.
- Bashir, M., & Verma, R. (2019). Internal factors & consequences of business model innovation. *Management Decision*, 57(1), 262–290.
- Belso, J. A., Expósito, M., & Tomás, J. V. (2016). Knowledge network dynamics in clusters: Past performance and absorptive capacity. *Baltic Journal of Management*, 11(3), 310–327.
- Berger, C. (1979). Beyond initial interaction: Uncertainty, understanding, and the development of interpersonal relationships. In H. Giles, & R. N. St Clair (Eds.), *Language and social psychology* (pp. 122–144). Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell.
- Beverland, M. B., & Lindgreen, A. (2007). Implementing market orientation in industrial firms: A multiple case study. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 36(4), 430–442.
- Bilkey, W. J., & Tesar, G. (1977). The export behavior of smaller Wisconsin manufacturing firms. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 9(Spring/Summer), 93–98.
- Bliemel, M. J., McCarthy, I. P., & Maine, E. M. (2016). Levels of multiplexity in entrepreneur's networks: Implications for dynamism and value creation. *Entrepreneurship Research Journal*, 6(3), 247–272.
- Brislin, R. W. (1970). Back-translation for cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 1(3), 185–216.
- Carter, W. R. (2015). Ambidexterity deconstructed: A hierarchy of capabilities perspective. *Management Research Review*, 38(8), 794–812.
- Cavusgil, S. T. (1980). On the internationalisation process of firms". *European Research*, 8(6), 273–281.
- Chakravarthy, B. S. (1982). Adaptation: A promising metaphor for strategic management. *Academy of Management Review*, 7(1), 35–44.
- Chen, Y.-S., Lin, M.-J., & Chang, C.-H. (2009). The positive effects of relationship learning and absorptive capacity on innovation performance and competitive advantage in industrial markets. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 38(2), 152–158.
- Chien, S.-Y., & Tsai, C.-H. (2012). Dynamic capability, knowledge, learning, and firm performance. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 25(3), 434–444.
- Chung, J.-E., Jin, B., & Sternquist, B. (2007). The role of market orientation in channel relationships when channel power is imbalanced. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 17(2), 159–176.
- Churchill, G. A., Jr. (1979). A Paradigm for Developing Better Measures in Marketing. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 16, 64–73.
- Cohen, W. M., & Levinthal, D. A. (1990). Absorptive Capacity. A new perspective on learning and innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 35(1), 128–152.
- Cowden, B. & Tang, J. (2021). Enhancing Entrepreneurial Orientation Research: From Theorizing to Measuring. Corbett, A.C., Kreiser, P.M., Marino, L.D. and Wales, W.J. (Ed.) *Entrepreneurial Orientation: Epistemological, Theoretical, and Empirical Perspectives* (Advances in Entrepreneurship, Firm Emergence and Growth, Vol. 22), Emerald Publishing Limited, Bingley, 69–86.
- da Silveira, G. J. C., & Arkader, R. (2007). The direct and mediated relationships between supply chain coordination investments and delivery performance. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 27(2), 140–158.
- Danneels, E. (2002). The dynamics of product innovation and firm competences. *Strategic Management Journal*, 23(12), 1095–1121.
- Davids, M., & Tjong Tjin Tai, S. Y. (2009). Absorptive capacity, knowledge circulation and coal cleaning innovation: The Netherlands in the 1930s. *Business History*, 51, 5.
- De Clercq, D., Dimov, D., & Thongpapanl, N. T. (2013). Organizational social capital, formalization, and internal knowledge sharing in entrepreneurial orientation formation. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 37(3), 505–537.
- Denk, N., Kaufmann, L., & Roesch, J.-F. (2012). Liabilities of foreignness revisited: A review of contemporary studies and recommendations for future research. *Journal of International Management*, 18(4), 322–334.
- Diamantopoulos, A., & Siguaw, J. A. (2006). Formative versus reflective indicators in organizational measure development: A comparison and empirical illustration. *British Journal of Management*, 17(4), 263–282.
- Dougherty, D. (1992). Interpretive barriers to successful product innovation in large firms. *Organization Science*, 3(2), 179–202.
- Eisenhardt, K. M., & Martin, J. A. (2000). Dynamic capabilities: What are they? *Strategic Management Journal*, 21(10–11), 1105–1121.
- Elg, U. (2002). Inter-firm market orientation: Its significance and antecedents in distribution networks. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 18(7–8), 633–655.
- Eltantawy, R. A. (2016). The role of supply management resilience in attaining ambidexterity: A dynamic capabilities approach. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 31(1), 123–134.
- Estrada, M., Monferrer, D., & Moliner, M. (2020). Improving relationship quality during the crisis. *Service Industries Journal*, 40(3–4), 268–289.
- Etemad, H. (2021). The evolutionary trends of international entrepreneurship in the past two decades: The state of the field in the face of COVID-19's global crisis. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 19(2), 149–163.
- Evanschitzky, H. (2007). Market orientation of service networks: Direct and indirect effects on sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 15(4), 349–368.
- Ferber, R. (1949). The problem of bias in mail returns – A solution. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 12(Winter), 669–676.
- Fisher, G. J., & Qualls, W. J. (2018). A framework of interfirm open innovation: Relationship and knowledge based perspectives. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 33(2), 240–250.
- Flechas, X. A., Kozesinski, R., & Salles, A. (2021). Absorptive capacity in startups: A Systematic literature review. *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation*, 17(1), 57–95.
- Forkmann, S., Henneberg, S. C., & Mitrega, M. (2018). Capabilities in business relationships and networks: Research recommendations and directions. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 74, 4–26.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50.
- Fosfuri, A., & Tribó, J. A. (2008). Exploring the antecedents of potential absorptive capacity and its impact on innovative performance. *Omega*, 36, 173–187.
- Frankort, H. T. W. (2014). Open innovation norms and knowledge transfer in interfirm technology alliances: evidence from information technology, 1980–1999. In Ron Adner, Joanne E. Oxley, & Brian S. Silverman (Eds.), *Collaboration and Competition in Business Ecosystems* (Advances in Strategic Management, Volume 30) (pp. 239–282). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Friedrich, T. L., Byrne, C. L., & Mumford, M. D. (2009). Methodological and theoretical considerations in survey research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(2), 57–60.
- Galkina, T., & Chetty, S. (2015). Effectuation and networking of internationalizing SMEs. *Management International Review*, 55(5), 647–676.
- Gallup, G. H. (1972). *The Sophisticated Poll Watcher's Guide*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Opinion Press.
- Gibson, C. B., & Birkinshaw, J. (2004). The antecedents, consequences and mediating role of organizational ambidexterity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47, 209–226.
- Guan, J., & Ma, N. (2003). Innovation capability and export performance of Chinese firms. *Technovation*, 23(9), 737–747.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Han, Y., & Li, D. (2015). Effects of intellectual capital on innovative performance: The role of knowledge-based dynamic capability. *Management Decision*, 53(1), 40–56.
- Harman, H. H. (1976). *Modern Factor Analysis* (third ed.). Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Helfert, G., Ritter, T., & Walter, A. (2002). Redefining market orientation from a relationship perspective. Theoretical considerations and empirical results. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(9/10), 1119–1139.
- Hoang, H., & Antoncic, B. (2003). Network-based research in entrepreneurship: A critical review. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 18(2), 165–187.
- Holma, A. M. (2014). Adaptation in business contexts: working triadic relationships. In Arch G. Woodside, & Roger Baxter (Eds.), *Deep Knowledge of B2B Relationships Within and Across Borders* (Advances in Business Marketing and Purchasing, Volume 20) (pp. 119–291). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Holmqvist, M. (2004). Experiential learning processes of exploitation and exploration within and between organizations: An empirical study of product development. *Organization Science*, 15(1), 70–81.

- Holtzman, Y. (2014). A strategy of innovation through the development of a portfolio of innovation capabilities. *Journal of Management Development*, 33(1), 24–31.
- Hou, J.-J. (2008). Toward a research model of market orientation and dynamic capabilities. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 36(9), 1251–1268.
- Hurley, R. F., & Hult, G. T. M. (1998). Innovation, market orientation, and organizational learning: An integration and empirical examination. *Journal of Marketing*, 62(3), 42–54.
- Irún, B., Monferrer, D., & Moliner, M. A. (2020). Network market orientation as a relational governance mechanism to public-private partnerships. *Journal of Business Research*, 121, 268–282.
- Jansen, J. J. P., Van Den Bosch, F. A. J., & Volberda, H. W. (2006). Exploratory innovation, exploitative innovation, and performance: Effects of organizational antecedents and environmental moderators. *Management Science*, 52(11), 1661–1674.
- Jansen, J. J. P., Tempelaar, M. P., van den Bosch, F. A. J., & Volberda, H. W. (2009). Structural differentiation and ambidexterity: The mediating role of integration mechanisms. *Organization Science*, 20(4), 797–811.
- Jantunen, A., Nummela, N., Puimalainen, K., & Saarenketo, S. (2008). Strategic orientations of born globals - do they really matter? *Journal of World Business*, 43(2), 158–170.
- Jin, X., Wang, J., Chen, S., & Wang, T. (2015). A study of the relationship between the knowledge base and the innovation performance under the organizational slack regulating. *Management Decision*, 53(10), 2202–2225.
- Johanson, J., & Vahlne, J. E. (1977). The internationalization process of the firm: A model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitment. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 8(1), 23–32.
- Jöreskog, K., & Sörbom, D. (1993). *LISREL 8: Structural equation modeling with the SIMPLIS command language*. Chicago, Illinois: Scientific Software International.
- Kearney, A., Harrington, D., & Kelliher, F. (2014). Exploiting managerial capability for innovation in a micro-firm context. *European Journal of Training and Development*, 38(1/2), 95–117.
- Kish, L. (1965). *Survey Sampling*. New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc.
- Koch, A., & Strotmann, H. (2008). Absorptive capacity and innovation in the knowledge intensive business service sector. *Economics of Innovation & New Technology*, 17(6), 511–531.
- Koch, T., & Windsperger, J. (2017). Seeing through the network: Competitive advantage in the digital economy. *Journal of Organization Design*, 6(1), 6.
- Kock, N. (2015). Common method bias in PLS-SEM: A full collinearity assessment approach. *International Journal of e-Collaboration*, 11(4), 1–10.
- Kohli, R., & Jaworski, B. J. (1990). Market orientation: The construct, research propositions and managerial implications. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(2), 1–18.
- Laursen, K., & Salter, A. (2006). Open for Innovation: The role of openness in explaining innovative performance among U.K. manufacturing firms. *Strategic Management Journal*, 27, 131–150.
- Lavie, D. (2006). The competitive advantage of interconnected firms: An extension of the resource-based view. *Academy of Management Review*, 31(3), 638–658.
- Lee, S. M., & Rha, J. S. (2016). Ambidextrous supply chain as a dynamic capability: Building a resilient supply chain. *Management Decision*, 54(1), 2–23.
- Lenox, M., & King, A. (2004). Prospects for developing absorptive capacity through internal information provision. *Strategic Management Journal*, 25(4), 331–345.
- Liao, J., Kickul, J. R., & Ma, H. (2009). Organizational dynamic capability and innovation: An empirical examination of internet firms. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 47(3), 263–286.
- Lichtenthaler, U., & Lichtenthaler, E. (2009). A capability-based framework for open innovation: Complementing absorptive capacity. *Journal of Management Studies*, 46(8), 1315–1338.
- Lin, B. W., & Chen, C. J. (2006). Featuring Product innovation in industry networks: the mediating role of knowledge integration. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 17(1), 155–173.
- Lin, S., & Si, S. (2019). The influence of exploration and exploitation on born globals' speed of internationalization. *Management Decision*, 57(1), 193–210.
- Liu, X., Shen, M., Ding, W., & Zhao, X. (2017). Tie strength, absorptive capacity and innovation performance in Chinese manufacturing industries. *Nankai Business Review International*, 8(4), 475–494.
- Lusch, R. F., Vargo, S. I., & Gustafsson, A. (2016). Fostering a trans-disciplinary perspective of service ecosystems. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8), 2957–2963.
- MacKenzie, S. B., & Podsakoff, P. M. (2012). Common method bias in marketing: Causes, mechanisms, and procedural remedies. *Journal of Retailing*, 88(4), 542–555.
- Maignan, I. (2001). Consumers' perceptions of corporate social responsibilities: A crosscultural comparison. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 30(1), 57–72.
- March, J. G. (1991). Exploration and exploitation in organizational learning. *Organization Science*, 2(1), 71–87.
- Martínez, L. (2015). *La influencia de la orientación emprendedora de la red sobre los resultados de las nuevas empresas internacionales*. Doctoral dissertation. Spain: Universitat Jaume I.
- Meeus, M. T. H., & Oerlemans, L. A. G. (2000). Firm behaviour and innovative performance. An empirical exploration of the selection-adaptation debate. *Research Policy*, 29(1), 41–58.
- Mellet, S., Kelliher, F., & Harrington, D. (2018). Network-facilitated green innovation capability development in micro-firms. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 25(6), 1004–1024.
- Miles, R. E., & Snow, C. C. (1978). *Organizational Strategy. Structure and Process*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Monferrer, D., Blesa, A., & Ripollés, M. (2015). Catching dynamic capabilities through market-oriented networks. *European Journal of International Management*, 9(3), 384–408.
- Monferrer, D., Estrada, M., Fandos, J. C., Moliner, M. A., & Sánchez, J. (2016). Service quality in bank during an economic crisis. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 34(2), 235–259.
- Monferrer, D., Moliner, M. A., & Estrada, M. (2019). Ambidexterity as a key factor in banks' performance: A marketing approach. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 27(2), 227–250.
- Morgan, T., Anokhin, S., & Wincent, J. (2016). Entrepreneurial orientation, firm market power and opportunism in networks. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 31(1), 99–111.
- Muñoz, M., & Fischer, B. B. (2021). Competitive capabilities in knowledge-intensive services firms: Strategic advantages of born globals in a peripheral region. *Competitiveness Review*, 31(4), 693–712.
- Mwesiuo, D., & Halpern, N. (2016). Interfirm conflicts in tourism value chains. *Tourism Review*, 71(4), 259–271.
- Naman, J. L., & Slevin, D. P. (1993). Entrepreneurship and the concept of fit a model and empirical tests. *Strategic Management Journal*, 14(2), 137–153.
- Narver, J. C., & Slater, S. F. (1990). The effect of a market orientation on business profitability. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(4), 20–35.
- Nätti, S., Hurmelinna, P., & Johnston, W. J. (2014). Absorptive capacity and network orchestration in innovation communities – promoting service innovation. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 29(2), 173–184.
- Nunnally, J. (1979). *Psychometric Theory*. Nueva York: McGraw-Hill.
- O'Reilly, C. A., & Tushman, M. L. (2008). Ambidexterity as a dynamic capability: Resolving the innovator's dilemma. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 28, 185–206.
- Oviatt, B. M., & McDougall, P. P. (1994). Toward a theory of international new ventures. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 25(1), 45–64.
- Oviatt, B. M., & McDougall, P. P. (2005). Defining international entrepreneurship and modeling the speed of internationalization. *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 29(5), 537–553.
- Pace, C. R. (1939). Factors influencing questionnaire returns from former university students. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 23(3), 388–397.
- Paul, J., & Rosado, A. (2019). Gradual Internationalization vs Born-Global/International new venture models: A review and research agenda. *International Marketing Review*, 36(6), 830–858.
- Peng, H. (2019). Organizational ambidexterity in public non-profit organizations: Interest and limits. *Management Decision*, 57(1), 248–261.
- Perks, K. J., & Hughes, M. (2008). Entrepreneurial decision-making in internationalization: Propositions from mid-size firms. *International Business Review*, 17(3), 310–330.
- Petroni, A. (1998). The analysis of dynamic capabilities in a competence-oriented organization. *Technovation*, 18(3), 179–189.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903.
- Reese, S. (2019). The practitioner's approach to ambidexterity and organizational learning. *The Learning Organization*, 26(4), 438–441.
- Reinl, L., & Kelliher, F. (2010). Cooperative micro-firm strategies: Leveraging resources through learning networks. *The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation*, 11(2), 141–150.
- Richardson, H. A., Simmering, M. J., & Sturman, M. C. (2009). A tale of three perspectives: Examining posthoc statistical techniques for detection and correction of common method variance. *Organizational Research Methods*, 12(4), 762–800.
- Rindova, V. P., & Kotha, S. (2001). Continuous “morphing”: Competing through dynamic capabilities, form, and function. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44, 1263–1280.
- Ripollés, M., & Blesa, A. (2021). International new ventures' international performance: A matter of network entrepreneurial orientation and network management activities. *Management Research Review*, ahead-of-print, 1–21.
- Ritala, P., & Ellonen, H. (2010). Competitive advantage in interfirm cooperation: Old and new explanations. *Competitiveness Review: An International Business Journal*, 20(5), 367–383.
- Ritter, T., Wilkinson, I. F., & Johnston, W. J. (2004). Managing in Complex Business Networks. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 33(3), 175–183.
- Sales, C. (2014). Product importance and complexity as determinants of adaptation processes in business relationships. *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, 29(1), 75–87.
- Schumpeter, J. A. (1934). *The theory of economic development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Slotte, S., & Coviello, N. (2010). Entrepreneurship research on network processes: A review and ways forward. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 34(1), 31–57.
- Steenkamp, J.-B., & van Trijp, H. C. M. (1991). The use of LISREL in validating marketing constructs. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 8(4), 283–299.
- Stephan, F. F., & McCarthy, P. J. (1958). *Sampling Opinions*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. *Strategic Management Journal*, 18(7), 509–533.
- Teece, D. J. (2007). Explicating dynamic capabilities: The nature and microfoundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 28(13), 1319–1350.
- Tsai, W. (2001). Knowledge transfer in intraorganizational networks: Effects of network position and absorptive capacity on business unit innovation and performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(5), 996–1004.
- Tseng, C. Y., Chang, D., & Hung, C. H. (2011). Knowledge absorptive capacity and innovation performance in KIBS. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 15(6), 971–983.

- Tseng, S. M., & Lee, P. S. (2014). The effect of knowledge management capability and dynamic capability on organizational performance. *Journal of Enterprise Information Management*, 27(2), 158–179.
- Van de Graaff, R. (2016). A multilevel study of structural resilience in interfirm collaboration: A network governance approach. *Management Decision*, 54(1), 248–266.
- Van den Bosch, F. A. J., Volberda, H. W., & de Boer, M. (1999). Coevolution of firm absorptive capacity and knowledge environment: Organizational forms and combinative capabilities. *Organization Science*, 10(5), 551–568.
- Velicer, W. F., & Jackson, D. N. (1990). Component analysis versus common factor analysis: Some issues in selecting an appropriate procedure. *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 25(1), 1–28.
- Vinding, A. L. (2006). Absorptive capacity and innovative performance: A human capital approach. *Economics of Innovation & New Technology*, 15(4-5), 507–517.
- Vissa, B., & Bhagavatula, S. (2012). The causes and consequences of churn in entrepreneurs' personal networks. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 6(3), 273–289.
- Wadeson, N. (2020). Internationalisation theory and Born Globals. *Multinational Business Review*, 28(4), 447–461.
- Wang, C. L., & Ahmed, P. K. (2007). Dynamic capabilities: A review and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 9(1), 31–51.
- Wang, Y., Guo, B., & Yin, Y. (2017). Open innovation search in manufacturing firms: The role of organizational slack and absorptive capacity. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 21(3), 656–674.
- Wiklund, J. (1998). *Small firm growth and performance: Entrepreneurship and beyond*. Doctoral dissertation. Jonkoping, Sweden: Jonkoping International Business School.
- Williams, L. J., Hartman, N., & Cavazotte, F. (2010). Method variance and marker variables: A review and comprehensive CFA marker technique. *Organizational Research Methods*, 13(3), 477–514.
- Wincent, J., Thorgren, S., & Anokhin, S. (2014). Entrepreneurial orientation and network board diversity in network organizations. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 29(2), 327–344.
- Windsperger, J., Cliquet, G., Hendrikse, G. W. J., & Srećković, M. (2019). Design and management of interfirm networks: An introduction. In J. Windsperger, G. Cliquet, G. Hendrikse, & M. Srećković (Eds.), *Design and Management of Interfirm Networks*. Springer, Cham: Contributions to Management Science.
- Wu, L.-Y. (2007). Entrepreneurial resources, dynamic capabilities and start-up performance of Taiwan's high-tech firms. *Journal of Business Research*, 60(5), 549–555.
- Wu, I. L., & Chen, J. L. (2014). Knowledge management driven firm performance: The roles of business process capabilities and organizational learning. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 18(6), 1141–1164.
- Zahra, S. A., & George, G. (2002). Absorptive capacity: A review, reconceptualization, and extension. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(2), 185–203.
- Zafar, M., Srećković, M., Cliquet, G., Hendrikse, G., & Windsperger, J. (2020). Network innovation versus innovation through networks. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 90, 79–89.
- Zahra, S. A., Sapienza, H. J., & Davidsson, P. (2006). Entrepreneurship and dynamic capabilities: A review, model and research agenda. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(4), 917–955.
- Zhang, M. J. (2007). Is support for top managers' dynamic capabilities, environmental dynamism, and firm performance: An empirical investigation. *Journal of Business and Management*, 13(1), 57–77.
- Zhang, J., & Duan, Y. (2010). The impact of different types of market orientation on product innovation performance. *Management Decision*, 48(6), 849–867.
- Zhao, X., Lynch, J. G., & Chen, Q. (2010). Reconsidering Baron and Kenny: Myths and truths about mediation analysis. *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(2), 197–206.
- Dr. Diego Monferrer** is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the Department of Business Administration and Marketing at Universitat Jaume I (Spain). He has held management positions at the University, including Coordinator of the Marketing Area in the Department of Business Administration and Marketing. He has participated as principal investigator in research projects for the Spanish Government and private companies. He has participated in more than 50 international conferences and has published in prestigious international journals including the *Journal of Business Research*, *International Business Review*, *Journal of Services Marketing*, *European Journal of International Management*, *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, *Business Research Quarterly*, *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *Service Industries Journal*, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, *Sustainability*, *Investigaciones Económicas*, *Spanish Journal of Marketing* among others.
- Dr. Miguel A. Moliner** is a Full Professor in Marketing at Universitat Jaume I in Castellón (Spain). He has held important management positions at the University, including Coordinator of the Marketing Area, Director of the Department of Business Administration and Marketing, Vice Chancellor for Strategic Planning and Quality and Vice Chancellor of Economics and PAS. He has participated in more than 30 research projects for the Spanish government, and 50 for various private companies. He has won various Spanish and international awards during his career. He has participated in over 200 Spanish and international conferences and has been published in highly prestigious international journals including the *European Journal of Marketing*, *Tourism Management*, *Health Care Management Review*, *Tourism Geographies*, *The Service Industries Journal*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, *Journal of Air Transport Management*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Service Theory and Practice*, *Journal of Small Business Management*, *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *Journal of Services Marketing*, *Journal of Travel Research*, *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, *Spanish Journal of Marketing* and many others.
- Dr. Beatriz Irún** is a Lecturer of Economics in the Business Department at ESIC Business and Marketing School in Valencia (Spain). Moreover, she is an Associate Professor of Marketing in the Department of Business Administration and Marketing at Universitat Jaume I (Spain). She has held C-level positions in private companies for more than 25 years in industries such as ceramic, toys, consulting and education. She was the CEO of a consulting firm while living in China, helping European companies reach the Chinese market. As a market expert, she was focused on infrastructure projects between European private companies and Chinese local companies and Governments cooperating with Dacheng Dentons law firm for more than 8 years. She was named Chinese expert in a United Nations program in 2013 and EUSME Beijing in 2016. She is a senior member of Cátedra China (Madrid). She published a book and a book chapter, both related to the Chinese market. She participated as a spokeswoman in international universities such as BISU (China), USIL (Peru), Caribe university (Colombia) among others. She is also a reviewer in *Journal of Business Ethics* and *Editorial Reverté*. She has participated in 13 international congresses. Other accomplishments include two winning projects as business mentor at Jaume I university.
- Dr. Marta Estrada** is an Associate Professor in Marketing at Universitat Jaume I in Castellón (Spain). She has worked as the marketing director for various companies in the education, industrial and advertising sectors for ten years. She has participated in research projects for the Spanish Government and private companies. She has held various management posts at Universitat Jaume I. She has participated in over 40 Spanish and international conferences. Her primary research interests are consumer behaviour and advertising. She has published her work in internationally renowned journals including *Journal of Services Marketing*, *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, *The International Journal of Aging & Human Development*, *Service Industries Journal*, *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, *Sustainability*, *Spanish Journal of Marketing*, *INNOVAR Journal*, among others.