

3.0 Client Behaviour, Needs and Segmentation

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The research showed that the information needs of clients vary on the basis of:

- the stage they are at in entering international markets and their level of export activity;
- the size of the business and the associated level of risk from foreign market development or investment;
- the role in the organization (e.g. senior executives versus operational managers);
- the business sector and nature of business transactions; and
- the advocacy role of organizations (i.e. commercial businesses versus associations).

Stage of Export Market Development

Exhibit 1 shows that information needs may differ depending on the stage companies are at in developing export markets. In the first stage, businesses investigate the potential of a foreign market. This involves gathering information on the general business environment in target countries or regions. For product manufacturers, it may also involve gathering information on market potential (e.g. demographic statistics).

Once companies have assessed the market potential and general business environment, they seek specific information which helps them to enter new markets. For example, they may search for information on potential distributors, partnership opportunities, risk support activities (mostly the availability of letters of credit, export insurance) and, ultimately, sales leads.