

**PURCHASE DECISION VARIABLES IN INTERNATIONAL INDUSTRIAL MARKETS:
AN EMPIRICAL EXPLORATION**

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Abstract

Relatively little empirical attention has been devoted to the purchasing side of the international business transaction, as contrasted with the plethora of empirical studies investigating problems and issues pertaining to export marketing activities. Nonetheless, the importing function is equally important in the process of international business, as problems rooted in the import side may affect adversely the establishment, development and maintenance of international business relationships. On the export side, a serious problem often encountered by firms in foreign markets is access to attractive distribution networks, due in part to the lack of understanding among exporters of those elements influencing the import decision making process. If exporting companies could develop awareness of overseas distributors' import supply source selection criteria, they would then be able to design and implement effective export marketing programs. The focus of this

study is an investigation of international supplier selection criteria of UK importing distributors trading with US exporting manufacturers of industrial products. In this context, an attempt is made to explore the underlying structure of overseas supplier selection criteria and examine potential differences in such choice criteria based upon degree of import dependence. The results highlight the crucial role that certain product offer and supplier characteristic elements play in influencing overseas supplier selection decisions. It was also found that a number of international supplier selection criterion dimensions were significantly associated with the level of export dependence. They include: product support services; international brand portfolio; payment facilities; and supplier reliability. These findings have important implications for business practitioners and public policy makers concerned with export development and success.