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A STUDY OF THE
INFORMATION ACQUISITION BEHAVIOUR
OF SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED MANUFACTURING
ENTERPRISES IN NEW ZEALAND



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ABSTRACT

Access to scientific and technological information enables companies to be more aware of new developments in technology and the resources available for obtaining and using the technology correctly. Harnessing a clear understanding of the technological and market environment is essential for most small businesses to improve their competitive position and face up to increasing national and international competition.

This study investigates the information acquisition behaviour of small and medium sized manufacturing enterprises (SMEs) in New Zealand, where SMEs not only dominate manufacturing employment but constitute 99.5% of all New Zealand companies.

Using a questionnaire methodology, this thesis reports an empirical study of the information acquisition characteristics and performance of 132 SMEs. Recent years have witnessed increasing international interest by academics, managers and policy writers, in the role of information within the business environment. However, information acquisition is seldom publicly discussed in relation to SMEs and is significantly absent from scholarship. To date very few studies have investigated how SMEs acquire information, how they disseminate this resource through their organisation and subsequently, if any barriers inhibit effective information infusion.

The results of this thesis demonstrate that SME owner/managers rely heavily on their own personal experience and judgment when making decisions. Information acquisition within SMEs is primarily a reactive procedure, where information is acquired to solve a specific problem. Criteria such as the inhibiting feature of individualism, a lack of managerial competence, resource deficiencies and the turbulent economic environment facing SMEs, suggest there is merit in seeking government support to develop an information assistance programme for the small business sector.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	4
2.1 Introduction	4
2.2 Information Acquisition	7
2.3 The Significance of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises	9
2.4 Large Business Information Acquisition Theory	13
2.5 Small Business Information Acquisition Theory	15
2.6 International Small Business Information Acquisition Studies	18
2.7 New Zealand's Small Information Acquisition Studies and Associated Policy Implications	22
2.8 Conclusion	26
3. THESIS DEVELOPMENT	27
4. METHODOLOGY	29
4.1 Sample Selection	29
4.2 Questionnaire Design	30
4.3 Response Rate	31
4.4 Critique of the Methodology	32

4.5	Characteristics of the Sample	33
5.	RESEARCH RESULTS	38
5.1	Information Uptake	39
5.2	Information Dissemination	48
5.3	SME Knowledge Requirement	49
5.4	Barriers to Information Acquisition	53
5.5	SME Innovation and R&D	54
5.6	Information Acquisition Correlations	57
6.	COMPARISON OF RESULTS & DISCUSSION	63
7.	CONCLUSION	75
8.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	79
9.	APPENDICES	89
1.	Covering Letter	
2.	Information Acquisition Questionnaire	

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1: The Information Life Cycle
- Figure 2: The Information Triangle
- Figure 3: Information Acquisition by Innovative Companies
- Figure 4: Age of Company by Industry Sector
- Figure 5: Turnover of Company by Industry Sector
- Figure 6: Predominant Markets of Sample Exporters
- Figure 7: Resources Used for Information Acquisition
- Figure 8: SME Personnel Dedicated to Information Collection
- Figure 9: Information Acquisition Personnel Vs Information Resource Count
- Figure 10: Regularity of Information Searches
- Figure 11: Transfer of Collected Information
- Figure 12: Knowledge Requirement for Technology Investigation
- Figure 13: Perceived Barriers to Information Acquisition
- Figure 14: Sources of SME Innovation
- Figure 15: Allocation of R&D Expenditure
- Figure 16: Theoretical SME Classification Model Based on Information Acquisition Behaviour
- Figure 17: The Information Process

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	The Significance of SMEs in New Zealand
Table 2:	Percentage of Time Owner/Managers Search For External Information by Type
Table 3:	Industry Classification of Respondent SMEs
Table 4:	Location of the Respondents Subsidiary Company
Table 5:	Employment Levels by Industry Sector
Table 6:	Percentage of Total Sales Exported by Industry Sector
Table 7:	Contingency Table of Total Staff Numbers Vs Information Resource Count
Table 8:	Frequency Table of Personnel Dedicated to Information Searches by Industry Sector
Table 9:	Contingency Table of Total Staff Numbers Vs Information Acquisition Personnel
Table 10:	Contingency Table of Information Acquisition Personnel Vs Information Resource Count
Table 11:	SME Information Search Procedures
Table 12:	Contingency Table of Information Acquisition Personnel Vs Information Dissemination
Table 13:	Frequency Table of Target Information Sector by Industry Sector
Table 14:	Contingency Table of Knowledge Sector Targeted For New Information Vs Competitive Strategy of the SME
Table 15:	Frequency Table of SME Technology Acquisition
Table 16:	Contingency Table of Export Performance Vs Information Resource Count
Table 17:	Contingency Table of Innovation Performance Vs Information Resource Count
Table 18:	Contingency Table of Competitive Strategy Vs Information Resource Count
Table 19:	Contingency Table of R&D Performance Vs Information Resource Count
Table 20:	Contingency Table of Turnover Performance Vs Information Resource Count