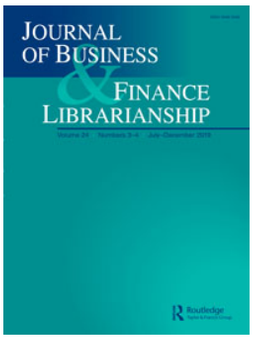

Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship

ISSN: 0896-3568 (Print) 1547-0644 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/wbfl20

The competitive intelligence consultancy – a new information resource for decision making in the business sector: the case of Spain

Antonio Muñoz-Cañavate, Marta Herrera-Barragán & Pedro Hípola

To cite this article: Antonio Muñoz-Cañavate, Marta Herrera-Barragán & Pedro Hípola (2019) The competitive intelligence consultancy – a new information resource for decision making in the business sector: the case of Spain, Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship, 24:3-4, 96-122, DOI: 10.1080/08963568.2019.1693850

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/08963568.2019.1693850

JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & FINANCE LIBRARIANSHIP
2019, VOL. 24, NOS. 3–4, 96–122
https://doi.org/10.1080/08963568.2019.1693850

The competitive intelligence consultancy – a new information resource for decision making in the business sector: the case of Spain

Antonio Muñoz-Cañavate[a], Marta Herrera-Barragán[b], and Pedro Hípola[c]

[a]Universidad de Extremadura, Badajoz, Spain; [b]Diputación de Badajoz, Badajoz, Spain; [c]Universidad Internacional de La Rioja, Madrid, Spain

ABSTRACT

The globalization of the economy has meant that firms increasingly need a great variety of information, which may be about its competitors, suppliers, distributors, potential customers, but also about technological, legal, sociological, about access to markets, etc. That information may refer to a single country or many. The Internet has led to the multiplication of business information resources, but, with the huge quantity of open access information resources being joined to the electronic information industry, retrieval of that information and endowing it with added value requires highly qualified personnel. Corporate librarians cannot always fulfill that function. That is why Competitive Intelligence consulting firms are beginning to proliferate worldwide since they provide a fundamental point of support for firms to be able to deal with all this information. By means of prior analyses, these firms generate "ad hoc" informative products for their corporate clients. The present work is an exhaustive description of this sector in Spain – its size, forms of operation, services offered, and sectors to which they are directed. This description may serve to help business librarians, brokers, and managers know whom they can turn to in their countries to resolve an informational problem whose complexity they can not address without external assistance.

KEYWORDS

Competitive intelligence; consultancy; information resources; support for company library; Spain

1. Introduction

A lot has changed in recent decades concerning the processes to keep up with knowledge of the information resources needed for decision making in the business world – how to gather that information, evaluate it, and prepare the final informative product. The traditional electronic information industry that existed before the expansion of the Internet underwent a profound transformation with the arrival of this network of networks. The Internet laid the technical foundations for the creators and producers of

CONTACT Antonio Muñoz-Cañavate amuncan@unex.es Faculty of Information and Communication. University of Extremadura. Avda. de Elvas s/n, 06071 Badajoz, Spain.

information to be able to get their resources out directly to the end user. This led to the many intermediaries either being displaced along the chain of information or directly disappearing from it. Also, many public and private organizations began to digitize their content, allowing the primary documents to be made directly available to users (Muñoz-Cañavate & Hipola 2015). In recent decades, we have been witnessing a stage in which "open access" policies have made a huge source of data available to users through a low-cost channel – the Internet. In the public sphere, the "*Green Paper on Public Sector Information in the Information Society*" published by the European Commission in 1998, COM (1998) 585 (European Commission, 1998), noted that Europe's information was scattered and fragmented, and that the issue was not about the Member States producing more information, but about making the information that was already available to the public clearer and more accessible.

Thus, phenomena such as disintermediation and open access policies have multiplied the information resources that a business librarian or documentalist has to monitor and manage. In parallel with this, the new information management tools have provided business librarians with new ways of working. In the 1990s, the name of BP Nutrition's librarian Michel Bauwens became popular. He was one of the people who most advanced the concept of "virtual library". Beset by economic problems, his firm had to fire library and documentation center personnel, and Bauwens had to carry out their tasks by himself, for which he created a totally electronic environment. As he himself explained, the basis of his work philosophy had three levels: (i) interconnection with colleagues inside and outside the firm and with teams of experts, which implies also interconnecting with personnel in different departments of the firm whom he could share knowledge; (ii) institutional memory, in that the information professional works to safeguard the organization's memory, obviating the possibility of its managers losing that shared and common memory; and (iii) outsourcing, which Bauwens sees as the principle behind the information specialist's work, as an idea that is contrary to doing everything oneself. Bauwens explained it in this way: "*They pay us to be creative, and we have to avoid everything that prevents us from being creative. As soon as I identify a need for information, I either automate it or subcontract it so that I can get it done outside, at the university for example. This frees me from routine, and I can devote myself to looking for another need for information, in a constant process of innovation*" (Bauwens, 1994).

The last of the levels points us to the function of business information consultants. These functions are classic, but demand for them has grown in recent years as a result of the aforementioned dramatic increase in information resources. The over-abundance of these resources can at times

hinder their appropriate selection. Indeed, one result of economic globalization has been a more complex world with information requirements that are ever more complicated and confusing.

The work that the reader has before them describes this sector in Spain. We think that its radiography is extrapolatable to other countries of similar economies. In particular, we think that information professionals in the business world (business librarians working in special libraries, academic libraries, and public libraries, and any other professional working in business information centers outside the traditional library environment) can find similarities with the situation in their own countries.

It is also necessary to point out that, although disintermediation has been a constant in recent years with the user accessing the final source directly, the need to offer an elaborated product whose analysis of the information provides added value to the end user requires professionals of this type. This article thus argues for the figure of the consultant in Competitive Intelligence and the Intelligence consulting firm as efficacious instruments for the business librarian, in the same line that Michel Bauwens suggested in 1994, allowing tasks to be outsourced so as to maximize the work of a firm's librarians and documentalists.

In the following paragraphs, we shall describe the discipline – Competitive Intelligence – which forms the framework for this type of consultancy, the reality of this sector in Spain, and the study that we applied to firms in this sector in Spain.

During the last few decades, a scenario in which firms compete has emerged worldwide where temporal-spatial borders vanish, new business models are developed, and firms discover new strategies with which to obtain competitive advantages. All of the above implies that managers need to be au fait with advances in society and technology, accelerations in globalization, and changing competitive environments and customer preferences so as to be aware of the new challenges and opportunities that have been created for them (Spender, 2015).

To improve their competitiveness and their managers' decision-making process, firms have to resort to obtaining and analyzing the information found in their environment. Little research has been done on firms selling their consulting services in Competitive Intelligence (CI). The authors set out to seek a methodological approach to determining the structure of this sector.

The objective of this work was to address knowledge of this type of consultancy, and, to this end, a method was designed that can be used in different countries of the world. The present study applies this method to Spain. Its conclusions should be similar to those that would be obtained for other countries of a similar socio-economic context.

CI is a process that firms and institutions use to improve their decision-making procedures. It is marked by various phases. It begins with the identification of information needs, the capture of data on that information, the application of techniques of analysis to transform the data and information into intelligence, and ends by making those intelligence products available to the persons who have to make decisions.

Several studies have found that the use of CI helps firms improve their competitive position and increase their market share (Stefanikova, Rypakova, & Moravcikova, 2015). This intelligence cycle involves a structured and formal process. It is very common, however, especially in small firms, for intelligence tasks to be carried out in an informal manner, without any formalized structures to support them, adducing such problems as time, human resources, or budgetary constraints (Nenzhelele & Pellissier, 2014).

The specific work of intelligence through tasks of research (information needs, sources, etc.) and analysis can be done by the organization's staff or can be subcontracted to external suppliers. Even when a firm has intelligence analysts and a structured intelligence service, sometimes the succession of projects or the time required to devote to a single project may require external assistance, perhaps in just one phase of the intelligence tasks or in all of them. In a study carried out with a group of large firms in Spain, 60% of them indicated that they used external consultancy services in CI. Of this group, 75% also had specific intelligence departments, which obviously indicates that they relied on these external services to complement the internal service tasks (Muñoz-Cañavate & Alves-Albero, 2017). Thus, the tendency towards subcontracting the tasks of Competitive Intelligence begins to generalize in the world (Muller, 2009) and recommendations arise to select the best service (Blenkhorn & Fleisher, 2005).

It is necessary to point out that outsourcing services is not a new concept. This activity consists in a firm contracting an external agent (person or firm) to perform a job they are specialized in, so as to reduce costs and/or gain efficiency, and that they have been developing over a long time. One type of external provider is the consulting service. While, as an institution, consultancy has its antecedents in the 19th century, given its raison d'être it can be considered to be an activity that has always existed, with its origins in the elders of primitive tribes and in Hellenistic culture which was supported by experts to resolve problems of supply, storage, and distribution (López, León, & Portela, 2007). One can affirm that modern consultancy had its origin during the Industrial Revolution (Kubr, 2002), and then developed in parallel with the first movements of the scientific organization of work.

In the case of Spain, the first consulting firms began to appear in the mid-twentieth century, although it was in the 1990s that they underwent

great growth and expansion (Ribeiro, 1998). Consulting services are a useful support for organizations and fundamental for the professionals working in them, since they facilitate an overall external vision of the organization that is not conditioned by its own dynamics and the circumstances surrounding it. They can count on the knowledge of specialist professionals, they have accumulated experience in specific areas of activity, and they can intensify working capacity by concentrating it in a specific area and time (Rodríguez, 2000).

It is clear that the support structures for a firm's decision-making process may require external backing, be it in the form of public agencies through public policies to support firms in a given territory, even through the public information itself already available (Rustomfram & Robinson, 2015), or through the private information and intelligence sector. This last sells firms its services, and allows them to subcontract the entire intelligence process or part of it.

Outsourcing the entire intelligence process or part of it is already contemplated in such standards as the Spanish norm for the formalization and structuring of a monitoring and intelligence system (Aenor, 2018). McGonagle & Vella analyzed the role of external consultants in intelligence and their importance for firms (McGonagle & Vella, 1990, pp. 317–335; 2003, pp. 192–227). They gave some reasons why firms decide to outsource their intelligence tasks: (a) using an external firm to carry out the research and analysis tasks can be useful to lessen the load on the firm's own CI unit at specific moments of peak demand; (b) sometimes an external consultant is hired to check whether the results obtained justify the organization's creation of an internal unit; (c) firms look to contract externally in special circumstances such as mergers and acquisitions when the internal security of sensitive information may be especially important; (d) to commission specific research and analysis tasks about aspects that are not part of the firm's traditional areas; (e) when the firm has lacunae in both staff and experience in specific matters, and it is more appropriate to have recourse to external experts; (f) when there is little time to undertake a task; or (g) when an external point of view is needed (McGonagle & Vella, 2003, pp. 192–193). It is usual to subcontract tasks which are required in very specific thematic areas where the work of experts may be essential (for example, intellectual property), or when it is necessary to apply certain techniques of analysis (Johnson, 2002), or sensitive information is to be obtained (West, 1999). But consultants are also well versed in the problems that firms may face when they decide to expand into international markets – for example, a lack of knowledge about local cultural practices (Adidam, Gajre, & Kejriwal, 2009). Weiss and Naylor (2010) emphasize that the services of independent professionals offer

objectivity as well as familiarity with the types of sources required for competitive intelligence, since these external professionals are familiar with a wide range of sources that they have already used before. And they work from a certain distance with the organizational culture, which allows them to think laterally and find crucial aspects that would be hidden from their clients.

Intelligence training tasks can also be outsourced, helping to create the organization's own CI unit. In general, even in firms with CI units, some intelligence tasks can be carried out more effectively by an external contractor which has expertise on the collection and analysis of certain types of data (McGonagle & Vella, 2003, pp. 194–195).

The literature review process we carried out for the present paper showed there to be a shortage of research about the reality of CI consultancy, underscoring the interest of the work. This lacuna in studies of competitive intelligence consultancies may be due to the discretion with which these firms operate, given the nature of their work and the confidentiality of the analyses of their clients' information. During the investigation, the authors clearly noticed the constant doubtfulness that this type of consultancy could feel a hesitancy to participate on the part of some firms.

2. Objectives, material and methods

The object of the present study was to design a methodological approach that allows the analysis of CI companies in the countries in which this sector has been consolidated. To evaluate the efficiency of the proposed method, it was applied in practice to the current situation of the Spanish market. This test included the following steps: (a) to determine the field of firms that offer this type of service, something which had not been done exhaustively before; (b) to determine through a questionnaire the services each firm offers in order to carry out an analysis of the sector in Spain; and (c) through consulting the SABI balance sheet database (produced by Bureau Van Dijk and the firm Informa SA), to also carry out a study of the operating revenues of firms in this sector, as an indicator of growth.

The research that concluded in this study was carried out from 2016 to 2019: the listing of firms and data capture in 2016; the firms' operating revenues in 2019 (in this year, the 2017 annual accounts were reflected in the SABI database); and, in 2018, size and mobility of employees of the different firms making up the study.

2.1. Analysis of the sector in Spain

To carry out the study, we needed, first, to clearly identify the group of firms the study was to be carried out on. Thus, in 2007 only one general directory of

entities and persons related to CI in Spain was found, with only three consultancies dedicated to CI (Emecon, 2007). The directory of members of the Spanish Association for the Promotion of Competitive Intelligence (Asepic, 2011) had 17 consultancies. These directories allowed us to lay the foundations for the broader directory of firms present in Spain.

Our preliminary studies detected various issues:

a. the lack of any prior study about CI consultancy in Spain, and the consequent lack of a directory of this type of firm;
b. the discovery of some firms that we had previously classified as intelligence consultants, but that at the time of the study no longer offered these services, but did offer services in other areas of R&D + i;
c. the detection of firms that offered a mix of CI consultancy services together with other services;
d. as a consequence of the foregoing, the need to identify the firms whose primary activity was intelligence consultancy as against those in which this consulting service was secondary.

It became necessary to construct a tool with the directory of CI consultants present in Spain. The directory is a database that contains the firms' data, name, postal address, fiscal identification number, etc., on the basis of which we were able to design the rest of the study.

To this end, we had the assistance of a group of professionals from a consulting firm in Spain who are experts in the sector. This support allowed many, mostly very small, firms to be identified which were then added to the initial list.

The initial analysis of the profile of the firms raised doubts about whether some of them really offered intelligence consultancy services. We therefore decided to include in the online questionnaire (which will be described later, and is the basis of the study) a screening question asking the respondents if they really considered themselves to be CI consultants. This initial question allowing a reliable directory of consultancies in the sector to be defined was the following: "Do you consider yourself to be a consultancy dedicated to the tasks of Intelligence (identification of needs, gathering information, analysis) and/or Technological Monitoring?". The final directory of 66 consists exclusively of firms that regard themselves as such consultancies.

Finally, the study identified within the directory four types of firms dedicated to intelligence consultancy:

a. Spanish firms dedicated exclusively to the commercialization of intelligence services.

b. Multinational firms from the intelligence sector with a presence in Spain.
c. Large generalist firms in the consultancy sector, with a specific division offering intelligence services.
d. And finally, a more diverse conglomerate of firms, dedicated to very diverse tasks, but with established departments and staff to market intelligence consultancy (for example, computer firms with a division dedicated to offering intelligence tasks).

Thus, the study has been carried out to the entire census of companies, not to a sample.

2.2. Questionnaire

The information was obtained from the different consultancies through a questionnaire. To reach its final version, a pretest was carried out with four consultancies with the purpose of eliminating inconsistencies and highlighting potential issues that might generate problems with the responses. The analysts of these four consultancies made their comments either by e-mail or in telephone interviews.

The final version of the questionnaire was posted onto the Google Drive platform. It was structured into seven blocks of questions, preceded by several introductory questions that were intended – as noted above – to screen out and eliminate those consultancies which did not offer intelligence consulting services at the time of the study, although they might have offered them in the past. The objective in this case was to make a selective list of firms dedicated at the present time to the commercialization of these services.

The questionnaire is given in the Annex.

The first block of questions allowed the firms to identify the sectors towards which they directed their services. To do this, the questionnaire used as its general structure Spain's National Classification of Economic Activities (CNAE) which is designed to categorize the nation's firms, although some variations were included to allow the respondents to improve the selection of sectors. Thus, the section dedicated to "Employers of domestic workers, activities of households as employers of goods and services for their own use" was eliminated. But the classification dedicated to Services was diversified so that different sub-categories were presented as eligible: Tourism Activities, Private Security and Investigation, Debt Collection Agencies, and Commercial Information.

The second block requested the firms to indicate the services they offer their clients. The items were based on the classic structure of the CI process: (a) the identification process – needs, information sources, monitoring key intelligence factors; (b) the search, treatment, and evaluation of information process; (c)

Table 1. Types of consultancy.

Type	Questionnaires sent	Responses
A. Spanish companies dedicated exclusively to the marketing of intelligence services	35	26
B. Intelligence sector multinationals present in Spain	5	3
C. Large consulting firms, with a specific intelligence division	4	0
D. Other types of firm	22	16
Total	66	45

the information analysis process – techniques used, products generated, recommendations, etc.

The third block (as can be seen in detail in the Annex) was designed to determine the importance of the different types of documented information for the tasks of analysis. These types of information were linked to the environments on which the consultancies' clients may need intelligence, and are recurrent in classical management theory: (a) the immediate environment (formed by clients, competitors, distributors, potential partners, Public Administrations), (b) the remote environment (political and legislative situation, information about society, information about the economic situation), and (c) the technological environment.

The fourth block of the questionnaire referred to the firms' staff and the fifth block to the Monitoring and CI software platforms – whether they use them, and, if so, whether the software is acquired under license or developed by the organization itself.

The sixth block was aimed at determining the firm's primary activity and main secondary activity. It included a series of closed items that were not exclusive: complete intelligence cycle, monitoring (obtaining information), assisting firms to establish their own CI/TM units, industrial property consulting, security consulting, distribution of software for CI and setting up turnkey solutions in accordance with the client's requirements, CI training, digital marketing, and brand management. The respondents had the possibility of including other activities if they thought fit.

Finally, with block seven we sought to determine how the consultancies' activities were disseminated in order to obtain new clients.

2.3. Response rate and data analysis

Out of 66 firms, 45 responded – 68.1% of the total (Table 1). The questionnaire was designed on the Google Drive platform, and was sent out in April and May 2016.

3. Results

We shall present the results in blocks in the same order as in the online survey. The information regarding the starting date of commercializing the

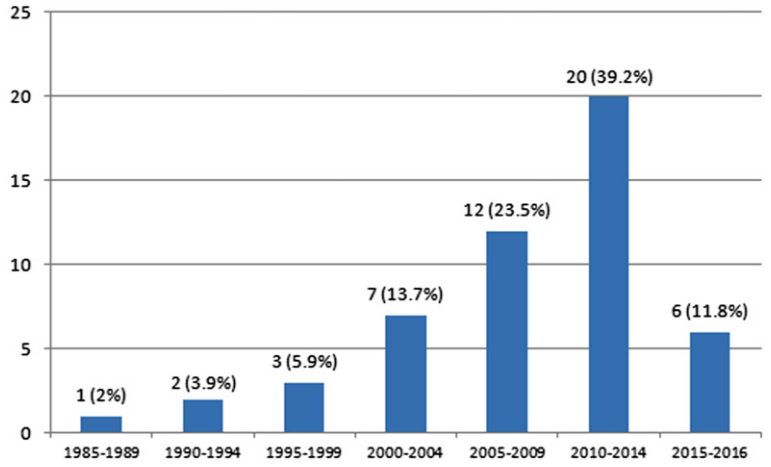

Figure 1. Year of commencement of intelligence consultancies in Spain (n = 51).

services is included in the following introductory subsection "General data of the sector", which provides an overview of the sector. This introductory section also includes the firms' operating revenues as obtained from the SABI balance sheet database.

It is important to note that the information obtained from the questionnaire is the aggregate of the national data for the total number of responses. No reference is made to the specific responses of each firm. This was a condition that all the firms were promised so as to guarantee the confidentiality of the study, because the authors thought that some of the questions might cause problems for these firms. Despite this, we found that some firms which had assured us by telephone or e-mail that they were going to respond eventually did not do so.

3.1 General data of the sector; birth of the sector and operating revenues

The dates of commencement of marketing the intelligence consultancy services shown in Figure 1 correspond to the three (out of the four) groups of consultancies which responded to the questionnaire. Despite this information being asked for in the questionnaire, for some of the firms in the first group (i.e., Spanish consultancies specifically dedicated to marketing intelligence services) which did not respond to the questionnaire we were able to extract this datum from various commercial information databases (among them, SABI of the Bureau Van Dijk). Obviously, this information was not available for the non-respondents of the group of large generalist firms in the consultancy sector which had a specific division offering intelligence services or of the last group, the mixed group of firms dedicated to very diverse activities (including intelligence consultancy). For this last group, some firms responded to the general questionnaire but did not

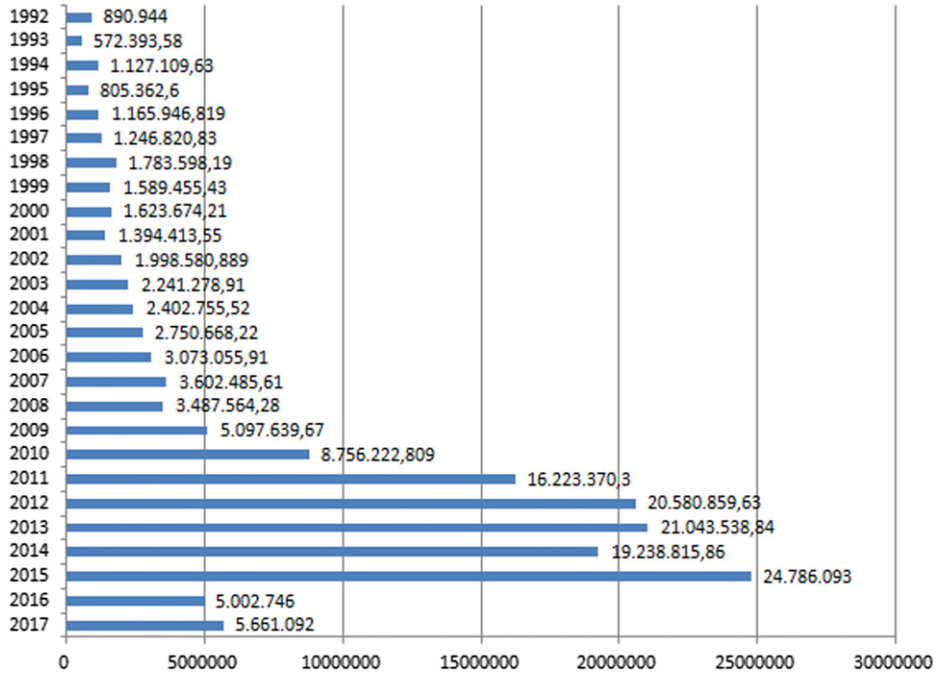

Figure 2. Operating revenues of the Groups A and B firms in euros-1992-2017- (n = 40).

provide the starting date of their intelligence consultancy services. We posit that this was perhaps because their offer in the market was very recent, and they might have thought that, if this information were made public, it would damage their image due to their lack of experience in this field. The resulting total sample for this datum consisted of 51 firms.

Figure 1 shows a progressive growth in the creation of this type of consultancy, which has intensified since 2005. Certainly in Spain in that period, there has been an eclosion of the culture of Intelligence. It is now common to come across small news items concerning this type of consultancy in the media. There are now courses and seminars on CI, which was not the case before. There are universities which have consolidated Master's courses in Intelligence, producing analysts who have been creating their own companies or finding employment in the analysis of Intelligence. And Spain's secret services through the CNI (National Intelligence Center) have been fostering this culture to make the country's companies more competitive.

Figure 2 shows the operating revenues of the Groups A and B consultancies who formed part of the study, i.e., those specifically dedicated to intelligence tasks. The figures were extracted from the Bureau Van Dijk SABI database. Firms whose core business is another activity, while providing intelligence services is only part of their work (Groups C and D), do not publish specific data about their revenues from the intelligence services that they market. The data correspond to all 40 firms of the first two groups (A and B), not just the 29

that responded. The data was taken for all the years of the firms' lifetimes, although 10 of the 40 firms never deposited their annual reports. In May 2019, the last accounts available in the SABI database corresponded to the 2017 fiscal year, dated 31/12/2017. Therefore, the last operating revenue in the figure corresponds to that year. In a few very specific financial years, some firms that regularly deposited their accounts did not do so. For these cases, we took the average of the preceding and following years. The objective with this graph was to visualize the overall tendency in the set of consultancies.

As one can see, from 2016 there is a fall in operating income. We theorize that the fall corresponds fundamentally to a single firm – one of the multinationals present in Spain – which, in the preceding financial years, had deposited accounts reporting revenues in excess of 15 million euros.

The data reflect the smallness in terms of revenue of this type of firm in Spain. This aspect is especially marked in the firms of Group A – the specifically Spanish consultancies.

3.2. The sectors

As was described in Methods, this objective of this first block of the questionnaire was to determine the type of sectors in which the consultancies are offering their services. Many of these firms operate in almost every sector. This may be an indication of the still embryonic state of the consulting sector in Spain, with the consultancies being forced to offer their services to whomsoever wants to buy them (a datum supported in the pretest phase by some analysts who stressed the need to contract jobs from all kinds of sectors). Nevertheless, there are six sectors which stand out above the rest. These are: "Information and communications" chosen by 69% of the consultancies surveyed, "Utilities" with 62%, "Professional, scientific, and technical activities" with 60%, "Financial and insurance activities" with 58%, and "Manufacturing" and "Public Administrations and Defense" with 56% each.

These sectors are intensive in information consumption, which makes them users of intelligence consulting. In this set of six sectors with greater demand we find strategic sectors such as telecommunications, IT and Internet, or with large expansion such as renewable energy. These six sectors include activities such as those that refer to R&D + i, business management consulting, and risk assessment in the banking sector – a financial sector which is undergoing major transformations. On the other hand, insurance companies have found in intelligence activities a way to complement or even replace the hiring of detectives. Among the clients that need consulting services the Defense sector is also included, the numerous Public Administrations, and the manufacturing sector, where there are industries such as heavy food agrifood.

Table 2. The phases of the CI cycle that the consultancy performs.

Phase	Yes	No	No response
A) Identification			
Identification of information needs	44 (98%)	1 (2%)	
Identification of information sources (internal and external)	41 (91%)	3 (7%)	1 (2%)
Establishing systems to monitor the key intelligence factors for clients	42 (93%)	1 (2%)	2 (4%)
B) Process of search, treatment, and validation of information			
Search for information	44 (98%)	1 (2%)	
Treatment (processing, e.g., data mining)	40 (89%)	5 (11%)	
Evaluates the quality of information sources	40 (89%)	5 (11%)	
C) Information analysis process			
Use analysis techniques (e.g., SWOT, Five Forces, PEST, patent analysis, etc.)	40 (89%)	4 (9%)	1 (2%)
Generates intelligence products for its clients	38 (84%)	6 (13%)	1 (2%)
Generates conclusions and market recommendations for clients based on the analyses (including strategies, scenarios, etc.)	42 (93%)	3 (7%)	

3.3. Phases of competitive intelligence

The objective of the second block of the questionnaire was to determine whether the consultancy offers among its services the application of the complete cycle of intelligence (from the identification of needs to the final analysis) or only some of the phases. The results are given in Table 2. One sees in the table that most of the firms offer all the phases, although a minority do not perform one or another of them.

3.4. Types of information

The following two tables reflect the results on the type of information sources that the consultancies use in their work. These sources are linked to the environments that the firms must monitor. They respond to the distinction made in the Management literature between the immediate and the remote external environments.

These external environments comprise all those factors which may directly or indirectly affect the firm (Ivancevich, Lorenzi, Skinner, & Crosby, 1993). Their importance is such that management's capabilities of including them in their decisions can mean the difference between success and failure. In this study, we allowed ourselves to link the needs of these environments to specific types of information.

Although the terminology concerning these environments is not always the same in the Management literature, we opted to differentiate between the immediate external environment (formed by consumers, employees, competitors, suppliers, distributors, trade unions, business associations, and public administrations), and the remote external environment (consisting of the economic, social, political, technological, and legal environments) (Ivancevich et al., 1993).

Tables 3 and 4 link specific types of documented information to each of the two types of environment, and give an assessment of the importance the consultancies give to this type of information resource in their daily work.

Table 3. Using information from the immediate external environment.

	Fi (%)					
Immediate external environment (N = 45)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Information on consumers (e.g., market research, monitoring social networks, media info, etc.)	4 (9%)	4 (9%)	5 (11%)	8 (18%)	21 (47%)	3 (7%)
Information on a competitor (e.g., business and/or solvency reports, patents and trademarks, social networks, media info, etc.)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	7 (16%)	9 (20%)	21 (47%)	4 (9%)
Information about supplier firms (e.g., directories, catalogs, business and/or solvency reports, media info, etc.)	4 (9%)	5 (11%)	11 (24%)	13 (29%)	11 (22%)	2 (4%)
Information on distributor firms (e.g., directories, catalogs, credit reports, media info, etc.)	4 (9%)	5 (11%)	15 (33%)	10 (22%)	9 (20%)	2 (4%)
Information on potential partners for a firm	4 (9%)	2 (4%)	11 (22%)	12 (27%)	14 (31%)	3 (7%)
Information on financial institutions (e.g., bank status reports, media info, etc.)	5 (11%)	8 (18%)	12 (27%)	11 (24%)	6 (13%)	3 (7%)
Information on public or government agencies (e.g., tenders, grants, approval of legal or technical regulations, media info, etc.)	3 (7%)	9 (20%)	12 (27%)	8 (18%)	10 (22%)	3 (7%)

Table 4. Using information from the remote external environment.

	Fi (%)					
Remote external environment (N = 45)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Information on the political and legislative situation of a territory (e.g., country risk reports, legislation, media info, etc.)	5 (11%)	3 (7%)	8 (18%)	12 (27%)	14 (31%)	3 (7%)
Social and demographic information (e.g., sociological, market, and statistical studies, etc.)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	17 (38%)	12 (27%)	9 (20%)	1 (2%)
Information on the economic situation (e.g., public or private agency reports, statistics, media info, etc.)	3 (7%)	3 (7%)	13 (29%)	15 (33%)	10 (22%)	1 (2%)
Information on the technological environment (e.g., public or private agency reports, patents, research reports, papers in scientific journals, etc.)	1 (2%)	3 (7%)	10 (22%)	10 (22%)	20 (44%)	1 (2%)

In the results which will be presented below, a 5-point Likert scale was applied with the following options: 1 "no importance"; 2 "little importance"; 3 "some importance"; 4 "very important"; and 5 "essential". The label 6 was assigned to "do not know/no response". In this way, the consultancies had to define both the importance of these environments as the object of concrete work for their clients, and the information linked to them.

3.5. Staff

Another important aspect reflecting the size of this sector in Spain is that referring to the intelligence consultancies' personnel. The fourth block of

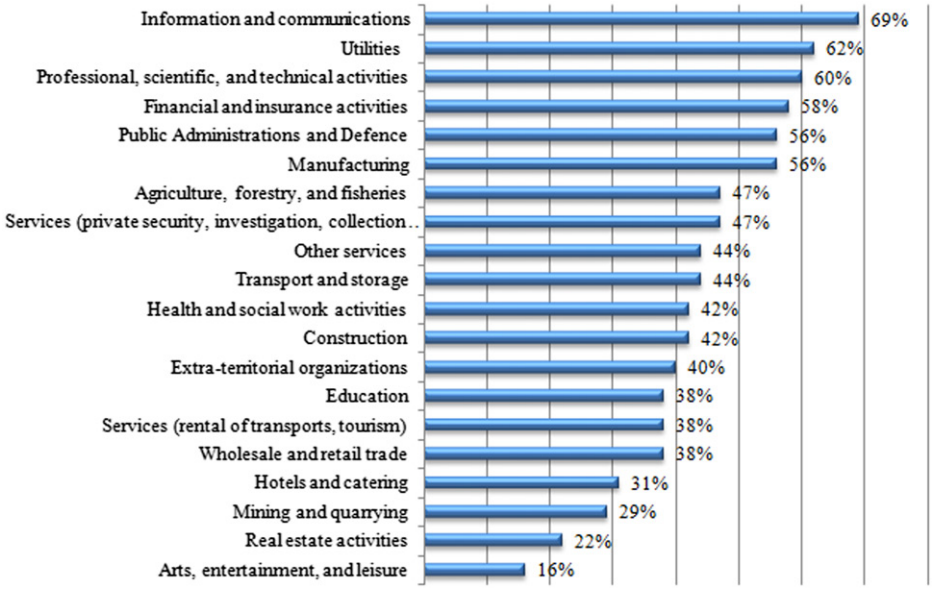

Figure 3. Activity sectors in which the intelligence consultancies offer their services (n = 45).

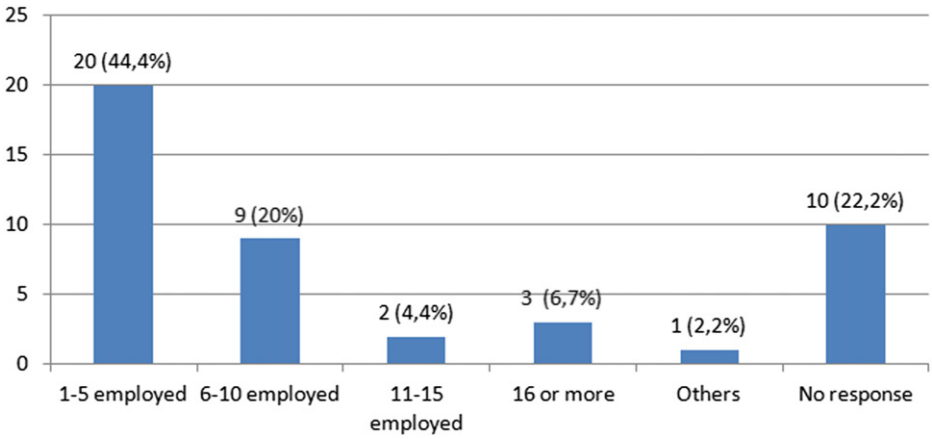

Figure 4. Number of staff employed on intelligence tasks (n = 45).

questions sought to determine both the number of persons dedicated to intelligence tasks and their qualifications.

It is important to note that of the 45 firms that responded to the questionnaire, 10 did not answer the question regarding the number of employees (Figure 3).

Figure 4 reflects the size of the consultancy sector in Spain based on the responses we obtained. As can be seen, this is a sector that is of small dimensions since 44.4% of the firms do not have more than five employees, 20% have between six and ten, and only 5 firms (11.1%) have more than ten employees. One firm surveyed responded that it bases its tasks on

external collaborations, without expressing any number, and ten firms did not respond to this question. The smallness in size of this sector (where 65% of the firms have fewer than ten employees, and where there are consultancies with only one or two employees) may be one reason why 22% of the respondents did not answer this question, perhaps trying to hide this datum in understanding that revealing this information could be negative for their firm's image.

Regarding the academic qualifications reported by the respondents, we cannot quantify the specific qualifications of the staff dedicated to intelligence tasks since the responses gave just generic mention to the qualifications of the different employees, but without quantifying the specific number of academic qualifications of each person. Sometimes the response was "Graduates" or "Qualifications of middle, higher, and doctoral degrees" without referring to any explicit degree. The most mentioned undergraduate degrees were, in decreasing order: Business Management and Administration, Engineering, Psychology, Journalism, Computer Science, Documentation, Criminology, Advertising, Mathematics, Political Science, Physics, and Philology and History, completed with other postgraduate degrees such as Digital Marketing, Analyst, and Business Intelligence. We thus found a great variety in the academic formation of the professionals dedicated to intelligence. Some responses, together with the descriptors of the bachelor's degree, said "Master of Intelligence for all of them". It is important to point out that some universities in Spain have begun to offer specific postgraduate courses in CI, Economic Intelligence, and Technological and Strategic Monitoring. It was also common to find postgraduates in Business Innovation with modules dedicated to Monitoring and Intelligence. We understand therefore that the professionals in this sector with very different academic profiles have completed their training with specialized courses in Intelligence.

In one specific case, one of the oldest consultancies in Spain indicated that already in the early 1990s they had gone to London to take courses on "Information Brokers".

The creation of a tool with the 66 firms that constituted the study allowed us to construct a database with the personal contacts of 66 analysts of the four groups studied (specifically Spanish intelligence firms, multinationals of the sector present in Spain, large consultancies with a specific intelligence division, and other types of firms that support an intelligence division). This allowed us to later view the mobility of the analysts in the intelligence consultancy market. Thus, in 2018, we proceeded to check whether the personnel working in the consultancies in 2016 continued to do so in 2018. This specific study was applied to all the firms –both those that responded to the questionnaire and those that did not. To this end, we

consulted the professional network Linkedin, and, in specific cases, established personal contacts with those involved.

We found that 75.3% of the staff present in 2016 was still in their same posts in 2018, while 24.6% had changed jobs. By groups however, while the staff of the specifically Spanish, small size, consulting firms mostly remained in their posts (because they themselves were the owners), the professionals who were hired as analysts in the firms of the last group (those whose primary core activity was unrelated to intelligence, this being just another branch of their business) did have greater mobility in moving as analysts to other firms in the sector. Thus 10 analysts of the 22 firms in this group had left the post they occupied in 2016 to move to other firms. In two specific cases, the analysts had switched jobs twice since 2016.

3.6. Computer tools

There is a type of software that is of assistance in the intelligence cycle, facilitating tasks in all or some of its phases. According to Sánchez and Palop (2002, 2006), the tools that facilitate the tasks of the intelligence staff and improve productivity can be classified into two subtypes: (a) those that support one or two phases of the intelligence cycle; (b) and those that support all the phases of the cycle. For those authors, the former may include software that was not expressly designed to perform monitoring or intelligence, while the latter was expressly created for that purpose (Sánchez & Palop, 2006).

There are authors who consider that, although it can index large amounts of data, this type of software is not effective without human help in the final analysis process. This was attested to by the Fuld & Company consultancy when in 2000 it analyzed 170 software packages, measuring their strengths and weaknesses in the different phases of the intelligence cycle, finding that, in order to increase their effectiveness, these applications had to be customized to the needs of each firm (Bexon, Stephens, & Pritchett, 2002). Other work, however, that has analyzed different software packages has emphasized that they are reliable tools with which to obtain, in a structured and systematic fashion, information about the environment, and which can carry out, as indicated above, some or all of the phases of the process depending on their degree of complexity (Cadierno & Hernando, 2011; León, Castellanos, & Vargas, 2006; Sánchez & Palop, 2006). The relevance of the role played by software of this type in CI has been emphasized (Semerkova, Zaretskiy, Divnenko, Grosheva, & Vishnevskaya, 2017), and methods have been developed for its evaluation (Aina, Cooke, & Stephens, 2016; Berges-García, Meneses-Chaus, & Martínez-Ortega, 2016). However, Barbie E. Keizer, one of the authors who has analyzed the CI software (Keiser, 2014; 2017; 2018), has concluded that

Table 5. Do you have a computer platform or tool for intelligence, technological watch, and/or social media monitoring?.

(N = 45)	n	%
Yes	33	73%
No	10	22%
No response	2	4%

the amount of products that are promoted as CI platforms is surprising, to attract new customers, but that nevertheless are little more than social network monitoring tools (Keiser, 2019a; 2019b).

In Spain, the publication in 2011 of a standard dedicated to Technological Watch and Competitive Intelligence (Aenor, 2011) has facilitated firms' subsequent design of this type of software. This standard was updated in 2018 (Aenor, 2018).

The fifth block of items asked the firms if they used this type of tool in their work, and, if so, whether it had been developed by the firm itself or acquired under license. Finally, the name of the software was requested. Table 5 lists the results of the first question in this block. Of the 45 firms surveyed, 33 (73%) do use these tools.

The results indicate that of the 33 firms which responded that they do have a digital platform, 16 had acquired it under license and 17 had developed it themself. The tools noted in the responses to the questionnaire were: AnalysIQ, Alto analytics, Brandwatch, Blueliv, Cortez Intelligence, Gephi, Hontza, Intelligence Watcher, JetReport, MiraIntelligence, NetVibes, Oraquo Analytics, Qlikview, Sindup, Temis, Vicubo, and Vigiale.

3.7. Services offered

The sixth block of questions was aimed at determining the set of services the firms offered. Although obviously all the firms were engaged in intelligence tasks, we sought to determine in more detail (by providing a closed list of services in the questionnaire, although the respondent firms could indicate other services not covered in that list) the specific types of activities, and whether they referred to the firm's primary activity or to secondary activities.

Our starting point was the evidence that, in addition to completing the entire cycle of intelligence or part of it, these firms might also offer other, more specific, services such as CI training or the distribution and marketing of intelligence software.

The activities regarded as core by the greatest proportion of consultancies were: complete intelligence cycle (89%); monitoring, i.e., obtaining information without analysis (53%); helping firms establish their own CI/TM unit (42%); and CI training (38%). Similarly, the most important secondary activities were: digital marketing/community management (53%);

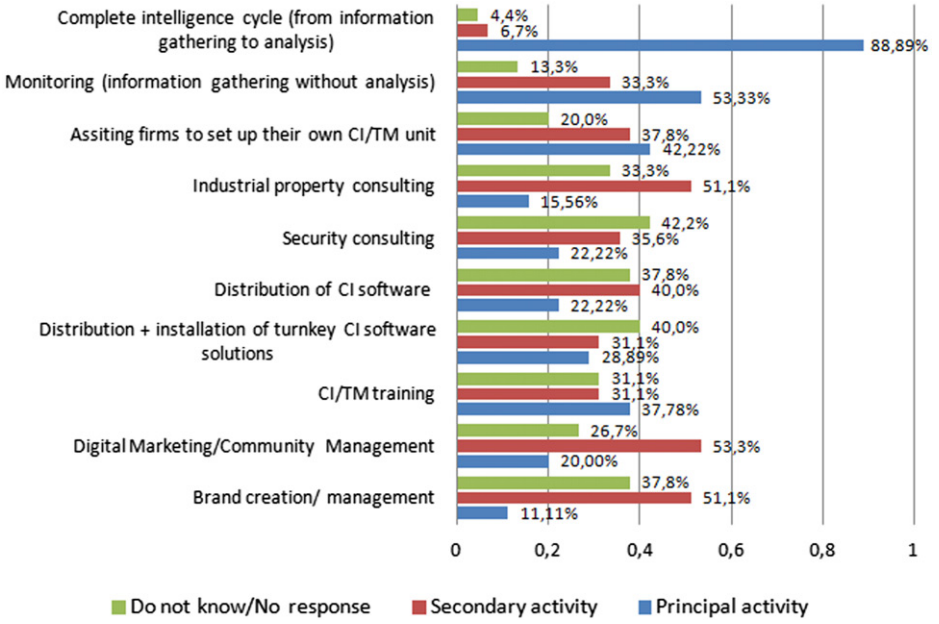

Figure 5. Services marketed by the consultancies (n = 45).

Table 6. Promotional activities to make the firm known and capture potential clients.

(N = 45)	Yes	No	No response
Through the consultancy's Internet portal	37 (82%)	8 (18%)	
Advertising in the media	8 (18%)	35 (78%)	2 (4%)
Setting up meetings with firms who are potential contractors of their services	41 (91%)	4 (9%)	
Doing workshops at events so as to present the services offered	24 (53%)	20 (44%)	1 (2%)
Setting up partnerships with complementary firms	37 (82%)	7 (16%)	1 (2%)

industrial property consulting (51%); CI software distribution (40%); and brand creation and management (51%) (Figure 5).

3.8. Visibility of the consultancy

The last block of questions in the questionnaire referred directly to the tasks the firms carried out to promote themselves and make themselves visible to their potential clients. The results are presented in Table 6. Firstly, 91% of the respondents set up meetings with potential clients; 82% make themselves visible through their Internet portal and by establishing collaboration agreements with complementary firms; 53% make use of service presentation workshops at events; and just 18% advertise in the media.

4. Conclusions

A methodological approach to analyzing the CI sector in a country has been set out in this paper. It was tested by carrying out a study of the case

in Spain from 2016 to 2019. In our opinion, the method could be used to conduct similar studies of the CI consultancy sector in other countries. In the near future we want to define a complete approach that is applicable in several countries, specifying the main characteristics of the CI professional: methodology, practices, resources …

It was not easy to prepare an initial list of firms in the Spanish sector because of the lack of any initial catalog of companies (it should be noted that in Spain there is no business association of consultancies specialized in this sector). To this has to be added the diversity of the offer: together with firms whose core and only business is consulting in intelligence, there are many others that offer consulting in intelligence as one activity within a larger range of services, even though that type of consulting may be their primary activity. This is the case, for example, of computer or patent management firms.

The analysis of the birth of the firms showed a young sector that mainly began to emerge in the year 2000, although the first consultancies go back to the late 1980s and early 1990s. These first consultancies offered various services related to Information Management, among which was that of covering clients' ad hoc requirements of knowledge. This involved access to databases, which in most cases were supported by the big database distributors of the time. It also involved knowledge of different interrogation languages. Spanish firms dedicated to the tasks of intelligence consultancy did not yet use the term "Competitive Intelligence", but marketed their services under the generic denomination of "Information Brokers". The absence of large specific associations dedicated to the promotion and Defense of CI in Europe, even though the SCIP had appeared in the United States in 1985, led some of these Spanish firms to join the European Information Researchers Network (EIRENE) and subsequently the Global Intelligence Alliance (GIA). This was the case of the Infoline consultancy. Its association with EIRENE and GIA offered it an international visibility that generated clients from European countries and the United States, as well as allowing it to carry out studies as different as the perception of certain American countries as tourist destinations for citizens from various countries in Europe, or the remote sensing of acid rain.

Although the firms are small in terms of billing and staff, the relative sharp rise of the sector is reflected in an expansion of the culture of intelligence that has had various axes: the work of promotion carried out by Spain's National Intelligence Center (CNI) and such professional associations as ASEPIC and the Spanish chapter of SCIP, the numerous postgraduate courses offered by Spanish universities and some business associations, and the ever greater visibility in Spanish media.

Along with the firms of Spanish capital, some of the major international consultancies have made their appearance in Spain. Perhaps the best known

is Kroll, created in 1972 by Jules B. Kroll. According to the commercial register data, its presence in Spain began in 2005 under the name of Kroll-Consultoría de Seguridad y Gestión de Crisis Empresarial [Kroll-Security Consulting and Business Crisis Management], and since 2010 with the name K2 intelligence Iberia SL.

One aspect to underscore in these final conclusions is that these intelligence consultancies are offering services to firms in multiple sectors instead of focusing on just one or a small group of sectors. The youth of the CI sector, as well as the small size of the firms, means that they cannot afford to focus their efforts on a small area, but have to accept work and projects from very different sectors (as could be seen in Figure 3). The head of one consultancy participating in our study was very explicit in this regard in citing a Spanish saying: "*Ave que vuela, a la cazuela [A bird that flies – into the pot]*", meaning that they need to take whatever they can get, without overly concerning themselves about the finer points.

With regard to the phases of the CI cycle, practically all the consultancies analyzed put all the phases of the cycle into practice, although some did not address certain specific phases (Table 2). As was shown in Figure 5, the most common core services marketed by these consultancies are: the full intelligence cycle (89%); monitoring, i.e., obtaining information but without analysis (53%); support services such as helping a client to establish their own intelligence unit (42%); and training in CI and technological monitoring (38%). Likewise, the most common secondary activities are: digital marketing and community management (53%); industrial property consulting (51%); brand creation and management (51%); and distribution of CI software (40%).

Software platforms specialized in CI claim to be important tools for consulting services. Indeed, 73% of the respondents use these platforms, either acquired under license or developed by the firm itself.

This study reflects the importance of staying up-to-date on certain types of information and knowledge concerning both the immediate external environment (Table 3) and the remote external environment (Table 4). In general, many of the consultancies give great importance to or consider essential all of the information types listed in those tables, especially that of information about consumers and competitors.

With regard to staff, in Figure 4 it was seen that 65% of the firms have fewer than ten employees. It is a small sector, but in a phase of growth. It comprises a set of small –some micro-sized– firms that offer their services with few resources but with great enthusiasm. However, there are some large international consultancies in Spain. We also found that 75.3% of the staff present in firms in 2016 remained in their same posts in 2018.

The growing competition in this sector gives rise to these consultancies having to implement strategies to attract clients. Our study has shown that few firms choose to promote their services in the media. In addition to the consultancy's own Web portal, most opted for meetings with potential client firms, for setting up collaboration agreements with complementary firms, and for service presentation workshops at different events.

There emerged a surprising fact that, although the analysis of the operating revenues of the group of consultancies studied showed an upward trend since 1992, 25% of those which offer services dedicated specifically to intelligence consultancy have never deposited their annual accounts in the Mercantile Registry, and some have stopped doing so in recent years. This is reflected in Figure 2 with a drop in the trend from 2016 onwards as a result of which one of the largest firms stopped depositing their annual accounts.

This work has shown how there is a market for business information consulting and analysis that can be very useful for those working in positions related to decision making within firms, whether these are intermediate positions such as those occupied by business librarians or documentalists responsible for providing reports to their firm's management teams, or directly being themselves part of the management team. That there are small firms which lack information managers – librarians, documentalists, etc. – dedicated to providing the information, whether in a raw form or with added value, needed for decision making, and large firms which need to make decisions faster and cannot wait for their own staff to prepare a report, makes this sector of Intelligence consulting a very effective resource for better business management.

In sum, there exists a consulting sector specialized in Competitive Intelligence which serves for firms to outsource tasks, and which is behind the work of the information specialist. It is thus an idea contrary to doing everything in-house.

Acknowledgements

We wish to express our gratitude for the help given by the following persons who facilitated the compilation of the directory of Competitive Intelligence consulting firms in Spain, and who in some cases also reviewed the questionnaire, which formed the basis of the present study: Hugo Zunzarren, Eliana Benjumeda, Mario Esteban, José Navío, Eva Moya, and Inés Robredo. We would also like to thank Amelia Kassel, president and owner of MarketingBase (United States), and Robert Berkman, editor of "The Information Advisor" (United States), for their contributions and final help.

Funding

The study was made possible by funding from the Regional R&D + i Plan of the Government of Extremadura (Spain).

ORCID

Antonio Muñoz-Cañavate http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2032-6916
Marta Herrera-Barragán http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2176-7473
Pedro Hípola http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6150-331X

References

Adidam, P. T., Gajre, S., & Kejriwal, S. (2009). Cross-cultural competitive intelligence strategies. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *27*(5), 666–680. doi:10.1108/02634500910977881

Aenor. (2011). *UNE 166006:2011. R&D&i management: Technological watch and competitive intelligence system*. Madrid: Aenor.

Aenor. (2018). *UNE 166006:2018. R&D&i management: Monitoring and intelligence systems*. Madrid: Aenor.

Aina, T. A., Cooke, L., & Stephens, D. (2016). Methodology for evaluating CI software packages. *Business Information Review*, *33*(4), 211–220. doi:10.1177/0266382116675249

Asepic. (2011). *Directorio de socios*. Madrid: Asepic.

Bauwens, M. (1994). Una biblioteca virtual. *Information World en Español (IWE)*, *3*(23), 1–2. Retrieved from: http://www.elprofesionaldelainformacion.com/contenidos/1994/abril/una_biblioteca_virtual.html

Berges-García, A., Meneses-Chaus, J. M., & Martínez-Ortega, J. F. (2016). Metodología para evaluar funciones y productos de vigilancia tecnológica e inteligencia competitiva (VT/IC) y su implementación a través de web. *El Profesional de la Información*, *25*(1), 103–113. doi:10.3145/epi.2016.ene.10

Bexon, M., Stephens, D., & Pritchett, C. (2002). Competitive intelligence: A career opportunity for the information professional in industry. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, *34*(4), 187–196. doi:10.1177/096100060203400402

Blenkhorn, D. L., & Fleisher, C. S. (2005). Outsource competitive intelligence? A viable option. *Competitive Intelligence Magazine*, *8*(6), 14–18.

Cadierno, U., & Hernando, S. (2011). Plataformas comerciales de vigilancia tecnológica en España. *Actas VISIO Vigilancia e Inteligencia Sistemática para la innovación en las organizaciones 2011* (pp. 274–292). Bilbao, Spain: Tecnalia.

European Commission. (1998). Public sector information: A key resource for Europe. Green Paper on Public Sector Information in the Information Society. COM (98) 585 final. Retrieved from: https://www.ip-rs.si/fileadmin/user_upload/Pdf/razno/Green_Paper.pdf

Emecon. (2007). *Directorio de la Inteligencia Competitiva y Vigilancia Tecnológica*. Barcelona: Emecon.

Ivancevich, J. M., Lorenzi, P., Skinner, S. J., & Crosby, P. B. (1993). *Gestión: Calidad y competitividad*. Madrid: McGraw Hill.

Johnson, A. R. (2002). Best practices in CI Consulting and Research Subcontracting. *In SCIP Annual Meeting 2002, in* Seattle, USA.

Keiser, B. E. (2014). Competitive intelligence research tools. *Online Searcher*, *38*(4), 22–27.

Keiser, B. E. (2017). New and improves competitive intelligence platforms. *Online Searcher*, *41*(2), 22–42.

Keiser, B. E. (2018). Competitive intelligence tools for the win. *Online Searcher*, *42*(4), 14–21.

Keiser, B. E. (2019a). Competitive intelligence platforms. *Online Searcher*, *43*(1), 18–23.

Keiser, B. E. (2019b). To be or not to be competitive intelligence tools. *Online Searcher*, *43*(4), 18–25.

Kubr, M. (2002). *Management consulting. A guide to the profession*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

León, A. M., Castellanos, O. F., & Vargas, F. A. (2006). Valoración, selección y pertinencia de herramientas de software utilizadas en vigilancia tecnológica. *Revista Ingeniería e Investigación*, *26*(1), 92–102. Retrieved from: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=64326111.

López, M. L., León, M. S., & Portela, L. L. (2007). Aspectos generales sobre el origen y conformación de los servicios consultivos. *Ciencias de la Información*, *38*(1-2), 41–50.

McGonagle, J. J., & Vella, C. M. (1990). *Outsmarting the competition: Practical approaches to finding and using competitive information*. Naperville: Sourcebooks.

McGonagle, J. J., & Vella, C. M. (2003). *The manager's guide to competitive intelligence*. Westport: Praeger Publishers.

Muller, M.-L. (2009). How and what others are doing in competitive intelligence: Various CI model. *South African Journal of Information Management*, *11*(1), 1–8.

Muñoz-Cañavate, A., & Hipola, P. (2015). Evolution of the online information industry in Spain, 1973-2014. *Online Information Review*, *39*(7), 939–954. doi:10.1108/OIR-11-2014-0274

Muñoz-Cañavate, A., & Alves-Albero, P. (2017). Competitive Intelligence in Spain: A Study of a Sample of Firms. *Business Information Review*, *34*(4), 194–204. doi:10.1177/0266382117735982

Nenzhelele, T. E., & Pellissier, R. (2014). Competitive intelligence implementation challenges of small and medium-sized enterprises. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, *5*(16), 92–99. doi:10.5901/mjss.2014.v5n16p92

Ribeiro Soriano, D. (1998). *Asesoramiento en dirección de empresas: la consultoría*. Madrid: Ediciones Díaz de Santos.

Rodríguez Rovira, J. M. (2000). Papel de las empresas consultoras en la gestión del conocimiento. *El profesional de la información*, *9*(10), 11–16. Available at: http://eprints.rclis.org/19435/

Rustomfram, P., & Robinson, B. (2015). Online government resources for financial literacy. *Journal of Business & Finance Librarianship*, *20* (1-2), 95–115. doi:10.1080/08963568.2015.977083

Sánchez Torres, J. M., & Palop Marro, F. (2002). *Herramientas de software para la práctica en la empresa de la vigilancia tecnológica e inteligencia competitiva*. Madrid: Triz XXI.

Sánchez Torres, J. M., & Palop Marro, F. (2006). Herramientas de software especializadas para Vigilancia Tecnológica e Inteligencia Competitiva. Available at: http://blog.pucp.edu.pe/blog/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2012/06/sanchez-palop-2006-.pdf (accessed 10 May 2016).

Semerkova, L. N., Zaretskiy, A. P., Divnenko, Z. A., Grosheva, E. S., & Vishnevskaya, G. V. (2017, May). Application of information technologies in competitive intelligence. In *Proceedings of 2017 20th IEEE International Conference on Soft Computing and Measurements* (pp. 804–807). St. Petersburg, Russia: .Ieee

Spender, J. C. (2015). Modern management: Origins and development. In: J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed., Vol 15, pp. 675–681). Oxford: Elsevier.

Stefanikova, L., Rypakova, M., & Moravcikova, K. (2015). The impact of competitive intelligence on sustainable growth of the enterprises. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, *26*, 209–214. doi:10.1016/S2212-5671(15)00816-3

Weiss, A., & Naylor, E. (2010). Competitive intelligence: How independent information professionals contribute to organizational success. *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, *37*(1), 30–34. doi:10.1002/bult.2010.1720370114

West, C. (1999). Competitive intelligence in Europe. *Business Information Review*, *16*(3), 143–150. doi:10.1177/0266382994237261

Annex

Intelligence Consultancy Questionnaire

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1. Do you consider yourselves to be a consultancy dedicated to Intelligence tasks (identification of needs, information gathering and analysis) and/or Technology Monitoring?
   Yes No
2. Do any of your services, even secondarily, use techniques of Competitive Intelligence and/or Technology Monitoring, or are based on them?
   Yes No

"If you have not answered Yes to either of these questions please go to the end and send off the questionnaire to let us know your situation and for us to remove your company from the list of Intelligence and Technology Monitoring consultancies. Thank you."

1ST BLOCK. SECTORS YOUR CONSULTANCY COMPANY WORKS IN

Please indicate the sector or sectors in which you provide services.

SECTOR	YES
Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries	
Mining and quarrying	
Manufacturing	
Construction	
Wholesale and retail trade	
Transport and storage	
Hotels and catering	
Information and communication	
Financial and insurance activities	
Real estate activities	
Professional, scientific, and technical activities	
Services (rental of transports, tourism)	
Services (private security, investigation, collection agencies, and commercial information)	
Public administrations and Defense	
Education	
Human health and social work activities	
Arts, entertainment, and leisure	
Other services	
Activities of extra-territorial organizations	

2ND BLOCK. PHASES OF CI/TM

Please indicate what services you offer businesses.

a. Identification process

Identification of information needs	Yes	No
Identification of information sources (internal and external)	Yes	No

Establish systems to monitor the key intelligence factors for clients Yes No
Comments, as applicable:_____

b. **Process of seeking, treating, and validating information**

Search for information Yes No
Treatment (processing, e.g., data mining.) Yes No
Evaluate information source quality Yes No
Comments, as applicable:_____

c. **Information analysis process**

Use analytical techniques (e.g., five forces, SWOT, PEST, patent analysis, etc.) Yes No
Comments, as applicable (indicate the name of the analysis techniques used if deemed appropriate): _____

Generate intelligence products for clients (e.g., newsletters, sectoral studies, technology reports, etc.) Yes No

Comments, as applicable (indicate the name of the intelligence products generated if deemed appropriate):
_____

Based on the analysis, generates conclusions and market recommendations for clients (including strategies, scenarios, etc.) Yes No

3RD BLOCK. TYPES OF INFORMATION

Please mark from 1 to 5 the importance for analysis that obtaining information on the areas indicated has in your consultancy.

1. No importance
2. Little importance
3. Some importance
4. Very important
5. Essential
6. Do not know/no response

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Information on consumers (e.g., market research, monitoring social networks, media info, etc.)						
Information on a competitor (e.g., business and/or solvency reports, patents and trademarks, social networks, media info, etc.)						
Information about supplier firms (e.g., directories, catalogs, business and/or solvency reports, media info, etc.)						
Information on distributor firms (e.g., directories, catalogs, credit reports, media info, etc.)						
Information on potential partners for a business						
Information on financial institutions (e.g., bank status reports, media info, etc.)						
Information on public or government agencies (e.g., tenders, grants, approval of legal or technical regulations, media info, etc.)						
Information on the political and legislative situation of a territory (e.g., country risk reports, legislation, media info, etc.)						
Social and demographic information (e.g., sociological, market, and statistical studies, etc.)						
Information on the economic situation (e.g., public or private agency reports, statistics, media info, etc.)						
Information on the technological environment (e.g., public or private agency reports, patents, research reports, papers in scientific journals, etc.)						

4TH BLOCK. STAFF

Number of people working on intelligence in your company: _____

Please could you indicate the academic qualifications of the staff dedicated to the work of collecting and analyzing information: _____

5TH BLOCK. SOFTWARE PLATFORMS FOR MONITORING/INTELLIGENCE

Do you have a software platform or tool for intelligence and monitoring (including social media monitoring)?

Yes No No response

If you answered Yes, is it acquired under license (e.g., Hontza, Intelsuite, Miraintelligence, SoftVT, Vicubo, Vigiale, Vixia, etc.) or developed by your organization itself?

Acquired under license _____

Developed by the organization itself _____

Name of the program used _____

6TH BLOCK. CONSULTING SERVICES OFFERED

Please mark the primary and secondary activity or activities of your consultancy.

	Primary activity	Secondary activity
Complete intelligence cycle (from information gathering to analysis)		
Monitoring (information gathering without analysis)		
Assisting firms to set up their own CI/TM unit		
Industrial property consulting		
Security consulting		
Distribution of CI software		
Distribution + installation of turnkey CI software solutions (soft + hard + parametrization based on client's requirements)		
CI/TM training		
Digital marketing / community management		
Brand creation / management		
Other activity (please note it): _____		
Other activity (please note it): _____		
Other activity (please note it): _____		
Other activity (please note it): _____		

7TH BLOCK. VISIBILITY OF THE CONSULTANCY

Through the consultancy's Internet portal

Yes No

Advertised in the media

Yes No

Meetings are set up with firms that are potential contractors of our services

Yes No

Workshops presenting our services are conducted at events

Yes No

Partnerships are set up with complementary firms

Yes No

Other types. Please note them: _____