

Internationalization of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's): Dimensions and Strategies

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Abstract. Taking note of the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises for the economic growth of countries, the internationalization of these industries seems inevitable in today's competitive world. Internationalization is a multi-dimensional process, and enterprises choose appropriate strategies for each dimension. The combination of these strategies forms the comprehensive internationalization strategies of an enterprise. This paper identified the internationalization dimensions and their subset strategies based on meta-synthesis method. Subsequently, we have obtained the corresponding combinations of the strategies of different dimensions through semi-structured interviews with experts. Then, the weight of each identified attribute was calculated in each combination regarding the other attributes by using the Analytic Hierarchy Process, and all the combinations were entitled. The prescribed dimensions are as follows: functional-competitive dimension, strategic orientation dimension, entry mode dimension, and extension pattern dimension, while the identified combinations can be listed as thrifty conservatives, niche differentiated group, growth-pursuer customer-oriented group, and technology-based aggressors. SME's can select and operate the combinations that are compatible with their environmental and organizational conditions.

Keywords: Internationalization, SME's, international strategies, internationalization dimensions

1. Introduction

Internationalization is one of the most critical decisions affecting the growth, survival, market development, and accomplishment of small and medium industries (Mustin et al., 2010). The term of internationalization has no evident and specific definition, and in the literature, numerous definitions are used when describing it. Buckley and Casson (2009) have defined internationalization as general undertakings interpreting the boundaries of an organization. Internationalization involves a wide range of economics, management, strategy, and policy issues (Suh & Kim, 2014). When an SME decides to be internationalized, it needs to choose the methods and models to form its internationalization strategy. Some researchers have tried to study multiple aspects of internationalization of the SMEs simultaneously; for instance, one research classified international SMEs based on many quantitative indicators of internationalization such as export share and the number of trade partners (Cerrato et al., 2016). Some researchers have only focused on an individual dimension, which an enterprise faces through internationalization such as entry mode and international contracts (Pezderka & Sinkovics, 2011). This study aims to identify all the dimensions that SMEs will face seeking presence at international markets, and they will need to make decisions and choices on these dimensions. These dimensions form the comprehensive strategies used by enterprises for internationalization purposes. After identification and classification of different aspects of internationalization, we need to answer what particular set of the combinations should be used by the SMEs to prosper in the international rivalry having compatible attributes within the combination and creating synergy.

2. Literature review

Various definitions of internationalization have been proposed to the day. Internationalization is a process in which an enterprise tries to achieve a better place in a network consisting of other enterprises, mostly originated in foreign countries (Schweizer et al., 2010). Internationalization is an external maneuver towards the international operations of the enterprise (Balabanis & Kastiks, 2003). Internationalization is the process of matching the enterprise's activities with the international setting (Aduah et al., 2011). Internationalization consists of the expansion of the business networks through the development in the foreign markets (Karneiro et al., 2011). There exist different theories in pursuit of the comprehension of the current views in SMEs internationalization studies. In the research literature, there are three theories on this subject: gradual internationalization theory, network theory, and the modern approach known as born global theory. In the gradual model, internationalization is the process in which the enterprise gradually increases its international involvement. This process evolves in an interplay between the development of knowledge about foreign markets (Johanson & Vahlne, 1990). As

time passes by and the knowledge of the market increases, the enterprise will be led to put more commitment in the foreign market, allocate more resources to these markets, and enter to markets with extended psychic distance (Anderson, 2000). The second theory, known as network theory focuses on entrepreneur networks in the market. Based on this idea, enterprises can situate their positions in the market by creating external networks in diverse countries. Such a network can help enterprises to achieve international market penetration after international development and eventually, international integration (Aduah et al., 2011). According to the born global model, some enterprises participate in significantly numerous markets as soon as they are founded. In fact, the born global firms are the enterprises that have reached a notable degree of internationalization from the time of their foundation. One research has classified the SMEs regarding the orientation based on international entrepreneurship, technical leadership, differentiation strategies, and cost leadership indicators (Knight & Cavusgil, 2005). Based on efficient strategic management enterprises can formulate and improve their competitive advantage so as to succeed in international business; hence their strategies can consist of differentiation, pricing and technical leadership (Hagen & Giovani, 2012). Strategic orientation will cause advantages in providing innovation, efficiency, quality, and customer responsiveness according to a resource-based view (Hagen & Giovani, 2012). Various dimensions and indicators have been raised to define internationalization of the SMEs; the pace of internationalization (Dimitratos et al, 2016), foreign sale percentage (Kuivalainen et al, 2012), internationalizing scope, containing the countries and regions where the enterprise has been present in (Gerschewski et al., 2015), international experience of management (Gerschewski et al., 2015), number of foreign subsidiaries (Pulat & Murat, 2013) and the entry to overseas market mode (Crick & Spence, 2005) (Armario et al, 2008). Hagen et al. (2011) have identified four groups of existing strategies on SMEs internationalization including growth-oriented group, customer-oriented group, and product-oriented group and strategy lacking group, considering different internationalization dimensions including strategic orientation and competitive advantage in their research. Hagen et al. (2017) have studied some SMEs from various aspects to identify the types of international SMEs and the strategies of these European enterprises. Three different types of enterprises and their exceptional strategies have been determined according to this research; the group of marketing and sale oriented businesses, growth-oriented enterprises, and enterprises focusing on technology. Welch (1996) represents two types of internationalization in his research: preplanned and unplanned. Gary Knight (2001) studied the effect of entrepreneurial orientation culture on international marketing strategies. These strategies included quality leadership, marketing leadership, and product specialization in his paper.

3. Methodology

This paper aims acting as a handbook for managers of SMEs seeking presence at international markets in addition to identification and presentation of comprehensive strategies. Hence taking the type of purpose into consideration, it will be categorized as a Basic-Applied research. Besides, this research has a descriptive research method in terms of its data allocation. The data's nature would title the study as a mixed one. In this research, the meta-synthesis approach is used to identify the unique strategies used in the internationalization (in the row of Concepts) of SMEs and to categorize these strategies with the title of internationalization dimensions (in the row of themes). After the identification of the strategies and dimensions of internationalization, the corresponding combinations and possible strategies identified in the previous phase were determined using semi-structured interviews with 12 experts. Finally, using Analytic Hierarchy Process, the weight of each particular strategy in the identified combinations was obtained (Zimmer, 2006) Meta-Synthesis requires the researcher to combine the findings of the related researches (Bech, 2002). This research uses the seven-step method of (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2003).

4. Results and Discussion

The Meta-Synthesis steps are as follows:

Step 1: Formulating the review question

What are the dimensions of SMEs internationalization?

What strategies does each of these dimensions include?

Step 2: Conducting a systematic literature search

In this phase, 699 articles were categorized and examined by keywords investigating valid databases during the period from 1980 to 2018.

Step 3: Screening and selecting appropriate research articles

At this stage, 34 papers were identified as the final selection (Fig. 1).

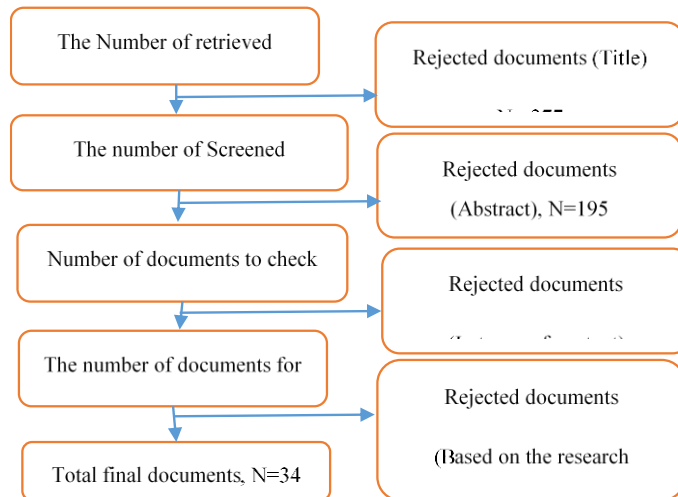


Fig. 1: The Process of Screening documents

Step 4: Extracting information from the articles: Selected articles were studied using Content Analysis method at this stage. The initial results were presented to the experts, and the results were finalized after summarizing their views. The number of finalized codes is equivalent to 73, and the results are accessible in Table 1.

Table1: Extracted Codes

Code	Reference
1. Differentiation with Brand	Hagen et al. (2017), Hagen & Giovani (2012), Knight (2001)
2. Differentiation with Innovation	Suh & Kim (2014), Cerrato et al. (2016), Pezderka & Sinkovics (2011), Felicio et al. (2016), Zhang et al. (2016), Ramos et al. (2011)
3. Differentiation with quality	Suh & Kim (2014), Hagen & Giovani (2012), Gerschewski et al. (2015), Knight (2001), Pinho & Prange (2016), Larimo (2015), Moen (2000)
4. Differentiation with technology	Knight (2001), Felicio et al. (2016), Camison & Lopez (2010)
5. Differentiation with designing	Felicio et al. (2016), Camison & Lopez (2010)
6. Emphasis on Product diversity	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Pinho & Prange (2016), Larimo (2015)
7. Emphasis on Innovation in Processes	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Knight (2001), Ramos et al. (2011)
8. High Capacity Utilization	Suh & Kim (2014), Hagen & Giovani (2012), Wignaraja (2015)
9. Emphasis on Cost Reduction over Competitors	Suh & Kim (2014), Wignaraja (2015), Cadogan (2003)
10. Breadth of Product lines	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Felicio et al. (2016), Pinho & Prange (2016),

11. The same behavior with Customers	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Apetrei et al. (2015)
12. The same brand name in all markets	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Cadogan (2003)
13. The Same Product Designing in all markets	Hagen & Giovani (2012)
14. The same Packaging Method in all markets	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Apetrei et al. (2015)
15. The same advertising theme in all markets	Simon & Narangajavana (2005), Hagen & Giovani (2012)
16. The same Sales and promotion tools in all markets	Hagen & Giovani (2012)
17. The same Sales Channel in all markets	Apetrei et al. (2015), Cadogan (2003)
18. The same pricing Strategy in all markets	Simon & Narangajavana (2005), Hagen & Giovani (2012)
19. Non-uniform behavior with customers	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Apetrei et al. (2015)
20. Different brand name in each market	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Cadogan (2003)
21. Different product designing in each market	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Apetrei et al. (2015)
22. Different Packaging method in each market	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Apetrei et al. (2015)
23. Different Advertising Theme in each market	Simon & Narangajavana (2005), Hagen & Giovani (2012)
24. Different Sales and promotion tools in each market	Simon & Narangajavana (2005), Apetrei et al. (2015)
25. Different Sales Channel in each market	Apetrei et al. (2015)
26. Different Pricing Strategy in each market	Simon & Narangajavana (2005), Hagen & Giovani (2012)
27. Satisfying a particular need	Suh & Kim (2014), Hagen & Giovani (2012), Gerschewski et al. (2015)
28. Producing Unique Products	Hagen & Giovani (2012), Gerschewski et al. (2015), Larimo (2015)
29. Focusing on Niche Markets	Suh & Kim (2014), Gerschewski et al. (2015), Kalinic & Forza (2012)
30. Focusing on Special Customers	Larimo (2015)
31. Emphasis on Customer Satisfaction	Felicio et al. (2016), Sarenketo & Kylaheiko (2008)
32. Customer Knowledge	Suh & Kim (2014), Hagen & Giovani (2012), Gerschewski et al. (2015)
33. Emphasis on Creating value for customers	Larimo (2015), Dasi et al. (2015)
34. Emphasis on After Sale Services	Gerschewski et al. (2015), Wignaraja (2015), Felicio et al. (2016), Pinho & Prange (2016)
35. Emphasis on Customer relationship	Cerrato et al. (2016), Gerschewski et al. (2015), Cadogan (2003)

36. Emphasis on Risk-taking	Knight (2001), Felicio et al. (2016), Zhang et al. (2016), Javalgi & Todd (2011)
37. Accepting Uncertainties and Ambiguities	Zhang et al. (2016), Javalgi & Todd (2011), Kalinic et al. (2014)
38. Management Commitment to Internationalization	Kalinic & Forza (2012), Hilmerson & Hans (2012), Dimitratos et al. (2016)
39. Emphasis on Introduction of new products and technologies	Cerrato et al. (2016), Hagen & Giovanni (2012), Knight (2001), Kalinic & Forza (2012)
40. Entering new markets before competitors	Kuivalainen et al. (2013), Gerschewski et al. (2015), Bell et al. (2004)
41. Emphasis on Recognizing Opportunities	Crick & Spence (2005), Ramos et al (2011), Cieslik et al. (2012)
42. Pro-active Response to Competitors	Crick & Spence (2005), Cerrato et al. (2016), Gerschewski et al. (2015)
43. The Company Willingness to try and test new ideas	Bell et al (2004), Cerrato et al (2016)
44. Innovation in Processes	Knight (2001), Ramos et al. (2011)
45. Emphasis on Research and Development	Javalgi & Todd (2011), Cerrato et al. (2016), Felicio et al. (2016)
46. Emphasis on Aggressive Decision Making	Knight (2001), Felicio et al (2016), Zhang et al (2016), Javalgi & Todd (2011)
47. Emphasis on New Product Development	Suh & Kim (2014), Felicio et al (2016), Pinho & Prange (2016), Zhang et al (2016), Ramos et al (2011), Bell et al (2004)
48. Attention to New Processes	Ramos et al. (2011), Pinho & Prange (2016), Hagen & Giovanni (2012)
49. Exploring New ways to do things	Kalinic & Forza (2012), Gerschewski et al. (2015)
50. Emphasis on Productivity in Operations and Production	Gerschewski et al. (2015), Hagen & Giovanni (2012), Pinho & Prange (2016), Wignaraja (2015)
51. Producing Inexpensive products	Wignaraja (2015), Simon & Narangajavana (2005)
52. Emphasis on Quality	Knight (2001), Pinho & Prange (2016), Larimo (2015), Moen (2000), Camison & Lopez (2010)
53. Emphasis on Lean time in production	Simon & Narangajavana (2005), Moen (2000)
54. Disregarding for Communication tools	Simon & Narangajavana (2005), Larimo (2015)
55. Producing Sophisticated Products	Suh & Kin (2010)
56. Investing in new Technologies	Suh & Kim (2010), Hagen & Giovanni (2012), Pinho & Prange (2016)
57. Technological leadership	Cerrato et al (2016), Hagen & Giovanni (2012)
58. Process Improvement	Hagen Et al (2017), Larimo (2015)

59. Indirect Exporting	Kunday & Senguler (2015), Hilmerson & Hans (2012)
60. Direct Exporting	Pezderka & Sinkovics (2011), Erikson et al. (2017)
61. Licensing	Crick & Spence (2005), Higon & Driffield (2010), Bell et al. (2004)
62. Franchising	Cadogan et al (2003), Sarenkato et al. (2008), Bell et al. (2004)
63. Joint Venture	Suh & Kim (2014), Crick & Spence (2005), Dutot et al. (2014)
64. Integration with an existing company (M&A)	Kuivalinen et al. (2012), Wright et al (2007)
65. Establishing an new Company in Host country (Green Field)	Felicio et al. (2016)
66. Focus Strategy	Cerrato et al. (2016), Kuivaleinen et al (2012), Dasi et al (2015), Knudsen & Servais (2007), Sarenketo & Kylaheiko (2008)
67. Entering only one market at any time	Bell et al (2004)
68. Penetrating Current Market's	Suh & Kim (2014), Dasi et al. (2015), Bell et al. (2004)
69. Slow Internationalization	Dimitratos et al (2016), Kuivaleinen et al (2012)
70. Diversification Strategy	Cerrato et al (2016), Kuivaleinen et al (2012), Knudsen & Servais (2007), Dasi et al (2015), Sarenketo & Kylaheiko (2008), Cieslik et al. (2012)
71. Fast Internationalization	Dimitratos et al (2016), Kuivaleinen et al (2012)
72. Entering new geographical Regions,	Pezderka & Sinkovics (2011), Cadogan et al (2003), Ojala (2009)
73. Entering Several Market's Simultaneously	Larimo (2015), Cieslik (2012)

Step 5: Analyzing and synthesizing qualitative findings: At this stage, concepts and themes were extracted from Table 2.

Table 2: Extracted Concepts and Themes

Themes	Concepts	Codes
Entry mode Dimension	Risk Averse Entry Mode	Indirect Exporting, Direct Exporting, Licensing, Franchising
	Risk Taking Entry mode	Joint Venture, Merge and Acquisition, Green Field
Extension Pattern Dimension	Conservative Extension Pattern	Focus Strategy, Entering only one market at any time, Penetrating Current Market's, Slow Internationalization
	Aggressive Extension	Diversification Strategy, Entering Several Market's Simultaneously, Entering new geographical Regions, Fast Internationalization
Operational-Competitive Dimension	Differentiation	Differentiation with Brand, Differentiation with Innovation, Differentiation with quality, Differentiation with technology, Differentiation with designing, Emphasis on Product diversity
	Cost Reduction	Emphasis on Innovation in Processes, High Capacity Utilization, Emphasis on Cost Reduction over Competitors, Breadth of Product lines
	Standardization	Uniform behavior with Customers, The Same Product Designing in all markets, The same brand name in all markets, The same Packaging Method in all markets, The same advertising theme in all markets, The same Sales and promotion tools in all markets, The same sales channel in all markets, the same pricing Strategy in all markets
	Adaptation	Non-uniform behavior with customers, Different brand name in each market, Different product designing in each market, Different Packaging method in each market, Different Advertising Theme in each market, Different Sales and promotion tools in each market, Different sales channel in each market, different pricing Strategy in each market
	Niche Strategy	Satisfying a particular need, Producing Unique Products, Focusing on Niche Markets, Focusing on Special Customers
Strategic Orientation dimension	Customer Orientation	Emphasis on Customer Satisfaction, Customer knowledge, Emphasis on Creating value for customers, Emphasis on After sale services, Emphasis on Customer relationship
	Growth Orientation	Emphasis on Risk-taking, Accepting Uncertainties and Ambiguities, Management Commitment to Internationalization, Emphasis on Introduction of new products and technologies, Entering new markets before competitors, Emphasis on Recognizing Opportunities, Pro-active Response to Competitors, The company Willingness to try and test new ideas, Innovation in Processes, Emphasis on Research and Development, Emphasis on Aggressive Decision Making,
	Innovation Orientation	Emphasis on New Product Development, Attention to New Processes, Exploring new ways to do things

Production Orientation	Emphasis on Productivity in Operations and Production, Producing Inexpensive products, Emphasis on Quality, Emphasis on Lean time in production, Disregarding for Communication tools
Technology Orientation	Investing in new Technologies, Technological leadership, Process Improvement, Producing Sophisticated Products

Step 6: Maintaining quality control

In this research, the researcher has benefited from the comparison of his opinion to another expert to control the extracted concepts by himself. In this regard, some of the selected texts were presented to one of the experts. When two are ranking the respondents, and it is intended to measure the agreement between these two ranking people, the Kappa index is used. The Kappa index varies from zero to one, and the closer the number to one is, the stronger is the agreement between them (Sandlowski and Baraso, 2003). The value of the index using SPSS software at the significance level of 0.000, was calculated to be 0.802, which is a fair number. Table 3 provides the mentioned statistics.

Table 3: Kappa Index

	Value	Standard Deviation	Significance Level
Kappa Index	0.802	0.061	0.000
Number of Codes	73		

Step 7: Presenting the findings

Internationalization is a multi-dimensional process, meaning that an enterprise will use a combination of different strategies, each of which covering a variety of internationalization aspects, to determine its comprehensive internationalization strategy. Various dimensions of internationalization in SMEs were identified using Meta-Synthesis. Each of these dimensions looks at internationalization from a specific point of view. These dimensions include:

Operational-Competitive dimension: An SME needs to determine its own competitive and operational strategy along the path of its internationalization, including strategies such as differentiation, cost reduction, standardization, adaption, and Niche strategy.

Strategic Orientation dimension: this dimension makes the strategic approach which the enterprise is based on visible. The approaches include; Customer orientation, Growth orientation, Production orientation, Innovation orientation, Technology orientation.

Entry Mode into the foreign market dimension: SMEs can choose different ways to enter the foreign market called the market entry mode strategy. As an example, an enterprise might want to use direct export to enter the foreign market, and another enterprise: the establishment of an enterprise in the host country. Some of these methods, such as direct and indirect export, do not require investment, commitment, and allocation of resources in the host country; therefore, we call them risk-averse entry mode. Methods such as joint venture or establishment of a subsidiary in the host

country require the investment and foundation of resources in the host country so that these methods will be more risk-taking.

Extension Pattern dimension: When an enterprise opts for a limited number of regions for entry, it only enters one market at a time, focusing on the current existing markets, and the speed of its internationalization (the interval between the establishment and internationalization) is low, and it primarily has employed a conservative extension pattern. We can say an enterprise has used an aggressive extension pattern when it enters a diverse range of regions and countries, and several markets simultaneously at a high pace.

After the completion of Meta-Synthesis, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 experts to identify corresponding combinations of identified strategies in the row of Themes. The experts were asked to comment on the combination of the attributes of each defined dimension. After these interviews, the propositions related to the possibility of combining the different strategies were extracted, as shown in Table 4.

Regarding the propositions obtained from interviews with the experts, we have extracted primary combinations and represented them to experts, and after taking note of their comments practically, we have determined the final combinations. To identify the importance of each attribute comparing to others in the same combination, we have calculated the normal weight of each attribute using the expert comments and Analytic Hierarchy Process. We have aimed to reveal the importance of each attribute of a combination regarding other attributes within that combination. One of the utilities of Analytic Hierarchy Process is to prioritize alternatives based on different indicators and specify the weight of the alternatives compared to each other by creating a pairwise comparison matrix (Azar & Mahjoob, 2007). Ultimately, the identified combinations were entitled regarding the recognized concepts and the specified weights. Table 5 represents the ultimate combinations and the weight of each attribute.

Table 4: Results of Interviews with Experts

No.	Interviews Result's	Experts Opinion
1	Applying Conservative Extension pattern and Adaptation Simultaneously.	Undesirable
2	Applying Risk-taking Entry Mode and Conservative Extension pattern Simultaneously	Undesirable
3	Applying Cost Reduction and Adaptation	Undesirable
4	Applying Risk-averse Entry Mode and Adaptation Simultaneously	Undesirable
5	Applying Aggressive Extension pattern and Niche Strategy Simultaneously	Undesirable
6	Applying Conservative Extension pattern and Growth Orientation Simultaneously	Undesirable
7	Applying Risk-averse Entry Mode and Growth Orientation Simultaneously	Undesirable

8	Applying Cost Reduction and Differentiation Simultaneously	Undesirable
9	Applying Risk-taking Entry Mode and Growth Orientation Simultaneously	Desirable
10	Applying Adaptation and Customer Orientation Simultaneously	Desirable
11	Applying Cost Reduction and Technology Orientation Simultaneously	Desirable
12	Applying Cost Reduction and Production Orientation Simultaneously	Desirable
13	Applying Differentiation and Innovation Orientation Simultaneously	Desirable
14	Applying Conservative Extension pattern and Customer Orientation Simultaneously	Desirable
15	Applying Niche strategy and Customer Orientation Simultaneously	Desirable
16	Applying Standardization and Adaptation Simultaneously	Undesirable

Thrifty Conservative: This strategy is a combination of cost reduction, standardization, production orientation, risk-averse entry mode, and conservative extension pattern. Enterprises using this combination to internationalization, concentrate more on cost reduction, conservative extension, and risk-averse entry-mode. Therefore, we entitled it “thrifty conservatives”.

Niche Differentiated group: Enterprises using this comprehensive strategy, try to offer a differentiated product to their particular customers, focusing on creating a differentiated product and entering into intact areas of the market, and to do so, the innovation orientation helps them to ease creating differentiation, being able to satisfy the exclusive customers of a niche market with the offered product. These enterprises utilize conservative extension pattern, risk-averse entry mode, and standardization to get present in niche markets.

Table 5: Comprehensive Strategies of Internationalization for SME's

Comprehensive Strategy	Components	Weight
Thrifty Conservative	Cost Reduction	0.207
	Standardization	0.127
	Production Orientation	0.147
	Technology Orientation	0.121
	Risk-averse Entry Mode	0.197
	Conservative Extension Pattern	0.201
Niche Differentiated Group	Differentiation	0.181
	Standardization	0.101
	Customer Orientation	0.133
	Innovation Orientation	0.121
	Risk-averse Entry Mode	0.139
	Conservative Extension pattern	0.147
	Niche Strategy	0.178
Growth Pursuer Customer-Oriented Group	Differentiation	0.118
	Adaptation	0.129
	Customer Orientation	0.151
	Growth Orientation	0.164
	Innovation Orientation	0.097
	Risk-averse Entry Mode	0.059
	Risk-taking Entry Mode	0.139
	Aggressive Extension Pattern	0.143
Technology-Oriented Aggressors	Cost Reduction	0.062
	Standardization	0.138
	Growth Orientation	0.167
	Production orientation	0.123
	Technology Orientation	0.174
	Risk-taking Entry Mode	0.151
	Aggressive Extension Pattern	0.185

Growth pursuer customer-oriented group: The main concern of enterprises using this comprehensive strategy is rapid growth and penetration in different international markets. These enterprises seek to attract new customers and develop their activities, focusing on a combination of growth orientation, customer orientation, and innovation orientation. They aim to cover various customer preferences and present unique products using adaptation and differentiation strategies to improve their growth and customer satisfaction. These enterprises use both risk-taking and risk-averse entry modes, but their main focus is on the risk-taking strategy. The extension pattern of these enterprises is aggressive, and in order of rapid growth, they enter into several markets simultaneously, and their internationalization pace is high.

Technology-Oriented Aggressors: These enterprises try to penetrate into new markets rapidly relying on growth orientation, risk-averse entry mode, and aggressive extension pattern. They are counted to be one of the most advanced enterprises technologically that assign great investments on research and development and apply new technologies. These enterprises act evenly toward their customers

(standardization) and attempt to offer them inexpensive products using product orientation and cost reduction simultaneously.

5. Conclusion

Internationalization is a multi-dimensional process; which means the SMEs will have to make various decisions in different areas to engage in international markets and in fact, these decisions will form their internationalization strategy. In other words, the comprehensive internationalization strategy is the synthesis of the strategies, which each relate to different dimensions of internationalization. We clarified different dimensions of internationalization by using the qualitative method of meta-synthesis to discover and identify different situations that enterprises encounter to be internationalized. These dimensions include; Operational-Competitive dimension (including cost reduction, differentiation, standardization, adaptation, and niche strategies); Strategic Orientation dimension (including growth orientation, customer orientation, technology orientation, production orientation, and innovation orientation), Entry Mode dimension (including risk-taking and risk-averse entry modes), and Extension Pattern dimension (including aggressive and conservative extension strategies). Following the various dimensions identification, we had to answer the question of how should SMEs combine the subset strategies of these dimensions and put them to work. In this regard, we have extracted propositions from semi-structured interviews with experts, which led us to identify practical combinations with more compatible attributes. Therefore, we have calculated the weight of each attribute comparing to other attributes using the Analytic Hierarchy Process to show on which attributes from the identified combinations Do Enterprises focus more. Ultimately, we entitled these combinations; thrifty conservatives, niche differentiated group, growth pursuer customer oriented group, and technology-based aggressors. According to our research findings, small and medium-sized business owners must consider the un-favorability of simultaneous use of some of these strategies relating to the different dimensions when choosing and executing the strategies. For instance, applying conservative extension pattern causes failure for an enterprise seeking growth in international markets (growth orientation), and such enterprise needs to use aggressive extension pattern to prosper in the international market. Each enterprise can choose a unique combination for its internationalization based on its intra-organizational and environmental configuration and in case of the discordance between these configurations and the attributes of the selected combination, the enterprise is condemned to failure. For example, from the environmental point of view, in case of strict sanctions existence, use of an aggressive extension pattern and risk-taking mode will not be feasible due to the limitation of enterprises from participating in several markets and the appliance of risk-taking entry mode like founding an enterprise in a host country will not be possible. From an intra-organizational point of view, for instance, using cost reduction strategy

seems not to be the right choice when monetary funds of an SME is not sufficient for high-volume production and developing extensive production lines.

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