Although International Marketing is a part of this book’s title, one very quickly gets the impression that relationship marketing is the true emphasis. In fact, some of the chapter material applies equally well to domestic marketing. This is not a “how to” perform international marketing manual, nor a textbook, rather, the authors’ objective is to offer a new perspective on how the international marketer adds value to the organization. Blending the “relational” with “analytical” behavior generates this value. The authors claim that managers who have had a good B-school education (with emphasis on the “analytical”), but who lack international experience, find that there is a wide gap between what they learned in the classroom and the way the world works (emphasis on the “relational”). This gap is caused, according to the authors, by a lack of emphasis in classroom instruction on the importance of the human relationship, one that is essential for success in international (or domestic) business. How the human relationship may be applied is suggested through three models: individual behavior, MAC (memory, affect and cognition) and organizational behavior, SILK (Social Information, Learning and Knowledge) and PASSION (human factors).

Chapters 1 and 2 are introductions to the book’s methodology. In Chapter 1 the authors lay the groundwork for their approach. Chapter 2 gives a synopsis for the uninitiated of relationship marketing with some applications to exporters and distributors.

Chapter 3 begins the discussion of the first (SILK) of the three models that form the basis for the book. In this chapter, the organization is treated as an organism whose survival depends upon its ability to convert social (implicit) information to learning (SI → L) and finally to knowledge (K). This process occurs in three stages beginning with personal relationships between managers in the firm and business partners outside (dyads), the creation of conduits for the flow of information through the firm and finally, its conversion into organizational (explicit) knowledge. At this stage knowledge can be shared throughout the entire firm. A number of examples and anecdotes are given to ease understanding of the nomenclature.

While Chapter 3 deals with organizational learning, Chapter 4 examines information processing on the individual level. Here, the authors challenge the fundamental assumption of rationality (Information → Cognition → Behavior) as the basis of consumer and marketer decision making. In its place, they offer an alternative, the MAC (Memory → Affect → Cognition) model. Cognition still influences behavior, but within the context of feelings that, according to the authors, are a necessary condition for decision making. The authors assert that the rationality thesis has not been adequately challenged in B-school curricula. Perhaps this may be true at Harvard (according to the example in the book), however, this reviewer had a different experience elsewhere. In any case, the rationality school has its opponents, not only among marketing scholars, but among some economists since the 1940s (cf. Katona, 1940, 1960).

How may the MAC model be applied? The authors give examples of consumer research, which...
precedes many, if not most marketing decisions. Don't accept the results of research, they say, unless they are based on experience (M) and attitudes (A). Yet, experiential/attitudinal research is only as good as the interpreter, whom I might add, also contributes his/her own cognitive input to the results. Moreover, experiential/attitudinal research requires costly (and time consuming) test markets in cases where consumer experience with new product offerings is lacking. One thing that most of us will agree with is that research of any kind should never be used to justify prior decisions.

The PASSION model (Chapter 6) stands for Purpose (focus) and (shared) identity, Animal Spirits, Social Information and Knowledge. It is thus an extension of SILK. Much research into corporate reputation and identity buttresses the authors’ emphasis on the importance of a shared focus for the organization. The AS of PASSION stands for Animal Spirits, which may be understood as some biological force that emits creativity, instinct, and sensing on the part of both management and workers. While the authors concede that there is no formula for instilling animal spirits, employees are motivated in that direction if they know that not only will they be heard, but that their contributions will be implemented. To be successful, an organization must have a common purpose, animal spirits and then knowledge, in that order.

Having spread the knowledge of SILK, MAC and PASSION, the authors apply them in subsequent chapters to a number of persistent international marketing problems such as dealing with cultural diversity, global advertising campaigns, the “it won't work here” syndrome, segmentation and e-commerce. While some of the suggestions sound familiar, others are innovative. In summary, it is the authors’ thesis that visionary, motivated, people determine an organization’s success, more than (but not without) mathematical formulas, planning schema and economic analysis. While, some of the ideas expressed in this book may seem difficult to implement in practice, they are nevertheless worthy of consideration.

References
