

Institution: Anglia Ruskin University
Unit of Assessment: C19 Business and Management Studies
Title of case study: The internationalisation of SMEs in the Assistive Care Sector
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The Lord Ashcroft International Business School (LAIBS) has had ongoing impact on SMEs and their internationalisation. The underlying research by Mughan and Lloyd-Reason successfully made the case for regional support to encourage and stimulate export activity. Following on from this work, the CURA-B project has had impacts for SMEs, economic support agencies, key customers and knowledge centres in the Assistive Technology (AT) sector. LAIBS has worked with SMEs, economic support agencies and key customers in coaching and consultative roles and through hosted large-scale engagements. LAIBS has helped shape the ecology of the support infrastructure now being put in place in the East of England, West Flanders, Nord-Pas-de-Calais and Zeeland.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research that underpins this impact case study was undertaken at LAIBS by Professor Mughan (employed 2000-2012), Professor Wall (employed 2000-2011), Sear (employed 2010-present) and Professor Lloyd-Reason (1992-present). It identifies the importance of regional development policy, regional support agencies and higher education institutions for successful internationalisation of SMEs.</p> <p>This research began in 2000 with the report 'Competing Effectively in International Markets' (2002-03; £180,509) commissioned by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA). At this time, EEDA knew very little about the international activities of SMEs in the region. Based on a survey of over 1,000 international SMEs plus 80 interviews with relevant stakeholders, this research identified the need for a clear, regional international trade strategy involving regional support agencies (Mughan, Lloyd-Reason, Wall, 2000), and provided policy advice based on an original typology of firms and the kinds of support each type needed (Selassie, Mathews, Mughan, 2004). Subsequent research argued that private consultancies were not motivated to provide the right support for internationalisation and that therefore 'knowledge centres' (e.g. Universities) as well as public sector regional brokers were also essential actors in the business ecosystem (Mughan, Lloyd-Reason, Zimmerman, 2004).</p> <p>Building on this research, Lloyd-Reason advised the Review of Revised International Strategy for the Eastern Region (2003; £9,050), undertaken by EEDA and later the UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) (Eastern Region). He and his team were invited to participate in key projects funded by UKTI, Trade Partners UK (TPUK) and i10 on improving internationalisation amongst SMEs, notably:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Trade Development in the Eastern Region (TPUK)</i> (2003; £39,050). Through this project, Lloyd-Reason's research contributed to the development of the 'Passport to Export' programme, still in use by the UKTI. This project also built the internationalisation 'Tool Box' for SMEs (training in business plan development, cross-cultural knowledge and practical language skills). Lloyd-Reason's work (UKTI: Review of Data Collection Methods by International Trade Teams, 2004; £8,600) also enhanced the performance of the EEDA's International Trade Advisors through improving their data collection and market analysis skills. • <i>High International Growth and the Higher Education Resource (H.I.G.H.E.R.) for i10</i> (2006), the HEFCE-funded Centre for Knowledge Exchange. This looked at how high-growth SMEs could implement sustainable international growth strategies, and reinforced earlier findings that access to support services was essential. • <i>Meeting the Development Needs of Experienced Exporters</i> (UKTI) (2007; £20,000). A market-sizing exercise by Mughan and Lloyd-Reason for a sustainable support package for high-growth international SMEs in the East of England region. <p>A study on the impact of e-trading on internationalisation (Lloyd-Reason, Hutchinson, Fleck, 2009) again pointed to the critical role of support agencies. The internet, they found, made international trade easier but also intensified competition. Regional support agencies, they argued, had a key</p>

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role to play (through training, making firms aware of trade opportunities, facilitating the building of trade networks) in giving local firms an edge internationally.

Mughan's most recent work (2012) reinforces the importance of support agencies, for the Export Promotion Service (EPS) in Turkey, which was seen by the firms studied as essential in improving organisational competencies in building stakeholder relations, researching international opportunities and market intelligence gathering.

3. References to the research

- 1) Mughan, T., 2000. 'Competing Effectively in International Markets: SMEs and the "Internationalisation Web"', in Lloyd-Reason, L. and Wall, S., Dimensions of Competitiveness: Issues and Policies, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 76-89. *Note: This paper drew on the Competing Effectively in International Markets EEDA funded study. (Available from HEI)*
- 2) Selassie, H., Mathews, B. and Mughan, T., 2004. 'Internationalisation Factors and Firm Size: An Empirical Study of the East of England', in McDonald, F., Mayer, M. and Buck, B., The Process of Internationalization: Strategic, Cultural and Policy Perspectives, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 175-193. *Note: This paper is based on the same survey data but is a quantitative analysis of firm factors bearing on export success. (Available from HEI)*
- 3) Lloyd-Reason, L and Sear, L., 2007. 'The Role of SMEs in the Global Economy', in Lloyd-Reason, L. and Sear, L., ed.2007. Trading Places: Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in the Global Economy - A Critical Research Handbook, Cheltenham. *Note: This chapter builds further on the EEDA funded research. (Available from HEI)*
- 4) Mughan, T., Lloyd-Reason, L. and Zimmerman, C., 2004. Management Consulting and International Business Support for SMEs: Need and obstacles, Education and Training, Vol.46 no.8/9, Special Issue: Critical perspectives of VET in a small business context, pp. 424-432. DOI [10.1108/00400910410569542](https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910410569542)
- 5) Hutchinson, K., Fleck, E and Lloyd-Reason, L., 2009. 'The Role of Business Support Organisations in the process of Retailer Internationalisation', International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, Vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 371-388 *This research was funded by the UKTI. DOI:10.1080/09593960903331378*
- 6) Durmuşoğlu, S. S., Apfelthaler, G., Nayir, D.Z., Alvarez, R. and Mughan, T.,2012. The Effect of Government-Designed Export Promotion Service Use on Small and medium-sized Enterprise Goal Achievement: A Multidimensional View of export Performance, Industrial Marketing Management, Vol. 41, no. 4, pp.680-691. DOI: 10.1016/j.indmarman.2011.09.016

Grants

- 1) Trade Development in the Eastern Region, 2003, Trade Partners UK, Cambridge; value: £39,050.
- 2) High International Growth and the Higher Education Resource (H.I.G.H.E.R.), 2006, i10, Cambridge; value: £128,771.
- 3) Meeting the Development Needs of Experienced Exporters, 2006, UK Trade and Investment (UKTI), Cambridge; value: £20,000.

4. Details of the impact

There are two strands to the impact of the research during the current REF evaluation period. The first is the continued impact of the project undertaken for Trade Partners UK on Trade Development in the Eastern Region (TPUK 2003). This developed the internationalisation 'Tool Box' for SMEs and refined the development of the 'Passport to Export'. When EEDA was disbanded in 2012, some of its functions were taken on by UKTI. The role of the UKTI is to work with UK-based businesses to ensure their success in international markets, continues to use the 'Tool Box', and the 'Passport to Export' programme remains an important part of their service.

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Case studies on the UKTI website testify to the nature of this impact.

The second strand is manifest in a collaborative project on acCURAte Business in the cure and care market (CURA-B). On the strength of our research on SMEs, internationalisation and regional development, in 2009 LAIBS was invited by Suffolk County Council to join an application to the European Regional Development Fund for funding to enhance regional economies through innovation and international trade in the healthcare sector. The outcome was the CURA-B project (2011-2014) involving 10 partners from regions that border the North Sea in the Netherlands, Belgium, France and UK.

CURA-B's goal is improving trade and innovation in AT (i.e. technologies that support independent living for citizens who are ageing or have chronic illnesses). Its approach and composition were shaped by the body of research on SME internationalisation by Mughan, Lloyd-Reason and colleagues. Specifically, the focus of the project is on improving regional infrastructure through collaboration between regional development agencies (i.e. EEDA), local government (i.e. Suffolk County Council), health and social care providers and knowledge actors, including those who are partners in the project.

We continue to bring our underpinning research to bear on the project's practices through participating in the project management team. Building on insights and findings from our underpinning research, the project has implemented ways to help SMEs in the AT sector to overcome the considerable barriers to domestic and international trade. These include the establishment of regional networks, networking events and trials of new technologies and services. We have introduced the concepts of the business model canvas, business-ecosystems and the triple helix to enable non-academic partners to re-think the design and delivery of services and support for internationalisation. As a project partner, we also provide coaching for the project's pilot studies, thereby demonstrating the value of disinterested knowledge actors in regional support systems.

Through this project, our underpinning research has influenced the approaches, practices and understanding of regional development agencies, local authorities, and health and social care and SMEs, as follows:

As a direct result of participating in this project, two of the regional development partners have set up new networks for cooperation and learning between SMEs and health and social care providers, one of which is the East of England Assistive Technologies Network (EEAT), established by the NHS innovation hub Health Enterprise East. In addition to regular network events, EEAT has organized a 'Dragons' Den' to meet the AT needs of Suffolk County Council and identified 30 suitable SMEs to participate. Positive feedback from SMEs testifies to the importance they attach to this Network as a neutral space in which to meet healthcare and social care providers. These activities, including the Dragons Den event, will continue after the project has finished. Similarly, the economic development agency N.V. Economische Impuls Zeeland has established the Santé Zeeland network. These networks, which will be sustained beyond the end of the project (March 2014), would not have come into existence but for the CURA-B project. The project has thus had direct impacts on how support agencies and HEIs engage with Assistive Technology SMEs in our own and partner regions. The work of bringing SMEs, providers and HEIs together will also continue with a new €460,000 ERDF project, Biz-4-age, on business opportunities in healthy aging and internationalization.

As a direct result of participation in this project, partners are conducting trials of new technologies and services. The regional development agency of North West Flanders and VIVES University College Bruges are working with an SME to assess the effects of innovative 'tunable white' lighting technology on dementia. Bruges regional development agency and VIVES University College Kortrijk are developing a portal for non-medical services for the elderly, and the Zeeland regional development agency is piloting the use of a UK test for the detection of dementia. A consortium of Zeelandic SMEs will also establish a number of concept homes to stimulate innovation in the field of healthy ageing. West Suffolk Hospital is using 'new to the UK' Bluetooth blood-sugar monitors from the US. In all of the above, the LAIBS project team is offering coaching on business-model thinking and cost-benefit analysis, including, for example, gathering evidence of the likely benefits of the blood-sugar monitor to the NHS Trust.

Beyond the immediate project partners, the project is also having an impact on SMEs through their participation in the trials, and in the project's cross-border conference, who testify that they are now more effectively engaging with growing AT markets.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- 1) Impact from Passport to Export
<http://www.ukti.gov.uk/export/howwehelp/passporttoexport.html>
- 2) CURA-B, "INTERREG IV A "2 Mers Seas Zeeën" Cross-border Cooperation Programme, 06-010-NL CURA-B, 2007-2013 <http://www.interreg4a-2mers.eu/projects/approved-projects-database/en?id=16112>
- 3) <http://www.cura-b.eu/partners>
- 4) East of England Assistive Technologies Network (EEAT) <http://www.hee.org.uk/networks-to-support-and-promote-innovation/>
- 5) N.V. Economische Impuls Zeeland has established a pilot network, Santé Zeeland, <http://www.cura-b.eu/pilot/pilot-%E2%80%98sant%C3%A9-zeeland%E2%80%99>
- 6) <http://www.cura-b.eu/pilots> - webpage that hosts the CURA-B pilot cases
- 7) Factual statement from HEE on the benefits of the East of England Assistive Technologies Network for SMEs in the region. Dr Anne Blackwood, Chief Executive of Health Enterprise East Ltd.
- 8) Factual statement(s) from CURA-B partners on how our underpinning research has had a positive impact on the conduct of the project / and its impact on their activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding. Ann Overmeire, Head of Knowledge, Innovation and Technology at POM in West Flanders.
- 9) Factual statement from SME of positive impact of participation in CURA-B. Tony Decavele, Sales Manager, Tronixx, Belgium.
- 10) Factual statement from SME of positive impact of events and networks (EEAT and Santé Zeeland). Stuart Arnott, founder and owner of Mindings.