

***The argument that “there is nothing new in the competitive intelligence field”***

It is often heard, and even more often seen written, for example on social media, that that there is nothing new in the competitive intelligence (CI) field. There are no new ideas, the ideas that are being expressed are the same old, there is no development, there is, at best, stagnation. Even the old claim that CI is dead<sup>1</sup> reappears with a certain frequency<sup>2</sup>:

“Competitive intelligence as a profession is dead. There are fewer and fewer full-time, dedicated CI professionals in organizations, and even fewer legitimate CI departments or functions. The need to understand an organization’s competitors has been diffused to several other functions including market research, finance, sales, R&D and others. What the founders of the profession - Jan Herring, Leonard Fuld, and Ben Gilad - built through the 80s and 90s no longer exists. And organizations are the worse off for it”<sup>3</sup>.

Is this true? Yes and No. From a research perspective CI has developed and emerged with information technology (IT) solutions over the past ten years. It has come to the point where it does not make much sense to talk about new CI practices. Most advancements and developments are now about IT solutions and applications. This has again given rise to a whole new world of intelligence related problems and opportunities, not only for engineers but for users of these technologies. It is probably fair to say that the intelligence perspective has never been as important for businesses as it is today. Companies and organizations have never collected and analyzed as much information.

Another way to explain this development is to say that CI has evolved, thus is no longer the same. Trying to look for the same or insisting that it has not changed gives the impression that there is nothing new in CI. CI consists of an interesting body of literature, but it was not the first term to deal with questions of intelligence in private organizations, and it is not the last. Before CI there was social intelligence, strategic intelligence and corporate intelligence with their own consultants and literature. As Sawka rightly points out CI was a label used in the 80s and 90s. Other terms used include market intelligence, marketing intelligence, business intelligence, collective intelligence, financial intelligence, scientific and technical intelligence, foresight, insight, and equivalent terms in other languages, like “l’information stratégique et de la sécurité économiques” (Sisse) [previously “intelligence économique”], “veille” in French and “omvärldsanalys” in Swedish. All these fields, where a field is defined as a body of literature, basically study the same phenomenon, how to gather information to make better decisions. As such intelligence studies is a part of the information age. The information age gave birth to several bodies of literature, of which the more established include information systems, management information systems and customer relations management. The intelligence perspective never really caught on among business scholars, maybe because it was associated with industrial espionage. The intelligence parallel in business is also a bet, the argument that private organizations are better organized as intelligence organizations, much like in state and/or military organizations. The idea is that this will give better information, which again will lead to a competitive advantage. So far, this bet has not caught on. Business organizations continue to be organized much as they were a hundred years ago: into production, sales,

<sup>1</sup> Sawka, Kenneth. (2010). The death of the competitive intelligence professional. *Outward Insights*, 13(2), 36-39.

<sup>2</sup> Sawka, Kenneth. The death of the competitive intelligence professional. Retrieved January 30, 2020 from <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6627549366062194688>

<sup>3</sup> Idem

marketing, HR, finance and accounting. However, the way people work in all of these departments with ever larger amounts of information and data is starting to look more like intelligence operatives with their extensive system of files. In other words, the CI position never really saw a breakthrough, but CI has become an ever more important part of employees' jobs, as a function.

How can we then explain the frequently raised discussion related to the problems of CI? Let me suggest two answers, one general, the other more specific. Once we create something, we insist that it has either to exist, as it is, or it must disappear, thus at the end it is declared dead. This is the western mind at work, thinking in dichotomies, a thing either exist or it does not exist. There is no room for evolution, only constants. If a phenomenon such as a discipline evolves, we shouldn't say that it's dead, it just isn't the same anymore, and nothing is more natural than that. So, what must change is rather the way in which we think about the fields we study. The other suggestion is that the critic of CI has more to do with another problem, the selling of consulting services. The market for consultancy services is highly segmented and fiercely competitive. As consultants we are trying to make a name for ourselves in a niche we can call our own and strive to be an acknowledged expert in it. This takes years, often a whole career. Academic careers are created much according to the same logic so the problem is the same there. The underlying message is "this is my area", my niche, and as such I will defend it. What often happens is that another persons' or group's area grows into our own and sometimes is better at explaining the reality of our business problem, thus challenging our very *raison d'être*. Instead we insist that we are still relevant refusing to read up on other areas. We cease to be curious and the very business problems we study pass on to others. Some would argue this is what happened to CI.

So, where is CI today? There certainly are many answers to this question. One suggestion is that it is more often treated as business intelligence again (it very much started there, but then without the IT association), data mining, search engine optimization, social media marketing and digital marketing in general. It suffices to look at the articles in this issue to find other examples: Bleoju et al. write about how MOOCs can be used to teach intelligence. Sperkova writes about customer experience (CX) and voice of customer (VoC). Poblano-Ojinaga et al. write about structural equation modeling for the identification of the intelligence factors. All authors have that in common that they are studying how organizations handle intelligence.

In more detail, the first article by Bleoju et al. entitled "Empirical evidence from a connectivist competitive intelligence massive open online course (CI cMOOC) proof of concept" reveals how "the CI learning community perceives the capability of a cMOOC to train foreknowledge practices, given the best match between its content and context." The paper argues for "an open intelligence approach to cMOOC collective training."

The second article by Maune entitled "Competitive intelligence as a game changer for Africa's competitiveness in the global economy" develops a conceptual framework for how competitive intelligence can be adopted by African countries to improve their performance in the global economy.

The third article by Sperkova entitled "Integration of textual VoC into a CX data model for business intelligence use in B2C" is a summary of her PhD, which will be defended in February 2020 at the University of Economics in Prague, the Department of Information Technologies. The author presents a model to store the customer experience (CX) and voice of customer (VoC) data as part of a business intelligence system. The model can help to improve customer relationships and make future performance more automatic and effective.

The fourth article by Palilingan and Batmetan Entitled "How competitive intelligence can be used to improve a management vocational high school: A case from Indonesia" shows how competitive intelligence can be applied to make a vocational high school more efficient.

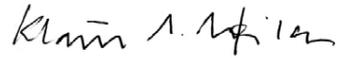
The fifth and last article by Poblano-Ojinaga et al. entitled "Effect of the competitive intelligence on the innovation capability: an exploratory study in Mexican companies", is an investigation using a methodology of structural equation modeling for the identification of the intelligence factors, to evaluate their relative importance and relationships with the innovation capability of Mexican companies. The empirical results show that the relationship between competitive intelligence and the innovation capability is indirect, with knowledge management as a mediating factor.

Some news worth mentioning: we would like to thank the Swedish Research Council/ NOP-HS for receiving the "large" grant for Open Access journals for two years starting in 2020. JISIB is now indexed by Crossref, which should give users direct access to PDF full text through databases like Scopus and Web of Science. The SCIP organization, owned by Frost & Sullivan, has been reignited with a new executive director. We wish them good luck. There are numerous conferences on intelligence related topics this spring and next winter. See the JISIB website for details. Some of the editors of JISIB will be at the ICI in Bad Nauheim 11-14 May 2020. We hope to see you there.

As always, we would above all like to thank the authors for their contributions to this issue of JISIB. Thanks to Dr. Allison Perrigo for reviewing English grammar and helping with layout design for all articles.

On behalf of the Editorial Board,

Sincerely Yours,



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