



## INTERNET MARKETING CAPABILITIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET FOR THAI COMPANIES

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### **Abstract**

This purpose of this study is to test the relationship between internet marketing capabilities and international market for Thai companies. A total of 32 respondents were survey through the Department of International Trade Promotion (DITP) in Thailand. The results indicated that internet marketing capabilities in the context of Thai companies had positively affected information availability and international network capabilities. Furthermore, there are needed to more participations in this research and it may further do a research across country.

*Keywords: Internet Marketing Capabilities, International Market, Thai Companies*

### **Introduction**

Many businesses around the world have used Internet marketing to facilitate an increase in a channel to distribute their products and communicate with customers. The development of Internet marketing capabilities enable companies to elevate the company performance in international activities through the use of digital tools such as online advertising, promotions, after-sales service, market research and purchasing or checking orders (Aspelund & Moen, 2004; Mathews et al., 2016; Mathews et al., 2018). Additionally, Internet marketing capabilities can help companies to facilitate activities such as information sharing or reducing the risk of new market entry (Bianchi & Mathews, 2016). From the time that people started using mobile phones for shopping, the digital economy has rapidly grown in East Asia and Southeast Asia. This is due to the rapid development in technology for the Internet and mobile infrastructure; many retailers have moved their products from the store shelves to an online platform. Furthermore, previously, many retailers focused only on the domestic market, and then, they moved into international markets. It seems that an increasing number of companies emphasize the importance of international activities through the Internet. However, in developing countries there still exists recurring problems such as slow Internet speeds and Internet connectivity is not aligned with developed countries (Tandon et al., 2017). There is increasing attention on researching the effects of Internet marketing capabilities and the actions taken to reach foreign customers, (Giuffrida et al., 2017; Mathews et al., 2016), but there is a need to gain more understanding and study in this area. For example, the Internet is an alternative channel to bring a company's international activities to potential customers Sinkovics et al. (2013), and Schu et al. (2016)

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studied the Internet operating factors influencing to online retailers. Reuber and Fischer (2011) found that there are many businesses are increasingly using the Internet to find international opportunities or international operations. Further studies, in the assessment of the literature, show that many studies have investigated Internet marketing for commercial business in developed countries (Bianchi & Mathews, 2016; Moen et al., 2016). One study by Schu et al. (2016), examined online retailers operating in the international markets of Europe and North America. Tolstoy et al. (2016) studied the online channels as a mechanism for international sales in Sweden, and also Moen et al. (2008) found that Norway and Denmark do not use make use of the Internet in their efforts to promote their businesses in international marketing. Moen et al. (2016) and Bianchi & Mathews (2016) suggested that studies should develop further in this area and these should be carried out in developing countries. In the past few decades, many researchers have been investigated the use of Internet marketing for commercial business, and there was abundant practice in developed countries, however, there may not be relevant studies for emerging countries such as Latin America, Asia, and Arab countries. The main contribution of this research is to provide the conceptual framework that use the combinations of resource-based view and capability related to internet capability able to international market to support Thai firms.

The remainder of this research is organized as follows: first, the review of the literature of this study is presented; second, the hypotheses are proposed; third, the research design and methodology are used, and fourth, the data analysis and findings are presented, finally the conclusions and limitations are discussed and suggestion for future research.

#### **Aim and Research objectives**

- To review the relevant literature of resource-based view (RBV) and capabilities.
- To test hypotheses of the Internet marketing capabilities that link to the growth of Thai companies.
- To suggest direction of possible international activities that Thai companies could use the internet marketing capabilities

The aim of this research is to test the hypotheses in relation to the Internet marketing capabilities that have a relationship with information availability, international strategic orientation and international network relationship and how these variables have a positive or negative impact on international market growth in the context of Thailand. This research will fulfil the problem of Thai companies facing the problem using of the internet capabilities as international activities. The remainder of this research is organized as follows: first, the review of literature of this study is presented; second, the hypotheses are tested; third the research design and methodology are used, and fourth, the data analysis and findings are presented, finally the conclusions and limitations are discussed and suggestion for future research.



## Literature review

### **Resource based view (RBV) and Capability perspective**

The combination of a resource-based view and dynamic capabilities are dependent mechanisms, they do not act independently from each other (Makadok, 2001). The resources-based view is an existing resource both of intangible and tangible assets such as financial, management skills, information and knowledge (Peng, 2001). However, the resource-based view is provided to the data available to compete over competitors upon allocation its resources (Kim et al., 2014). The point of view in capability perspective associates the condition organization with facing a rapidly change environment (Bianchi & Mathews, 2016). For example, traditional retailers have to adapt to a digital platform (an online market) due to the transformation of technology. To develop comprehensive company performance in international activity, this resource based view and capability theories are used to affect international market growth (Schu et al., 2016). Currently, the Internet has a fundamental role as a marketing tool, both in the domestic and international marketplaces, with the ability to be able to offer a product through an Internet server. This is one possible channel a company can utilise to provide growth in an international market.

## Hypotheses

### **1) International market growth**

International marketing can make an important contribution to economics. Growth in the international market has been adopted as a measure of a dependent variable by international business researchers (Mathews et al., 2016; Prasad et al., 2001). There are a few studies which can be applied to test the Internet capabilities on international market growth, (Aspelund & Moen, 2004; Gregory et al., 2007), and researchers found that the Internet can influence export companies, for instance, for rapid communication (Schu et al., 2016), a barrier to new market (Sinkovics et al., 2013; Watson IV et al., 2018), and selling on an Internet-based channel (Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2011). It has been argued that using the Internet facilitates internationalization activities, especially for SMEs

### **2) Internet Marketing capabilities and information availability**

This section of the research paper has a combination of Internet marketing capabilities for using the available information to increase marketing activities such as advertising, after-sales service, market research and online sales for international market (Aspelund & Moen, 2004; Bianchi & Mathews, 2016; Moen et al., 2016). The study by (Schu et al., 2016) found that by using the Internet one can find new market knowledge. For example, Internet marketing capabilities can use the available information such as evaluation of market segments, information about competitors, and searching for new partners and customers (Bianchi & Mathews, 2016; Moen et al., 2008). If companies can develop technology in advance that can reduce communication times with customers, transaction and cost (Reuber & Fischer, 2011; Schu et al., 2016), then it is possible for SMEs, or companies which have a resource-constraint, (Moen et al., 2008),



to utilise the Internet to reduce entry barriers for SMEs by accessing information availability and the development of knowledge. Further studies found that Internet marketing capabilities are positively associated with information availability (Bianchi & Mathews, 2016; Mathews et al., 2016). Based on this, the following research hypothesized that:

H1: Internet Marketing capabilities are positively associated with information availability.

### **3) Information availability and international strategic orientation**

Traditional international marketing relied on foreign channel intermediaries, however, currently, in a study by Watson IV et al. (2018) since 2000, a supplier and a customer can use Internet-enabled communications, and this is conveniently strategic for many industries to monitor a secure order. There are dimension of using information (Schu et al., 2016). Using the Internet can support sales and service activities; it may contribute to the efficient accessing of customers and increased sales (Schu et al., 2016). Sometimes, there is too much information that may negatively affect the extent to which decision makers are able to use available information properly. Therefore, information availability depends on the user; the information the company uses in decision making for the type of strategy utilised (Souchon et al., 2003). Strategic orientation in international business context involves with the company's effort go aboard Griffith et al., (2006) while it should provide a characteristic of customer. However, doing a business in aboard, there are some limitations such as language, experience. For example, China has blocked the all information and providing only Chinese language, this is how we can gain the information from Chinese people. Sinkovics & Roath (2004) claimed that there are two dimensions (customer and competitor orientation) are need to be addressed. Hence, this research follows this hypothesis:

H2: Information availability is positively associated with international strategic orientation.

### **4) Internet marketing capabilities and international strategic orientation**

A company using Internet technology to contact both individuals and organisations is more likely to develop a strategic orientation towards international opportunities (Mathews et al., 2016). For example, for 1 billion Facebook users, a company can make an online advertisement which is targeted only at Chinese residents. If a company wanted to promote its product in China, it could use Alibaba, VVIP, and Baidu, and additionally, there is an added advantage that the e-commerce channel manager may not need to travel abroad. A study by Schu et al. (2016) found that, since the last decade, traditional retailers have progressed to modern trading retailing methods by connecting with external customers, since, many retailers have prioritised the importance of connecting quickly with international customers. The accounts of the numbers of Europeans have accounted for 2.2% (\$405bn). Oliveira et al. (2010) and Reuber & Fischer (2011) found that the context of several companies using the Internet for international marketing rather than specifically in a domestic market has increased, due to an increase of their capabilities to find new opportunities such as cost reduction, performance improvement and accessing new customers. If use of the Internet is carried out properly, opportunities for sales at a distance to a customer can be increased. The study by Sinkovics



et al. (2013) found that the using the Internet for exporting produces a strong positive on international strategic orientation. Therefore, this research proposes following hypothesis:

H3: International marketing capabilities are positively associated with international strategic orientation.

#### **5) International strategic orientation and international market growth**

If there is a lack of information concerning exports, the company is likely to have greater information needs, which does not rely on past experience (Souchon et al., 2003). However, a study by Gregory et al. (2007) alluded that the experience of a company can recognise and identify a unique market demand and possess a better comprehension of how to change itself to meet the challenges of meeting the opportunities in a foreign market. The suggestion of the study by Chen et al. (2016) is that the international strategic orientation is positively associated with international market growth.

H4: International strategic orientation is positively associated with international market growth.

#### **6) Internet marketing capabilities and international network capabilities**

The Internet can maintain and further develop long-term customer relationships (Moen et al., 2008). Furthermore, their study found that using the Internet can have a positive relationship with international networking capabilities. For example, using the Internet is an effective form of communication; a commitment is made between companies and customers. Mathews et al. (2018) mentioned that the Internet can enhance communication and trust among business-related networks. This is a resource that Internet-enabled companies use. It has been found that using the Internet is important for the development of customer relations in European countries (Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2011). However, the researchers mentioned that the relationships between local and multinational companies (MNCs) are totally different. For example, a MNC should have a commitment or a memorandum of understanding (MOU), which is a guarantee for maintaining a relationship.

H5: Internet marketing capabilities are positively associated with international network capabilities

#### **7) International strategic orientation and international network capabilities**

Most companies plan to export internationally by using an international expansion strategy. In order to increase sales of their products, most companies focus on growth of the market, however, if there are possibilities of increasing good customer relations, they are more likely to have closed relations with local customers, suppliers, alliance partners, and the host government in country (Elango & Pattnaik, 2007). This is an opportunity for competent companies to compete with local competition or other MNCs. The global study by Mort & Weerawardena (2006) found that companies utilising network capabilities is positively significant. For example, where companies have a strategy for a single product in an international market where their markets are suited for their businesses. These companies will often search for a local company who has a complementary product in order to launch to market and gain a lead in this market. The researchers found that this strategy is suitable for small businesses who have a strong relationship with international network capabilities (Mort & Weerawardena, 2006).

H6: International strategic orientation is positively associated with international network capabilities.

### 8) International network capabilities and international market growth

Business networking and relationships in terms of an international business context are important for the international market growth (Mathews et al., 2016). For example, if companies have a good relationship with their customers, it can be opportunity for an increase in future sales (Schu et al., 2016). The study of an emerging market by Elango & Pattnaik (2007) found that network relationships and international market growth have a positive relationship, whereas business in Asia is related to a business network. Many researchers suggest that the international network capabilities are important for Internet-enabled small businesses to be able to expand their export merchandise (Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2011; Mathews et al., 2018; Reuber & Fischer, 2011).

H7: International network capabilities are positively associated with international market growth.

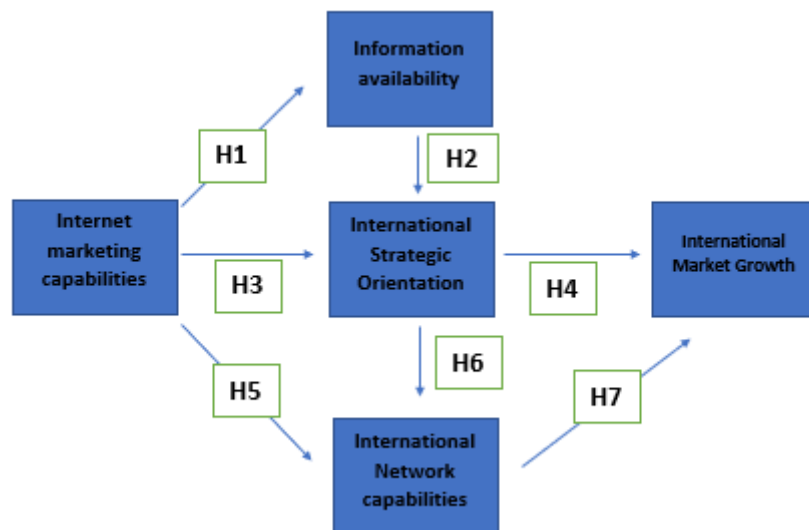


Figure 1: Proposed model (7 Hypotheses)

### Research methodology

The study of international marketing research by Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2002) suggested that the perceptions of Export managers are preferable to using a quantitative method (i.e. a questionnaire). This research uses a quantitative method to test and analyse the data. The questionnaires were translated into the Thai language and then the researcher translated back to English using bilingual native speakers of both languages. The targets of data collection are those people who are responsible for international marketing or their duty is to report the export performance, and so, they either complete the questionnaire or they inform the people who are responsible for the company's exporting decisions. To increase the quality of research, the research which is based on Thai companies concerning their international activities, the Internet is used for this process. This study included companies from several industries such as technology, beauty and medical, professional services, foods and services, agriculture, and other businesses. The main



contributors to economic development in Thailand lie in export activities. These industries were selected as they are in the top-ten industries of Thailand exporters. For example, the export value of these industries has generated \$16.2 billion worth of exports to South East Asia, (MOC, 2018).

The researcher tests the hypotheses through Survey Monkey, which consists of a questionnaire and is distributed to Thailand export companies between March and June 2019. Additionally, the researcher provides a gift voucher (Google Play card worth 500 Thai baht) to motivate the participants to complete the surveys. The market surveyor had sent an invitation e-mail to 135 Thai companies which were selected using the data on Thai companies from the Department of International Trade Promotion ([www.ditp.go.th](http://www.ditp.go.th)). This database contains data on Thai organizations which have a strong reputation in exporting internationally from Thailand. Furthermore, the organization has also a current database available that can be added to. The survey had a response rate of  $n = 32$  (23.7%). Table 1 describes the demographics of the survey respondents.

### **1) Measures**

This research used a seven-point Likert scale due to a basic understanding of number and a work-related theme and should be reliable and have valid construction. All participants were measured by ranging of numbers from 1 to 7.

#### **Internet marketing capabilities**

This research aimed to capture Internet marketing capabilities in relation to companies resources and capabilities through a seven point Likert-type scale: 1 “no use” to 7 “extensive use” The four items were developed by (Aspelund & Moen, 2004; Bianchi & Mathews, 2016; Mathews et al., 2016) who found a strong construct on Internet marketing capabilities which aims to link a company who uses the Internet channel. (1) The company uses Internet tools for marketing and advertising; (2) “the company uses Internet tools for online sales”; (3) “the company uses the Internet for market research”; (4) the company uses the Internet for international marketing management. The Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .849.

#### **Information availability**

The questionnaire has been adopted from Mathews et al. (2016) and Bianchi & Mathews (2016) which makes information available related to the international business context. This section captured through a seven Likert scale: 1 “no information” to 7 “extensive information” includes; (1) information about “international market” is available; (2) information about “international competitor” is available; (3) information about “international customer” is available; (4) information about “international resources” is available. The Cronbach’s alpha for the scale was .912.

#### **International strategic orientation**

International strategic orientation is a strategy for the orientation of a company to seek opportunities abroad. This part of the questionnaire had four items, adopted by (Aspelund & Moen, 2004; Mathews et al., 2016) through a seven-point Likert scale: 1 “strongly disagree” to 7 “strongly agree”



includes; (1) the company is actively seeking possibilities in export markets; (2) the company is able to develop and adjust new and existing products and service to international markets; (3) the company emphasizes the importance of growth employees; (4) the company views international experience is viewed as important. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .719.

#### **International network capabilities**

Building a business network is important to maintaining a relationship with customers (Mort & Weerawardena, 2006). This research has adopted the questions based on the perception of the business network and the relationship in the context of internationalization with customers, partners and local suppliers. In this study the questions have been developed by (Bianchi & Mathews, 2016; Mathews et al., 2016). This research set four questions through a seven-point Likert scale: 1 "no use" to 7 "extensive use" includes; (1) the company uses business networks to maintain international customer relationship; (2) the company uses business network to have the strengthen their existing relationships; (3) the company uses business network to develop a long relationship; (4) the company uses business network to acquire a new international customer. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .965.

#### **International market growth**

International market growth is a dependent variable. These questions are applied by (Bianchi & Mathews, 2016; Mathews et al., 2016). A seven-point Likert scale from: 1 "significant increase" to 7 "significant decrease". These items aimed at the participant, give information about an increase or a decrease in new customers in a new international market and an existing market include; (1) last 10 years have (\_\_\_\_\_) new customers in new international markets; (2) last 10 years have (\_\_\_\_\_) new customers in existing international markets; (3) last 10 years have (\_\_\_\_\_) new customers from existing international customers. The Cronbach's alpha for the scale was .915.

## **2) Sample and data collection**

<b>Table 1: Demographics of the Survey Respondents (n = 32)</b>	
Business or Industry	Technology: 6.3% Professional service: 9.4% Beauty and drugs: 6.3% Foods and Services: 31.3% Agriculture: 15.6% Other businesses: 31.3%
Main market	USA: 9.4% Europe: 18.8% China: 25.0% Australia: 3.1% South East Asia countries: 31.3%





	Other countries: 12.5%
Company size	Small Business: 81.3% Medium Business: 3.1% Large Business: 15.6%
Company age	0-5 years: 15.6% 6-10 years: 46.9% 11-15 years: 9.4% 16-20 years: 3.1% More than 20 years: 25%
Position of respondents	International management manager: 15.6% General manager: 9.4% Chief executive officer: 12.5% Owner: 21.9% Staffs responsible for International marketing: 25% Supervisors responsible for International marketing: 6.3% Other position responsible for international marketing: 9.4%

## Data analysis and findings

### 1) Descriptive results

Table (1) indicates that companies are represented by the samples of technology (6.3%), professional services (9.4%), beauty and drugs (6.3%), foods and services (31.3%), agriculture (15.6%), other industries (31.3%). The largest number of respondents is two main exporters of foods and service, and other industries. Respondents were international marketing managers (15.6%), general managers (9.4%), chief executive officers (12.5%), owners (21.9%), staff responsible for International marketing (25%), supervisors responsible for International marketing (6.3%), and other positions responsible for international marketing (9.4%). All respondents have a responsibility for international activities. Key informants are important because they are knowledgeable and are willing to participate on the problem being examined. There are two steps: (1) screening and assessing, respondents sent a reply e-mail, the researcher carried out a screening first by contacting them to ask information about “Are you responsible for international marketing” and “Is your company using the Internet for marketing”; (2) the selection is in order to build accuracy and honesty due to the research aims of having participation with a clear understanding of questionnaires. The market sizes are as follows: small business (81.3%), medium business (3.1%) and large business (15.6%). The company age are from 0-5 years (15.6%), 6-10 years (46.9%), 11-15 years (9.4%), 16-20 years (3.1%), and more than 20 years (25%). It seems that a majority of the companies is 6-10 years old. The export countries are the USA (9.4%), Europe (18.8%), China (25%), Australia (3.1%), South East Asia

Countries (31.3%) and other countries (12.5%). These countries were selected by the ranking number of main exporters of Thailand. It can be reported that the main export markets of Thailand are the South East Asia Countries, China, and Europe. The results show that 100% of all export companies use the Internet for communication with customers. In Thailand, there are a range of business types, from small to large. This research includes of business sizes including small business (81.3%), medium business (3.1%), and large business (15.6%). Most of the respondents were small business. Furthermore, these small businesses use the Internet for opportunities, which gained revenue of \$13 billion (BOT, 2019). There is an additional research study, which has a control variable including position, export market, sized company and industry, and which is based on international business marketing research (Reuber & Fischer, 2011). Table 2 indicates the bi-variate Pearson correlations of the constructs, it shows that size and IMC (sig = 0.029), and INC (sig = 0.043) are significant relationships with control variables. In previous studies by S. W. Mathews et al. (2018) and (Schu et al., 2016), using Internet marketing capabilities is more advantageous for companies, especially for small business. However, industry, export market, age of companies and the responsibility for an international marketing position do not significantly support the relationships.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Internet marketing capabilities (IMC)	1	.028	.128	.046	.951	.916	.243	.029	.234	.730
2. Information availability (IA)		1	.431	.026	.906	.356	.099	.336	.132	.162
3. International strategic orientation (ISO)			1	.215	.534	.819	.120	.812	.856	.640
4. International network capabilities (INC)				1	.363	.138	.723	.043	.072	.221
5. International market growth (IMG)					1	.462	.271	.645	.642	.104
6. Industries						1	.111	.202	.158	.002
7. Export markets							1	.855	.453	.086
8. Size of business								1	.000	.572
9. Age of companies									1	.844
10. Position responsibility for international										1

\*p <.05

## 2) Hypotheses testing

All of the regression coefficients H1 and H5 are positively maintained; however there are five hypotheses (H2, H3, H4, H6) are negatively maintained (Table 3). The findings will be presented below:

Table 3 indicates that the results of regression analysis between the independent and dependent variables.

To test hypothesis 1, the Internet marketing capabilities are related to the information available with control variables, and the variable predicted that the Internet marketing capabilities had a positive relationship with information availability ( $\beta = 0.389$ ,  $p = < 0.05$ ). The result of hypothesis 2 was that the information availability had a negative relationship with international strategic orientation ( $\beta = -.144$ ,  $p = < 0.05$ ).

Hypothesis 3 resulted in there being a negative perception of Internet marketing capabilities and having a negative impact on international strategic orientation ( $\beta = 0.275$ ,  $p = < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 4 showed that international strategic orientation had a negative impact on international market growth ( $\beta = 0.114$ ,  $p = < 0.05$ ). In contrast, Hypothesis 5, which are the company usages of Internet marketing capabilities, show a positive association for international network capabilities ( $\beta = 0.356$ ,  $p = < 0.05$ ). Hypothesis 6, proposed that international strategic orientation was positively associated with international network capabilities, conversely the result showed that there was a negative relationship ( $\beta = 0.225$ ,  $p = < 0.05$ ), and hypothesis 7 international network capabilities had a negative relationship with international market growth ( $\beta = -.166$ ,  $p = < 0.05$ ).

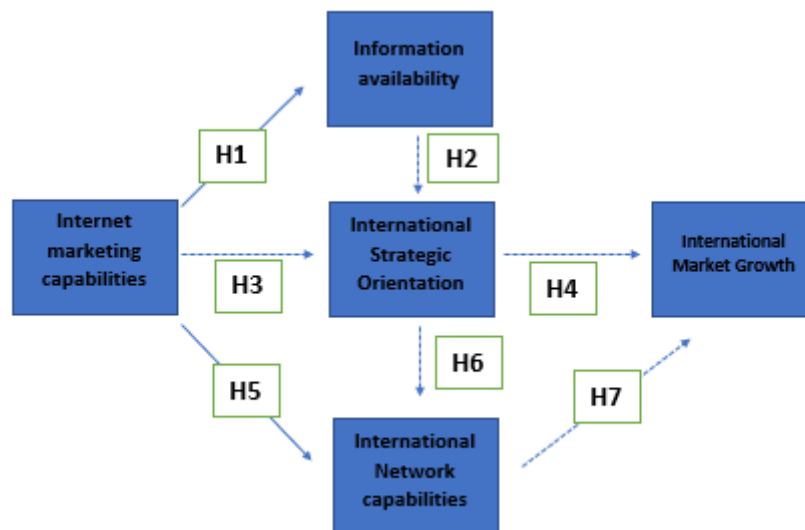


Figure 2: Final model

## Discussions

In this discussion, this study has drawn on RBV and capabilities (Makadok, 2001; Schu et al., 2016) to test and develop a conceptual model regarding consideration of the Internet network capabilities on the international business of market growth in a Thai company context. In these findings, using data from Thai exporters, this study contributes to previous research which needed to test a model in different contexts (Mathews et al., 2016). In addition, this study has extended a previous research by using Internet marketing capabilities which influence international market growth. In these findings, this study found that Internet marketing capabilities in the context of Thai companies had positively affected information availability and international network capabilities. This study presented the use of Internet technology for international marketing activities such as marketing and online advertising, e-commerce, and marketing research. The conclusion is that the use of Internet technology for international marketing activities does not have a

significant direct effect on international market growth. These results were similar that integrated RBV and capabilities arguing that using Internet marketing capabilities are important, but only for international opportunities (Bianchi & Mathews, 2016).

Hypothesis	Positive/Negative
H1: Internet Marketing capabilities are positively associated with information availability	Positive
H2: Information availability is positively associated with international strategic orientation	Negative
H3: International marketing capabilities are positively associated with international strategic orientation	Negative
H4: International strategic orientation is positively associated with international market growth	Negative
H5: Internet marketing capabilities are positively associated with international network capabilities	Positive
H6: International strategic orientation is positively associated with international network capabilities	Negative
H7: International network capabilities are positively associated with international market growth	Negative

Furthermore, the findings of this study are that Internet marketing capabilities were significantly supportive to the available information for exporters. This result is similar to previous studies (Bianchi & Mathews, 2016; Mathews et al., 2016; Mathews et al., 2018; Reuber & Fischer, 2011), which have a positive impact of Internet marketing capabilities and information availability on international context. The findings in this study show that Internet marketing capabilities have a positive link to international network capabilities, but there is an indirect effect between international network capabilities and international market growth.

#### Conclusion, limitation and future research directions

The study examined the international business context of Thai companies with Internet marketing capabilities and the link between information availability, international network capabilities, international strategic orientation and how Thai companies are possibly using the Internet from which they derive the international market growth of Thai companies. This research has some limitations. This research has a limitation of the collection data, there are a very low number of participants (n = 32), but this study was similar to other response rates from other researchers in international business fields using an invitation e-mail survey (Bianchi & Mathews, 2016). This study investigated only one country, in future research this would be extended to other countries. Additionally, much of the literature mentions that studies should be carried out on SMEs due to the fact that they have limited resources, yet they could gain more opportunities using Internet marketing capabilities. Secondly, they could carry out further studies on using the Internet for new market strategies. Finally, this study found that Internet marketing capabilities could further focus other perspectives such as export performance.

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Mr. Puttipong Anantasophon is full lecturer of the Business Management Department at Sripatum University. He is currently PhD student at National Institute of Development Administration. He has been visiting lecturer in different institute from Thailand. His research interests include, international marketing capabilities, logistics and supply chain, and systematic literature methods in operation management. He has joined top conference, British Academy of Management, and Production and Operation Management.

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