SMES' INTERNATIONALISATION PATTERNS AND SOME ASPECTS OF THEIR INTERNATIONAL MARKET BEHAVIOUR: A REVIEW OF SELECTED PAPERS

Regina Appiah-Gyimah
Lecturer, Accra Polytechnic, Accra Ghana

ABSTRACT: *This paper reviews selected studies on SMEs' internationalisation patterns and other aspects of their international market behaviour. The objective of the review is to critique the contribution of these studies to academic debate and knowledge. The review is based on 5 studies which have the common subject matter of SME international market behaviour. Articles reviewed are sourced from the published papers index of "Emerald Insight". Each article is thoroughly read, with special attention given to the harmony among its literature, methodology and findings. All studies could fairly contribute to academic debate on the various aspects of SMEs' international market behaviour by providing a strong link between related literature, chosen methodology and results. The logical flow of thoughts and augments, and their linking to previous theoretical and empirical evidence is praiseworthy. Results in the papers support reviewed literature, chosen methodology and conclusions. However, there are common issues about clarity of stated hypotheses, and testing for basic assumptions on which writers' choices of statistical tools and the validity of research conclusions are based. With respect to principles of statistical inference, these issues weaken the validity of conclusions in the four quantitative studies.*

KEYWORDS: SMEs, internationalisation patterns, emerging markets, resource-based view, international market segmentation, supplier-buyer relationships

INTRODUCTION

By observation, research on SMEs' movement into international and emerging markets is expanding gradually. Moreover, the body of studies assessing international market behaviour patterns of SMEs is expanding. These developments are attributed to the impressively outstanding contribution of the SMEs sector to GDP growth in most countries (Turcan & Jones, 2002; Olejnik, 2014). Moreover, there has been a consistent identification of opportunities in international markets for SMEs (Turcan & Jones, 2002; Olejnik, 2014), especially in international emerging markets (Kiran, Majumdar & Kishore, 2013). Moreover, scholars (e.g. Lu & Beamish, 2001); Lin, 2010) have expressed the need to use research as a basis of assessing SMEs' international market entry patterns and behaviours in view of their operational challenges and the dynamics in international markets.

With respect to research-to-date on the subject, it is obvious researchers are recognising the exceptional potential of SMEs for economic growth. However while research is primarily aimed at contributing to knowledge and academic debate, it is argued that "faulty" research does not do so (Vance, Talley, Azuero, Pearce & Christian, 2013). Rather, it infiltrates the current body of knowledge with spots of controversy and retards the process of knowledge sharing in the academic arena (Ingham-Broomfield, 2013; Vance et al. 2013). Alas, "faulty" research studies are the embodiment of a common academic "poisoning" and are part and parcel of research work (Vance et al., 2013). Logically, one of the most needed interventions to this problem is formal critique and review of research studies with the goal of assessing the quality of knowledge shared in them. "Formal" in this context means the use of acceptable standards to review and critique researches, and to publish results. Ingham-Broomfield (2013) and Vance et al. (2013) have vehemently suggested the formalisation of published paper critique. Their suggestion was inspired by the fact that an overwhelming majority of published studies are not reviewed and critiqued; so it becomes difficult evaluating the quality or inferiority of the knowledge shared in published researches. From a personal viewpoint, there is a huge gap in the extent to which published researches are formally reviewed relative to mainstream research work, where mainstream research work is synonymous to conducting research and publishing its results (Vance et al., 2013). This assertion is twin to the argument that scholars and researchers give highly unequal attention to formal research critique and mainstream academic publication (Ingham-Broomfield, 2013; Vance et al., 2013).

On the basis of these gaps, this paper reviews contemporary researches on SMEs' internalisation patterns and their international market behaviours. The studies reviewed and critiqued are recent because none of them was conducted before the year 2012. Also, the review captures only 5 studies. This enables the reviewer to focus on major ideas and concepts delved into in the studies, providing an opportunity to give adequate depth to the review and critique. The reviewer focuses on SMEs in view of their growing opportunity in international and emerging markets. In the next section, the purpose of the review is stated.

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The purpose of this review is to evaluate recent contributions to academic debate and knowledge on the subject of SMEs' internationalisation patterns and international market behaviours. The reviewer seeks to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of each study as a basis of unfolding the quality of the contribution to knowledge and academic debate on the subject. The review illuminates the credibility of arguments made in the studies and identifies their roles among studies contributing to academic debate on the subject.

OVERVIEW OF REVIEWED PAPERS

Five (5) studies are reviewed in this paper. Each study is given a number used to refer to it throughout the review. Corresponding to each reference number is the number of authors of the article, names of authors, year of publication, country and geographical region, and the topic of the article. Table 1 captures basic features of reviewed papers.

Table 1: Primary Information on Reviewed Papers

Article ref. number	Number of Authors	Authors	Year	Country	Geographical region	Topic	Journal name
1	4	Bortoluzzi, G., Chiarvesio, M., Di Maria, E., Tabacco, R.,	2014	Italy	North America	Exporters moving toward emerging markets: a resource-based approach	International Marketing Review, Vol. 31, No. 5
2	2	Budeva, D.G., Mullen, M.R.	2014	USA	North America	International market segmentation: Economics, national culture and time	European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 48, No. 7/8
3	3	Buvik, A., Andersen, O., Gronhaug, K.	2014	Norway	Europe	Buyer control in domestic and international supplier-buyer relationships	European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 48, No. 3/4
4	4	Kuivalainen, O., Sundqvist, S., Saarenketo, S., McNaughton, R.	2012	Finland	Europe	Internationalization patterns of small and medium-sized enterprises	International Marketing Review, Vol. 29, No. 5
5	2	Olejnik, E., Swoboda, B.	2012	Germany	Europe	SMEs' internationalisation patterns: Descriptives, dynamics and determinants	International Marketing Review, Vol. 29, No. 5

In Table 1, the first study, published in 2014 from Italy, has four authors. The theme of the study is about exporters (SMEs) moving towards emerging markets. The second article, published in the same year from United States of America, has 2 authors. This article has been based on international market segmentation among SMEs. The third article has 3 authors and is published in 2014 from Norway. Its contents are focused on buyer control in domestic and international

supplier-buyer relationships, with emphasis placed on SMEs. The fourth article, published in 2012 from Finland, has 4 authors. This article is focused on internationalisation patterns among SMEs. The fifth article, published in 2012 from Germany, is based on the same theme, but has 2 authors. Generally, the articles cover two geographical regions. Two of the articles (i.e. **1** and **2**) are published from North America, while the remaining three (i.e. **3**, **4** and **5**) are published from Europe. Moreover, the first and third articles have been published in a journal of the same volume and number, likewise the fourth and fifth articles.

REVIEW APPROACH AND OUTLINE

The review captures 5 peer-reviewed articles which are sourced from the published papers index of "Emerald Insight". The reviewer focuses on these articles owing to the fact that they are recently published, consequently providing a more contemporary contribution to knowledge on the subject. Moreover, the articles are written on a common theme and contribute to academic debate in a subject area not much explored by researchers. Reviewed articles are exclusively sourced from "Emerald Insight" as a result of the reviewer's interest to use studies published in journals with the same publication guidelines and standard.

The reviewer carefully read through the five articles a number of times to understand the major arguments and thoughts made in each. After gaining considerable understanding of the contents of the articles, research guidelines and other studies on the subject were accessed from various peer-review journals, read and related to them. At this stage, the interest was to identify the extent to which arguments and thoughts are presented in each reviewed paper in accordance to other studies and proposed research methods on the subject.

The reviewer read through each paper once again, paying attention to each thought and argument relative to cited works and facts identified in other related studies. In this session of the review, comments are made and tabulated on each major idea and argument. The comments tabulated were in two categories. The first category of comments has a positive tone as it expresses agreement to other studies and proposed research methods on the subject. The second category, on the other hand, expresses issues and lack of clarity about major ideas and arguments relative to other studies and proposed research methods on the subject. To make the critique credible, tabulated comments were discussed with a few research experts on the subject. Impressively, their opinions generally support the reviewer's tabulated comments, which were later elaborated in writing.

This paper is organised in five uniform blocks. A block is given a heading relating to the article on which it is based and superscripted with its reference number (see Table 1). Each block provides critique on each paper reviewed. In each block, the reviewer focuses on clarity of arguments and expressions, and appropriateness of literature review, methodology and statistical analysis (if present) vis-à-vis other related studies, standard guidelines and proposed research

methods on the subject. Outside the five blocks, the reviewer exposes the strengths and weaknesses of each paper and gives a short conclusion on the entire review. Suggestions for future research work are also stated. In the next section is a review of the first article.

EXPORTERS MOVING TOWARD EMERGING MARKETS: A RESOURCE-BASED APPROACH[1]

With reference to Table 1, the first reviewed article examines exporters' movement into emerging marketers from the viewpoint of the resource-based approach. The authors analyse the effect of international experience, managerial competence and market capabilities of a firm on its presence in emerging markets. They provide an abstract that captures the purpose of the research, its methodology, findings, implications and its originality. Their presentation of this part is concise and comprehensive. Thus it offers a simple but enlightening overview of the contents of the article. The inclusion of statements about the article's originality and implications is unique to the journal in which it has been published and presents an overview of contents in a broader scope.

The general introduction of the article is started with an acknowledgement of the global role of emerging markets from a historical perspective. Then the writers make it known that the managerial literature on the subject is expanding, with appropriate reference works cited (e.g. Ramamurti, 2004; Khanna, 2007). Important comments are made on the dimensions of the expanding literature. Despite the fact that the subject's literature is expanding, the writers state the prevalence of a gap in it. The writers make emphasis on the gap from the viewpoint of firm's capabilities and resources. It is praiseworthy that the writers link the prevalence of this gap in the managerial literature to some reference works (e.g. Peng, 2001; Meyer et al., 2009).
After identifying the main gaps in the managerial literature, the writers pinpoint what they seek to achieve in their study. The articulate the aspect of the stated gap they wish to remedy in the study. The tail end of the article's general introduction captures the outline of the paper. In the next subsection, review information on the paper's literature is presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

At the literature review section, the writers first define emerging markets (EMs) and link the definitions to the peculiar traits of EMs. In turn, the main characteristics of EMs are briefly compared with those of advanced markets (AMs), with appropriate references made to some studies (e.g. Cavusgil et al., 2012; Khanna & Palepu, 2010). A major concept of the paper, "institutional void", is then mentioned as a primary weakness associated with EMs. Additionally, the meaning of "institutional void" in the context of the paper is explained, while a snappy comment is made on how it counters firms' entry into emerging markets.

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In the next block of the literature review, the writers present the relationship among three variables: (1) firms' capabilities; (2) firms' experience; and (3) firms' international experience. After discussing a network of the relationships among these variables, each variable is discussed separately in terms of its individual effect on firms' entry into emerging markets. Generally, their literature suggests that presence in emerging markets is positively related to each of the three variables. With this general idea in mind, the writers formulate three hypotheses. Their hypotheses likely inform their methodological and analytical approaches.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the writers mention their chosen research design and context. They employed the quantitative approach and used primary data collected from a survey of a sample of Italian manufacturing firms in the fashion, furniture, and engineering sectors. After disclosing their research context and approach, the writers justify their research design options and introduce the population of their study. A description of the population is then linked to their chosen sampling procedure and sample size. They endeavour to throw light on the response rate achieved in the study.

With reference to some popular previous studies (e.g. Cavusgil et al. 2012; Johanson & Vahlne, 1990), variable selection and measurement are explained by the writers. The validity of variable measurement is argued and referenced to some precious studies. To ensure clarity, the writers define each variable based on evidences from the literature.

FINDINGS

Before presenting the major findings of the study, the writers acknowledge the statistical tool used to analyse data. They also mention their control for multicollinearity problems. With respect to the main findings of their study, two of the three variables (international experience and marketing capabilities) are linked positively and significantly to the dependent variable (presence in EMs). The overall variance explained by this model is about 22%. The complete model confirms that managerial capabilities are poorly linked to presence in EMs. The writers communicate another important insight about their analysis; thus firms expanding in EMs have, on average, more international experience than firms that remain in AMs only. In all, their results support the first and third hypotheses, but they researchers claim the found little evidence to retain the third research hypotheses. Table 2 in the appendix shows stated hypotheses in their study.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

By observation, the writers at the level of discussion relate their results to reviewed literature. They indicate portions of result supported and not supported by the literature. The confirmation of the first and third hypothesis is prominently positioned in their literature. Absence of

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sufficient evidence to support the second hypothesis agrees to some part of the literature, whereas other parts of the literature show no support in this respect. Conclusions are passed by the writers based on the findings. Generally, conclusions made correspond to the confirmation of the first and third hypotheses, and the rejection of the second research hypothesis. The implications and future research directions of the study are stated as parts of the discussion and conclusion. From a personal perspective, there is a strong harmony among result, discussion and conclusion.

INTERNATIONAL MARKET SEGMENTATION: ECONOMICS, NATIONAL CULTURE AND TIME

The second article identifies possible changes in market segment membership over time along the dimensions of economic and cultural characteristics in markets, and a combination of them. Thus the research seeks to identify economic and cultural effects and their combined effect on international market segment membership overtime. The writers generally capture the content of their study in the abstract. The abstract covers the study's purpose, methodology, findings and implications for future research and practice. Their presentation of the abstract harmonises traditional formats of presenting abstracts in peer-reviewed articles, except for the inclusion of a statement on paper originality.

With reference to Ter Hofstede et al., (1999), the writers introduce the study by attributing international segmentation to a prevailing global competition. They therefore argue that effective international market segment membership enable firms to hedge against the negative effects of global competition. They authors argue by citing appropriate reference works that international market segmentation is relevant to business performance in international markets. They however indicate that the bases of segmentation are not yet settled in the literature.

Economic and cultural variables are justified as the main bases for international segment membership acquisition, with reference to some popular studies (e.g. Day et al., 1988; Baalbaki & Malhotra, 1993). They further posit based on the literature that a relatively new and third factor that influences international market segment membership is time. The authors then make a straightforward comment on the problem found in the subject's literature. In this respect, they express the view that traditional country segmentation research is limited in that it has mainly used data from a single period or a limited period. In addition, this gap is considered problematic because bases of segmentation are believed to be dynamic in nature and potential changes may not be detectable in short periods. This assertion is made based on evidences taken from some studies (e.g. Cavusgil & Nevin, 1981; Day *et al.*, 1988; Wedel & Kamakura, 2002) and premised on the third factor that influences international market segment membership, time.

It is evident that an identification of this gap connects to the writers' statement of the purpose of their study. A statement of the outline of their article is part of the purpose statement. In the next section, the reviewer's take on this paper's literature is presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

At the introductory stage of the literature review, the authors reintroduce the research gap stated in the general introduction, after which effects on international market segment membership are discussed at the three factor levels: (1) economic factors; (2) cultural factors; and (3) economic and cultural factors. Individual subsections are dedicated to the review of literature on each level of these factors. In the subsection related to economic factors, energy consumption, exports and imports and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita are identified as the drivers of international market segment membership. They refer to some studies (e.g. Sethi, 1971; Huszagh *et al.,* 1985) to suggest in the literature that these economic variables significantly determine the nature of international market segment membership among firms. At the level of culture, four factors are identified to determine or influence international market segment membership. These are individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and masculinity, where a disclosure of these factors is referenced to some studies (e.g. Gupta et al., 2002; Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Ronen & Shenkar, 1985).

As mentioned earlier, the researchers capture the role of time in the individual and combined effects of economic and cultural variables in a subsection of their literature review. The most conspicuous aspect of their argument is the linking of the individual and combined effects of these factors to previous studies (e.g. Berry et al., 2002; Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Kitayama, 2002). In a whole subsection, the writers reiterate the relationships among the factors in the literature, but at this level they use a different tone to formulate hypotheses. This approach seems to have duplicated preliminary subsections on which their four hypotheses could have been developed. At a larger extent, the hypotheses formulated agree with their literature review, but their clarity is questionable from a personal standpoint.

METHODOLOGY

The authors introduce their methodology by stating the design and context of their research. The sources of data and their reliability are evidently the main areas of focus at this level. Afterwards, the writers define each of the three variables or constructs (i.e. economic and cultural factors, and time). This section throws additional light on factor descriptions made in the review of literature. A special subsection is reserved for describing variable measurements. Generally, the measurement style adopted is based on pathways taken in previous studies (e.g. Kaiser & Rice, 1974; Ford et al., 1986). The writers' approach to Cluster Analysis is also explained. It is made evident that the cluster analysis approach is rooted in standards attributed to Punj & Steward (1983).

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RESULT

Results are reached using layered or several cluster analysis. Results are conceptualised in figures. According to their results, membership of some countries changes over time. Initially some ex-communist countries are clustered with the developing country segment. At the end of the 1990s, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia join Belgium, the Czech Republic, Ireland, The Netherlands and Slovenia. At the same time, Russia moves from the segment containing developed countries (Austria, Canada, Finland, France and Germany) to a segment with less developed countries (a segment containing some of the so-called Big Ten or BRIC countries such as Brazil and India). These results confirm the authors' expectation that segment membership will change with changes in economic development. Although the number of segments remains stable, the structure of the segments has changed with some countries moving across segments. As the authors predicted in the second hypothesis, the segments are different from solutions based only on economic or cultural variables. Their results there confirm the four hypotheses stated (see Table 3 in appendix).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As seen with respect to the first paper, these researchers could make a comprehensive sense of their results by demonstrating the extent to which findings are supported by the literature at the level of discussion. The writers also sourced empirical evidences to render their confirmed hypotheses well-grounded. In their discussion, their confirmed hypotheses are supported by a good number of related studies (e.g. Helsen et al., 1993; Sethi, 1971; Johansson & Moinpour, 1977; Cavusgil et al., 2004). Yet, their discussion is placed in four subsections. The first section captures discussion on effect of economic variables; the second covers discussion on the effect of cultural variables; the third subsection covers combined effects of economic and cultural variables; and the fourth subsection captures effect of time change.

Unlike what is seen in the first paper, these authors discuss their implications for theory and research, implications for practice, and limitations and suggestion for future research in separate subsections. Also, a short conclusion that makes a concord with the confirmed hypotheses is made at the tail end of the paper.

BUYER CONTROL IN DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SUPPLIER-BUYER RELATIONSHIPS

In the third paper, the writers seek to investigate the effects of supplier-specific investment and prior relationship length on buyer's control, while comparing these effects across local and international business to business relationships. The structure of their abstract is consistent with the two papers reviewed earlier. This situation is owing to the fact that the articles are structured using the same publication guideline.

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Unlike the first and second articles, these writers start their general introduction by stating the purpose of their study. Also in the preliminary part of their general introduction, proxies and models (i.e. transaction cost analysis, TCA; internationalisation process; and relational contracting perspective) on which variable measurement is done are acknowledged. These models and proxies are explained and referenced to previous works on the subject (e.g. Bradach & Eccles, 1989; Granovetter, 1985; Heide & John, 1992). This explanation is portrayed as a basis of introducing a primary and influential concept, "information asymmetry".

After introducing the concept of information asymmetry, the purpose of the study is restated and linked to a statement of the paper's outline. Unlike the first two papers reviewed, these writers do not give an evident gap; so a problem on which the study is based is not evident in the general introduction. In the following subsections, the reviewer indicates how this situation translates into their chosen methodology and results.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As seen so far, this article has a number of unique features relative to the first two papers. This scenario is also strongly exhibited in the literature review section of their study. These authors are the first to link their study to context-specific theories. For instance, the major concepts (e.g. transaction cost analysis, TCA; internationalisation process; and relational contracting perspective) raised in the general introduction are discussed on the basis of contextual theories. The theoretical review is captured in a single subsection.

After the requisite theories are probed, the central aspect of the review has three facets: (1) relationship duration; (2) opportunism; and (3) information asymmetry in domestic and foreign business-to-business relationships. The general idea expressed at this level is that information asymmetry limits the ability of a partner in the buyer-supplier relationship to exhibit opportunism as a result of his/her lack of full knowledge about the other partner (where the other partner has no such advantage) with respect to substantial performance, quality and possible strategic pricing behaviour. This idea is the outcome of reviewing several related studies (e.g. Dixit & Nalebuff, 1991; Williamson, 1985, 1991) by the writers. The understanding conveyed at this level is linked to a conceptual framework on which hypotheses are based.

The authors use a conceptual framework to express their expectations in the study. The framework suggests two expectations and phenomena: (1) a negative association between the levels of buyer-specific investments and buyer control in industrial buyer-seller relationships; and (2) when the prior length of buyer-seller relationships increases, the association between supplier-specific assets and buyer control will be more negatively shaped in international supplier-buyer relationships than in domestic ones. After clarifying the bases of these hypotheses, the authors discuss their methodology.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, the writers define their research design and justify its adoption in the study. They used a longitudinal research design. An elaborate discussion is made on what a longitudinal design is and how suitable it is to the study. In the next subsection, the adopted sampling frame, sampling methods and sample are identified. Moreover, much of their writing in this subsection justifies the chosen sampling frame, sampling methods and sample. The response rate is also acknowledged at this level.A major subsection of interest talks about variable measurement and its justifications. Here, variables are defined relative to previous studies and the literature (e.g. Heide & John, 1990; Heide, 2003). A subsection is also dedicated to variable validation by the writers. At this level, the validity and reliability of the scales and instruments used are communicated.

RESULT

The researchers use multiple regression analysis to analyse data and present results. The writers observe in their analysis a strong and negative effect of buyer-specific assets on buyer control, and this provides support for the first hypothesis. Their results also support the second hypothesis, suggesting that the effect of asset specificity on buyer control is attenuated significantly more in international buyer-seller relationships than in domestic ones when the prior history of the relationship increases.

They also observe that when an interaction effect is present, the main effect of a variable entering the interaction term expresses its effect when the variable with which it interacts is zero. Environmental uncertainty seems to foster higher hierarchical governance to cope with unpredictable terms of trade and the prospects of frequent renegotiations ($B = .17$; $p < .01$). Finally, stakes and leverage considerations seem to act as a significant antecedent to hierarchical governance, and the annual purchasing volume absorbed by the buying firm is positively associated to buyer control ($B = .15$; $p < 0.10$). Generally, the dimensions of result suggest that there is a negative association between the levels of buyer specific investments and buyer control in industrial buyer-seller relationships. When the prior length of buyer-seller relationships is increased, the association between supplier-specific assets and buyer control is more negatively shaped in international supplier-buyer relationships than in domestic ones.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There is much similarity in the structure of the discussion made in this paper relative to the first two papers. The writers relate their findings, which support their hypotheses, to previous empirical and theoretical evidences. At a larger extent, the literature supports results or the retention of the two hypotheses. Hence, two primary conclusions are evident:

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- There is a negative association between the levels of buyer-specific investments and buyer control in industrial buyer-seller relationships.

- When the prior length of buyer-seller relationships is increased, the association between supplier-specific assets and buyer control is more negatively shaped in international supplier-buyer relationships than in domestic ones.

Strangely however, these conclusions are clearly presented at the analysis stage. Invariably, there is no special section reserved for these conclusions; neither are they evidently presented in the discussion section. The researchers present their implications in two sections, namely theoretical implications and managerial implications. Each of these categories of implications is captured in sufficient detail.

INTERNATIONALIZATION PATTERNS OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES

It is observed that the fourth and fifth reviewed articles have the same topic, year of publication and source, though they have different authors. The primary concepts and lessons shared in them are also very similar. The only difference evident in them is the fact that the fourth paper adopts a qualitative approach, whereas the fifth takes a quantitative research pathway. The reviewer therefore decides to critique them side by side to warrant a better understanding of their contents. In both articles, the purpose is to examine internationalisation patterns among SMEs. The fourth article focuses on a review of concepts and frameworks on the topic, while the fifth article uses a quantitative method to analyse internationalisation patterns among SMEs.

As seen with respect to the first three papers, these papers offer a concise overview of their contents in the abstract session. In the introductory section, writers of the two papers provide a historical account of internationalisation among SMEs. They authors portray internalisation as a process fraught with challenges in terms of SMEs' entry into international markets. For instance, authors of the fifth article (i.e. Olejnik & Swoboda, 2012) posit that SMEs internationalisation is still recognised as a challenge in the subject's modern literature, with this argument traced to some studies (e.g. Jones & Coviello, 2005; Moen, 2002).

The two sets of authors (i.e. Kuivalainen, Sundqvist, Saarenketo & McNaughton, 2012; Olejnik & Swoboda, 2012) acknowledge that research on internationalisation has steadily increased, but the absence of a framework for SMEs' internationalisation is conspicuous in the subject's literature. This statement is made as a priori to a statement of the purpose of their study. Similar to what is done in the first three papers; these writers present the outline of their papers at the extreme end of the general introduction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the fourth paper, the writers start their review of literature by giving a general background that captures the purpose of their study and how literature justifies its importance. In the second subsection, literature on SMEs internationalisation patterns is delved into. The emphasis at this stage is to link internationalisation pathways to existing measures, typologies and how they fit into pattern and pathway thinking. In the next subsection, they gear the review towards establishing a framework or model. The framework formed is linked to several studies (e.g. Hymer, 1976; Zaheer & Mosakowski, 1997; Zahra, 2005; Mudambi & Zahra, 2007; Johanson & Vahlne, 2009).

The framework generally depicts internationalisation patterns alongside their antecedents and outcomes, where the rest of their review analyses each arm of the framework. In a personal opinion, discussion on the arms of the framework (i.e. internationalisation patterns, their antecedents and outcomes) has significant academic backing. The authors give a brief description of papers incorporated into their study, and finally give directions to future research work on the subject.

In the fifth article, similar contents are given to the literature review section. However, the writers' interest seems to be focused on hypotheses formulation on the basis of evidences in previous literatures and those in the fourth study (i.e. the work of Kuivalainen et al., 2012). Writers of the fifth paper formulate 6 hypotheses. The first hypothesis addresses internationalisation patterns among SMEs. The second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth hypotheses relate to determinants of internationalisation patterns. Their literature review is adapted towards making these hypotheses verifiable and justifiable by linking each hypothesis to exiting empirical evidence (e.g. Knight & Cavusgil, 2004).

METHODOLOGY

Authors of the fourth paper admit using a qualitative research design. They also provide information on how papers used in their study were obtained. In the fifth paper, Olejnik & Swoboda (2012) explain their chosen research design and context. They discuss the population of the study, sampling procedure and sample, data source and collection, and response rate. These authors give an extensive explanation on how each variable was measured, with emphasis on the rationale behind each measurement step taken. They also clarify validity and reliability measures taken and provide an overview of the type of analysis used.

RESULT

In the fourth article, the result is the conceptual framework and its discussion. Results in the fifth article are quantitative and address the 6 hypothesis stated by Olejnik & Swoboda (2012). By

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using multiple linear regression, results show support for the first three hypotheses. Thus, three distinct internationalisation patterns based on the foreign operation mode, countries, time lag and foreign sales ratio best represent the empirical data on SMEs internationalisation. Also, international orientation and growth orientation significantly influence the internationalisation patterns of SMEs. Contrary to their hypotheses, communication capability is significantly related to the traditional internationalisation pattern instead of the born global or the born-again global pattern. They therefore reject the fourth hypothesis. The intelligence generation capability is related to the born-again global pattern. This finding supports their fifth hypotheses. Since marketing-mix standardisation does not differentiate between born globals and traditional, the writers' result does not support the first part of the sixth hypothesis. However, marketing-mix standardisation is significantly related to the born global pattern but not the born-again global pattern. This result suggests support for the second part of the sixth hypothesis.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

No discussion is evident in the fourth study, possibly owing to its qualitative nature and outline adopted. The discussion made by authors of the fifth writers is not different from what has been discussed for the first three articles. The same applies to their implications, limitations and suggestions for future research. Among all the four quantitative papers reviewed, only the fifth uses a framework to make suggestions for future research. The framework used makes the writers' future research pointers more comprehensive relative to the other three quantitative papers. These writers also embed their conclusion in the discussion section, as done by writers of the first and third papers. Generally, the discussion and conclusion are in sufficient harmony with results, though not all results are supported by their literature.

RESULTS OF THE REVIEW

The five papers reviewed have a rich content. The arguments and concepts are coherently presented. There is substantial clarity in presentations from the abstract to conclusion. The flow of information is largely logical; therefore offering readers the opportunity to connect their understanding of one section and thought to the next. It is obvious arguments and thoughts shared are enshrined in the subjects' literatures, as writers of each paper could support their submissions with appropriate reference works. Apart from thoughts on general knowledge, others are well premised on theoretical and empirical evidences. In essence, the papers are absolutely void of plagiarism.

More impressively, the writers could structure their literature reviews in a comprehensive way. Though literature review of most of the articles is blind to theory, variables and constructs and their contextual importance in the study are well explained. The four quantitative studies could formulate their hypotheses on the basis of previous empirical evidences. According to Bhutta

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(2002), good hypotheses are those developed on the basis of previous empirical evidence and theory.

The methodologies adopted are well articulated by the researchers, especially in the quantitative studies. The research contexts and designs are given adequate depth. The research contexts are also chosen to agree with the research gaps being identified and literature review, a measure deemed very important by ALLEA (2011). What is most commendable about the methodologies of the quantitative studies is the way variables are defined and measured. It is well done, enabling a better understanding of the variables and constructs vis-à-vis lessons in the literature. This view is expressed with respect to the argument that the credibility of quantitative studies is based on how well variables are defined and measured (Ingham-Broomfield, 2013; Vance et al., 2013).

Data analysis and results are concisely presented. Based on standards established by ALLEA (2011) and Vance et al. (2013), it is realised that the right statistical tools are used to analyse data and present results. Some assumptions governing the use of these tools are tested by the researchers. The quantitative researchers could clearly indicate how hypotheses are supported or not supported by their analysis, forming a good basis for making conclusions (Ingham-Broomfield, 2013; Vance et al., 2013).

Discussion in each quantitative paper is well done. This is owing to the fact that the three primary goals of a discussion are accomplished. These goals are (Bhutta, 2002; ALLEA, 2011): (1) acknowledgement of results; (2) arguing the extent to which results are supported by reviewed literature; (3) communicating all other evidences (including researcher's experience) that provide support or otherwise to results. In the quantitative studies, comprehensive conclusions are made.

The ability of writers to provide implications of their studies for research, theory and practice is commendable. In a personal opinion, no defect is found in the presentation of the implications and suggestions for future research. It is also worth mentioning that there is appreciable connection among the writers' literature, methodology, results, discussion and conclusions, a situation considered a necessity for published papers (Kleinert & Wager, 2010). Considering all features of the reviewed papers, the reviewer thinks they have made good contributions to knowledge and academic debate on firm's internationalisation and other aspects of their international market behaviour (e.g. market segment membership, buyer-supplier relationships, etc.). These five studies play important roles in the body of studies based on the subject.

At large, the five papers have made credible contribution to knowledge and academic contribution on the subject. Nonetheless, a few gaps are found in each based on the reviewer's experience and existing research standards (e.g. Kiran, Majumdar & Kishore, 2013; Lin, 2010; Lu & Beamish, 2001; Olejnik, 2014; Turcan & Jones, 2002; Oliveira & Teixeira, 2011). The issues are discussed for each paper as follows.

Article 1   The heading (i.e. Background and research hypotheses) chosen for its literature review is confusing. As to why the writers ignored the traditional heading (i.e. Review of literature) is unexplained. The authors do not define the type of hypotheses used to indicate whether they hypotheses are "null" or "alternative" or "both". According to ALLEA (2011), indicating the type of hypotheses made helps to relate results to principles of statistical inference, making it easier to make good decisions in the study. It also enables readers to judge the accuracy of the decision made in the study. These authors fail to provide justification for their chosen tool of data analysis, which is logistic regression.

Article 2   With respect to this paper, the only issue evident at the level of literature review is failure to define the type of hypotheses used, as discussed earlier. Another flaw identified is failure to conduct all basic assumption tests on the statistical tool (i.e. factor analysis) used in data analysis. For instance, the normality test is missing, likewise other indicators of factor analysis validity such as anti-image correlations and correlation matrix. The fact that these indicators are missing makes their conclusion weakly reliable (ALLEA, 2011; Vance et al., 2013).

Article 3   These authors also indicate their hypotheses in one direction but fail to tell readers whether the hypotheses are "alternative" or "null". The researchers must have mistakenly assumed that readers know about the type of hypotheses used. Also, most of their hypotheses are long and unclear. Some of the hypotheses are naturally double-barrelled; thus they constitute two or more hypotheses stated as one. According to ALLEA (2011) and Vance et al. (2013), such hypotheses cause problems for readers when trying to judge the accuracy of conclusions. These authors also fail to test for all assumptions governing their choice of statistical tools and data, a situation that weakens the validity of their conclusions.

Article 4   This is the only qualitative paper in the review. There is no evident categorisation of their sections. Therefore, their chosen methodology, results, discussion and conclusion are not distinctive. Relative to formats of traditional qualitative papers, it implies that these sections are either unviable or are difficult to locate (Kleinert & Wager, 2010). With this problem, future researchers and readers would hardly be able to benefit from the study (Kleinert & Wager, 2010; ALLEA, 2011).

Article 5   These authors erred on the basis of gaps found in the third article. This has to do with using long and double-barrelled hypotheses and failure to test for all basic assumptions governing the use of their data and chosen statistical tools. This weakens the validity of their conclusions, since satisfying these assumptions provides a foundation for reaching valid conclusions (Vance et al., 2013).

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH POINTERS

Regardless of the fact that few weaknesses or gaps are found in the articles reviewed, their contribution to knowledge and academic debate on the subject is appreciable in the light of their plethora of strengths. The papers have made good contributions to knowledge and academic debate on firm's internationalisation and other aspects of their international market behaviour (e.g. market segment membership, entry into emerging markets, buyer-supplier relationships). The studies play a major role in the cluster of useful studies on the subject.

There is however the need for caution to be taken by researchers when conducting related studies to ensure that basic research guidelines (e.g. ALLEA, 2011) and standards are not violated. Satisfying assumptions on which data and statistical tools are used are critical in research. Hence quantitative researchers must endeavour to test for them before proceeding with their choices of statistical tools and analysis. There is also the need for future researchers to justify any action taken in their studies. This is because research actions and decisions lead to results and conclusions (Kleinert & Wager, 2010; Vance et al., 2013). If readers have no basis for verifying the validity of researchers' actions in their studies, there is no basis for relying on their results and conclusions.

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APPENDIX

Table 2: Hypotheses of Article 1

Notation	Hypothesis	Result
H1	The higher the international experience of a firm, the higher the probability is that it has a presence in EMs.	Confirmed
H2	The more managerial experience a firm has, the higher the probability is that it has a presence in EMs.	Not confirmed
H3	The higher the marketing capabilities of a firm, the higher the probability are that it has a presence in EMs.	Confirmed

Table 3: Hypotheses of Article 2

Notation	Hypothesis	Result
H1	Country segments formed from strictly economic variables will be different than country segments formed from strictly cultural variables.	Confirmed
H2	Country segments formed from economic and cultural variables will result in different segments than those formed from either economic or cultural variables alone.	Confirmed
H3	Changes in economic development will result in movement of countries across segments more often than changes in national culture.	Confirmed
H4	Countries that move from developing economies to higher income status will experience cultural changes resulting in changed segmentation patterns.	Confirmed

Table 4: Hypotheses of Article 3

Notation	Hypothesis	Result
H1	There is a negative association between the levels of buyer specific investments and buyer control in industrial buyer-seller relationships.	Confirmed
H2	When the prior length of buyer-seller relationships increases, the association between supplier-specific assets and buyer control will be more negatively shaped in international supplier-buyer relationships than in domestic ones.	Confirmed

Table 5: Hypotheses of Article 5

Notation	Hypothesis	Result
H1	Three distinct internationalisation patterns based on the foreign operation mode, countries, time lag and foreign sales ratio best represent the empirical data on SME internationalisation.	Confirmed
H2	SME that have a higher international orientation are more likely to follow a born global rather than a traditional internationalisation pattern and a born-again global rather than a traditional internationalisation pattern.	Confirmed
H3	SME that have a higher growth orientation are more likely to follow a born global rather than a traditional internationalisation pattern and a born-again global rather than a traditional internationalisation pattern	Confirmed
H4	SMEs that have a higher communication capability are more likely to follow a born global rather than a traditional internationalisation pattern and a born global rather than a born-again global internationalisation pattern.	Not confirmed
H5	SMEs that have a higher intelligence generation capability are more likely to follow a born-again global rather than a born global internationalisation pattern and a traditional rather than a born global internationalisation pattern.	Confirmed
H6a	SMEs that stronger standardise their marketing mix are more likely to follow a born global rather than a traditional internationalisation pattern	Not confirmed
H6b	SMEs that stronger standardise their marketing mix are more likely to follow a born global rather than a born-again global internationalisation pattern.	Confirmed