
Editorial

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This special edition of the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management* focuses on internationalisation of firms and international entrepreneurship. International entrepreneurship and internationalisation of small enterprises have increased phenomenally since the turn of the century, as governments and businesses continue to exploit the opportunities of globalisation and cooperation among nations. Consequently, international activities of entrepreneurs have contributed to the development of their home economies as well as the global economy, by facilitating innovation and technology transfer, supply of raw materials and parts to multinational firms and overseas manufacturers, production, and distribution of goods and services in international markets. In order to further stimulate the success of (small) enterprises in the global market, there is need for a better understanding of the international activities, internationalisation process, entry mode options, and strategies pursued by small enterprises in the international market. This includes firms selling physical goods as well as service organisations such as educational institutions. This special issue of the *IJEIM* addresses these important areas.

All papers featured in this special issue were subjected to a double blind review process. The papers were first screened by the guest editors to ensure there is a fit with the theme of the special issue. The papers were then sent to two anonymous reviewers who are experts in the subject matter of the paper for blind review. A third reviewer was invited where there was a disagreement in the recommendations of the two reviewers. Based on the recommendations of the two (or three) reviewers, the guest editors rejected or invited the papers to be revised and resubmitted. The resubmitted version was sent back to the reviewers for their recommendation before a final acceptance decision was made.

The special edition starts with a theoretical paper by Fletcher. The paper tries to demonstrate that different theoretical approaches are required for the internationalisation of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The paper calls into question the relevance for SMEs of established theories of internationalisation derived from large scale surveys involving MNCs in developed countries; and made a comparison of existing theories and

approaches with the actual behaviour of SMEs. The author suggests that internationalisation of SMEs requires different strategies based on approaches which are emic rather than etic and are systemic. This is required if SMEs are to compete effectively in both developing as well as developed overseas markets.

The second paper by Madu, Kuei, Chow and Ndubisi looks at the components of supply chain practices in the 21st century and its implications for new international ventures. The authors used the components to develop a conceptual model that consists of four constructs: operations practices, operations concerns, system capability, and organisational performance. By using data from Hong Kong, they showed that operations concerns are significantly correlated with operations practice, which influences operations system's efficiency and effectiveness. The results show that operations concerns and operations practices are associated with system capabilities and have positive impacts on business performances. The results show that firms with different strategic intents, unique set of action plans and foci, are more efficient and effective. The outcomes of the study are particularly important for new international ventures or international entrepreneurship as they prepare to take on the global market.

In the next paper, Toften and Hammervoll examine the international market selection and growth strategies of niche firms. In studying the bases for selecting new international markets and which strategic directions niche firms follow in their pursuit of growth, the paper adopts a qualitative research methodology with in-depth interviews of key personnel, and data from six niche firms in the wine and food industries. The findings suggest that niche firms expand internationally by developing and exploiting long-term relationships with downstream channel partners, such as importers. Furthermore, the strategic directions for expansion are based on penetration, product development, and market development.

Matanda and Ndubisi in the fourth paper compare interfirm relational capabilities between large and small internationalising organisations. Fresh produce exporters from a sub-Saharan African country were surveyed. Using one-way analysis of variance the differences in interfirm relationships capabilities were examined. Significant differences were found between small and large suppliers in most of the relationship constructs. The authors argue that adoption of interfirm relationships is critical for the fresh produce sector especially for suppliers of products that take long periods to mature.

Next, Haase and Franco study the motives and perceived effectiveness of international cooperative alliances among SMEs. The article seeks to elucidate the influence of motives for international cooperative alliances (CAs) on their perceived effectiveness. From the outcomes of their study it seems that CA can be a successful strategy in the process of internationalisation, especially for firms with limited resources. The authors interviewed a sample of 107 Portuguese SMEs involved in international CAs. The results reveal a number of motives as relevant for the performance of international CAs namely innovation and organisational learning, firm development and market power, risk and cost sharing, and synergy and competitive advantage.

The sixth article by Capel takes a turn to the education sector and investigates e-learning adoption and how it has fuelled the internationalisation of the sector. The author examines adoption of e-learning technology and drivers, as well as implications for internationalisation of the education sector. The results show that e-learning perceived benefit (outcome orientation) and usage ease (process orientation) are the key drivers of adoption, and significantly moderated by users' attitude and internal control (self-efficacy). She concluded that since e-learning can be effectively used to serve

international markets without having the international students relocate to the foreign country, interventions can now be developed to facilitate wider acceptance of this mode of delivery in the global education market.

Evers, in the next paper offers exploratory insights into the way in which market orientation (MO) is manifested in small entrepreneurial exporting firms. The construct of market orientation is employed for conceptual guidance and applied to two cases of highly internationalised small seafood exporters – an understudied context in both international marketing and international entrepreneurship literatures. From the study, entrepreneurial orientation and the dynamic capability of the entrepreneurs emerged as key determinants for successful mobilisation and implementation of export market-orientated activities in the case firms. External relationships were also actively leveraged by the entrepreneurs to bring about effective execution of their MO processes for export performance.

The special issue concludes with the work of Abebe and Angriawan entitled ‘The internationalisation of SMEs: a multi-level integrative framework’. The authors argue that despite the growing number of studies that focus on one or more antecedents of internationalisation activities in SMEs, there is a lack of an integrated theoretical framework that conceptualises the antecedents of internationalisation in SMEs as a multi-level organisational phenomenon. They therefore, proposed a multi-level integrated theoretical framework of SMEs internationalisation based on the open system perspective of organisations. The paper integrated the extant literature on SME internationalisation by discussing behavioural (Managerial), firm-level (resource endowments and strategy) and industry-level (life cycle and competition) antecedents. Drawing from the product-life cycle, resource-based view, organisational learning, social network and strategic management literatures, they developed an integrated framework and related propositions on the drivers of internationalisation activities in SMEs for future studies.