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The electronic commerce as entry mode by SMEs: A qualitative bibliometric study

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Abstract: The study aims to provide a bibliometric qualitative study of the internationalization process of electronic commerce in order to understand how much the electronic commerce influences the traditional internationalization theory. A range of different articles depicted from Scopus database shaped this study, under a deductive exploratory approach. The electronic commerce might be considered as an entry mode for SME's and it is acknowledge an online environment for export barriers and marketing strategy. The articles researched, are theoretical and exploratory, with different models not furthered replicable. However, this paper might provide a new perspective line in the internationalization theories in order to understand the importance of this phenomenon in the international environment. Thus, the proposed methodology aims to create gap spotting and proposition, followed by different steps.

Key Words: electronic commerce. internationalization. international business. international marketing.

1 Introduction

The study of electronic commerce in the international environment starts with the internet advent, becoming a conduct of international transactions, reducing costs and approximating countries and companies around the world (Hamill, 1997; Samiee, 1998). In this manner, the electronic commerce became a modern business methodology that addresses the needs of organizations, merchants, and consumers to cut costs while improving the quality of goods and services and increasing the speed of service delivery, by using the internet (Kumar et al., 2015).

In line with this key trend, there are few studies such as: Samiee (1998); Zaheer and Manrakhan (2001); Dunning and Wymbs (2001); Sinkovics et. al. (2012) that contribute to the field of electronic commerce in the internationalization theories, though, mostly studies are related to the use of the internet supporting the export marketing and specially playing a great role in the business-to-business environment. However, the study of how much the e-commerce influences the traditional internationalization process theory is not being explored

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by academic researchers. For this reason, the goal of this study is to answer this question with a qualitative bibliometric study followed by different steps.

The first phase aims to delimitate three different research questions by describing the study of the internationalization process, the market entry decision analysis and the marketing strategy. The second phase seek for articles to explain the research questions proposed, and by this different points are proposed such as: identification of concepts and key terms, research on a data base, articles selection, articles categorization, descriptive analysis and methodology analysis.

After that, the third phase was to develop the thematic analysis, deeply understanding the proposed research questions and the aim of the study. Lastly, a conclusion answering the research question and identifying theoretical gaps were concluded complementing with a thematic framework and propositions. By this, this study aims to contribute to the International Business (IB) and International Marketing (IM) literature, by studying the process of the electronic commerce internationalization.

2 Literature Review and Research Questions

The IM and IB is concern on business activities across national borders, however, the IM is more on create, communicate, deliver, and exchange products and services, mainly focused on achieve competitive advantage and develop marketing strategies in those countries (Doole & Lowe, 2008; Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2012).

In order to answer the research problem, based on both internationalization theories, it will be reported in this section different steps: the internationalization process, the market entry decision analysis and the implementation of the marketing strategy in foreign countries (Root, 1998; Hollensen, 2007).

2.1 The Internationalization Process

The economic cycle started with the product cycle theory, grounded on the market imperfection, which the company discovers an innovation in the market of its country of origin (Hymer, 1960). This demand might be developed in other countries, starting with the export mode to the implementation of subsidiaries, suggesting later that companies pursue international diversification extended from the product life cycle (Vernon, 1966). Afterwards, the internalization theory arises. According to this, the internationalization is constituted by the internalization of headquarters' operations abroad in the multinationals' subsidiary firm (Buckley & Casson, 1976). With the internalization, the OLI paradigm theory ascended associated to the competitive advantage of the company and seeking for the direct external investment. This economic theory is compound by ownership, localization and internalization competitive advantage (Dunning, 1980). Although all these theories are being conducted under an economic perspective, Andersen (1993) complement that the IM might be also under developed by a behaviorist approach.

In the same way, the Uppsala model, from a business international perspective, is seen as a process in which the firm gradually increases its international involvement by overcoming different stages (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). These enterprises often consider psychic distance terms and the liability of a business network process which underlay the firms' knowledge,

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opportunities, network position, learning, commitment and trust-building (Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975; Johanson & Mattson, 1988; Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Despite the Uppsala model, Andersen (1993) criticize it, conflicting with the innovation – related internationalization model, which are formed by the export model of different authors which the internationalization decision is considered as an innovation for the firm (Bilkey and Tesar, 1977; Czinkota, 1982; Cavusgil, 1980 and Reid, 1981). The Uppsala model and the Innovation model can properly be regarded as behaviorally oriented (Anderssen, 1983).

Other different behaviorist theories are complementing the IB and IM literature, such as: the formation of new venture, which are organizations international from inception (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994). The international entrepreneurship firms, which are characterized by a rapidly speed of internationalization (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). Even though, recent characterized in the IM literature, the *born globals* firms, which are early adopters of the internationalization process, based on innovative culture, knowledge and capabilities in this unique breed of international entrepreneurial firms (Knight, 1996; Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). In this new business model scene, Vahlne and Johanson (2002) conceptualize the importance of electronic commerce as a critical interactive process that understands buyer–seller activities, both in domestic and cross-border contexts. Thus, Yamin and Sinkovics (2006), indicate a reduction of psychic distance as a result of experience with online internationalization.

Based on this literature review it is proposed the first research question:

RQ1: What are the theories of the internationalization process that underpins the electronic commerce?

2.2 The Market Entry Decision Analysis

The key difference between the domestic and international market environment is the complexity of many foreign marketplaces a company may operate in (Doole & Lowe, 2008). In order to operate in different markets, some managerial strategies might be considered in order to overcome different internationalization barriers (Kahiya & Dean, 2015).

Ford and Leonidou (2013) classify these barriers as: environmental, organizational, managerial and strategic barriers. The author classified environmental barriers as cultural differences, government barriers, infrastructural facilities and others. The organizational are the amount and quality of export staffing and size of the firm (Ford & Leonidou, 2013).

The managerial barriers are regarding the level of management quality and determination, marketing orientation selling, long–term or short-term export commitment and others. Lastly, the strategic export which is related to the degree of adaptation or standardization of product, price, promotion and place (Ford & Leonidou, 2013).

Subsequently analyze different strategic decisions, the company is able to select when, where and how to internationalize (Root, 1994; Peng, 2009). The market entry decision depends on the firm objectives, attitudes and capabilities toward an international market (Cavusgil et al., 2014). those are seeing as market entry modes mainly classified into export modes, intermediate modes (contractual modes) and hierarchical modes (investment modes) (Hollensen, 2007). Despite of the traditional entry modes, the study of also found alternative distribution channels related to the internet environment focuses on the influence of new technologies (Hoppner & Griffith, 2015).

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However, due to Johanson and Vahlne (2009) study regarding the rapid entry speed of firm in different markets, the business environment become to be viewed as a web of relationships or a network, rather than as a neoclassical market with many independent suppliers and customers. Besides, Andersson et al. (2014) identified that this new internationalization entry process is characterized by emergent factors identified as new business models, technology and industry network dynamics. Thus, Sinkovics and Jean (2013) and Abebe (2014) indicate the importance of adoption of electronic commerce for *Born globals* and entrepreneurial firms.

Based on this literature review it is proposed the second research question:

RQ2: To with extend can the electronic commerce influence the market entry decision analysis?

2.3 Marketing Strategy

The IM strategy is concern on determine the activities that will ensure the market entry strategies, products and services, even addressing the elements of the marketing mix (Doole & Lowe, 2008). The marketing mix is compound of product, price, place and promotion being researcher in the business-to-consumer but also in the business-to-business market (Hollensen, 2007).

Different author are considering the information technology in the marketing mix strategy (Quelch & Klein, 1996; Kotalbe and Helsen, 1998; Allen & Fjermestad, 2001; Constantinides, 2002, 2006). Chaffey et al. (2009) argues there are a few academic points of views regarding the implementation of a strategic internet marketing plan. However, the internet provided the role of electronic commerce, different from the offline commerce, which might create others strategies among both commercial markets (Constantinides, 2002).

In this way, Constantine (2002) presented critical factors of the web marketing, characterizing the electronic commerce as an important virtual integration of the physical company's strategy. Besides, the author argues that the marketing mix might be revisited due to the emerging field of electronic market (Constantine, 2006).

The electronic marketing became a company's internet technology investment. This investment considers the company's return on investment and the improvement of customer satisfaction and brand awareness, thus the openness of new sales channels (Damanpour & Damanpour, 2001).

This distribution channel considers the strategy of distribute goods from manufactures to the end user, dealing with direct customer, agents, distributors and others (Doole & Lowe, 2008). For Van de Poel and Leunis (1999) point that the internet is becoming an online channel considered as a direct sale and/or a reseller. This new business strategy is called e-business, interpreted as the use of internet-based tools to support the business processes (Cagliano et al., 2003).

Based on this literature review it is proposed the third research question:

RQ3: To with extend can the electronic commerce influence the marketing strategy?

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3 Description of Methodological Procedures

To formulate different research questions the most common way across paradigmatic camps is to spot various ‘gaps’ in the literature and, based on that, to formulate specific research questions (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). Besides, the authors addressed the issue of what ways of constructing research questions may lead to interesting and significant theories (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011). In order to examine the proposed research questions, it was under developed a qualitative content analysis, on the length of an exploratory study and an inductive approach (Duriau et al. 2007; Welch et al. 2011). The inductive nature of the analysis implies that it was departed from the overall recognition importance and relevance of the international expansion of electronic commerce and the newly existence of the theme in the IM and IB studies.

This has guided to the decision to examine the state of the field in the Scopus data base, since this theme is new and difficult to find a great amount of papers in other journals. Next, it was chosen the qualitative content analysis as it offers the possibility for interactive conceptual development and a holistic interpretation of a text, e.g. academic articles (Welch et al. 2011). This methodology allowed investigating ‘how’ this phenomenon has been addressed in the IM and IB field.

Table 1
Steps of the qualitative bibliometric study

Step	Contributions
1	<i>Review of literature and define research questions.</i>
2	<i>Define concepts and key terms to identify and evaluate literature.</i>
3	<i>Research area on Scopus database</i>
4	<i>Determination of criteria for inclusion or exclusion of articles.</i>
5	<i>Categorize and synthesize remaining articles.</i>
6	<i>Methodology analysis (Paper type -qualitative/quantitative/mixed); statistical analysis; sampling).</i>
7	<i>Thematic analysis</i>
8	<i>Conclusion (gap spotting and preposition)</i>

Source: Own research (2015).

Following the suggestion by Jormanainen and Koveshnikov (2012), this research design consisted of several methodological steps to ensure the reliability of the analysis, namely defining the concepts, defining the research area and the database for the analysis, selecting texts to be analyzed, analyzing the data, and, finally, interpreting the results, as showed in table 1. Follow bellow the detailed methodological procedure:

The *review of literature and definition of reserach question* were presented in previous session. The *definition of concepts and key terms* are *International Marketing* combined with *commerce, internet, sales, international and market entry*, considering only articles as document type and all year to present, as a date range.

The *research area was developed on Scopus database*. Considering that electronic commerce is a recent theme, less underexplored and not considered a based theory in the internationalization theories, the data collection was based in research publications of *Scopus* database in order to capture the greatest possible number of articles on this topic. The choice

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of this base is explained by Norris and Oppenheim (2007) affirming that *Scopus* is a more comprehensive data base for the state of art in applied social sciences research.

The **determination of criteria for inclusion or exclusion of articles** was based on articles about commerce, internet, sales, international and market entry in the internationalization process theories. It was found 168 documents. The articles were opened and it was verified specifically if “internationalization of electronic commerce” was in the text. With this procedure 28 articles remained. According to this bibliometric research, 1998 and 2005 are the years with more publication regarding electronic commerce in the field of IM. From the 28 articles researched on Scopus, it was found different journals, classified accordingly to SCImago Journal & Country Rank (2015).

In order to **categorize and synthetize remaining articles**, the key words were proposed as follow:

RQ1: What are the theories of the internationalization process that underpins the electronic commerce? Key words: “international marketing”; “internet”; “commerce”

RQ2: To with extend can the electronic commerce influence the market entry decision analysis? Key words: “market entry”; “commerce”; “international”

RQ3: To with extend can the electronic commerce influence the IM strategy? Key words: “international marketing”; “internet”; “sale”.

For the **methodology analysis**, each article was opened and the defined key words were identified. After that, the articles were classified according to their methodology. Table 2 synthetize the three most published journals and summarize the others journal, according to theoretical, quantitative, qualitative or mixed methodology.

Table 2
Methodology and journals researched

Methodology	Journals				Total	%
	International Marketing Review	Industrial Management and Data Systems	Industrial Marketing Management	Others Journals		
Theoretical	3	2		3	8	29%
Quantitative	5		1	7	13	46%
Qualitative		1	1	3	5	18%
Mixed				2	2	7%
Total	8	3	2	15	28	100%

Source: Own research (2015)

In order to determine the articles’ sample, the countries and type of companies were analyzed, considering only the quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodological articles. When excluding the theoretical articles, it remains 20 articles, from the 28 articles of the final sample, as seen in table 3.

Table 3
Statistical analysis and sampling researched

Art	Article Title	Methodology	Sample	
			Country	Type of
.				

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				enterprise
1	Using the World Wide Web for IM: Internet use and perceptions of export barriers among German and British businesses	Quantitative	UK and Germany	SME
2	How is information technology affecting business relationships? Results from a UK survey	Quantitative	UK	SME
3	The Effect of Website and Electronic commerce Adoption on the Relationship between SMEs and their Export Intermediaries	Qualitative	UK	SME
4	Internet and exporting: determinants of success in virtual export channels	Quantitative	UK	SME
5	Virtual exhibitions: An exploratory study of Middle East exhibitors' dispositions	Quantitative	European and Mid. Eastern	SME
6	Extending the supply chain: Integrating operations and marketing in the online grocery industry	Quantitative	Customers of four different firms	SME
7	The internationalization speed of electronic commerce companies: An empirical analysis	Quantitative	USA	<i>Born Global</i>
8	Global alliance networks: A comparison of biotech SMEs in Sweden and Australia	Qualitative	Sweden and Australia	SME
9	Empowerment of SME websites—Development of a web-empowerment scale and preliminary evidence	Quantitative	New Zealand and Austria	SME
10	B2B international internet marketing: A benchmarking exercise	Mixed	UK	-
11	The internet and export marketing performance: The empirical link in export market ventures	Quantitative	Australia	-
12	The relationship between network structure and international channel performance: A moderating effect of E-business activity	Mixed	Taiwan	-
13	Success in electronic commerce implementation: A cross-country study of small and medium-sized enterprises	Quantitative	Australia and Singapore	Small enterprises
14	Contrasting Electronic commerce business models: performance implications for small enterprises	Quantitative	Geographically sample	Small enterprises
15	The importance of the internet in IB-to-business markets	Quantitative	Denmark and Norwegian	SME
16	Investigating the e-CRM activities of Irish SMEs	Quantitative	Ireland	SME
17	The value chain and e-business in exporting: Case studies from Ghana's non-traditional export (NTE) sector	Qualitative	Ghana	SME
18	B2b eMarketplaces A classification framework to analyse business models and critical success factors	Qualitative	Geographically sample	SME
19	Virtual worlds: A gateway for SMEs toward internationalization	Qualitative	Geographically sample	SME
20	The internet as an alternative path to internationalization?	Quantitative	UK	SME

Source: Own research (2015)

According to table 3 it is seen that the country most researched is the United Kingdom and two countries from emerging markets. The Small and Medium sized enterprises are the most researched and there is just one *Born Global* and two small enterprises studied. As the electronic commerce is a recent topic in the internationalization process theories and in

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the articles researched there were different theories explaining the phenomena. Therefore, the references of the 20 articles were analyzed and different theories from IM and IB were found in order to explain the internationalization process of electronic commerce. Consequently, a qualitative analysis of the proposed articles was developed (Jormanainen & Koveshnikov, 2012).

It was also measured the variables that compound the quantitative and qualitative articles, resulting in different dependent and independent variables. According to Kerlinger (1980) to study a phenomena and its relation it is necessary define and use different variables. Table 6 summarizes the main theories and variables found in the qualitative bibliometric analysis in order to answer the research questions proposed in the literature review.

Table 4
Theories and Variables

Theory	Relevant Literature	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable
RQ1			
Uppsala Model evolution: Psychic distance, Relationships, Networks, Knowledge, Experience	Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul (1975)	Internationalization (+)	Psychic distance measurement
			Channel relationship cooperation
			Information technology increase relationships
	Johanson and Vahlne (1977)		Use of the internet for network
			Firm's international experience
			Firm's innovative and marketing capabilities
	Johanson & Mattson (1988)		Use of the internet for entry speed
			Level of firm experience
			Firm's technical experience
	Johanson and Vahlne (2009)		Firm's experiential learning
			Firm's export intensity
Firm's Export experience			
RQ2			
Export Barriers	Root (1994)	Export performance (+)	Use internet to reduce export barriers (high psychic distance)
	Doole and Lowe (2008)		Use internet as an alternative to a physical presence
			Customer internet affordable access
	Leonidou and Ford (2013)		Website security
			Delivery availability
			Technological infrastructure
RQ3			
Internet Marketing (Product/service management, Pricing, Channel	Kotalbe and Helsen, (1998)	Marketing strategy to generate sales (+)	The internet when is used for communication purposes
	Allen and Fjermestad (2001)		Use of the internet as a sales channel
			The internet when it is used to increase sales volume
			The internet when it is used to show product, promotion and price
			E-Business quality

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management, communication)	Constantinides (2002; 2006) Chaffey et al. (2009)		Electronic CRM
			Supply chain management
			Logistic process

Source: Own Research (2015)

The *thematic analysis* was firstly developed according to the first research question, which is about the theories of the internationalization process that ground the electronic commerce, can be answered by the Uppsala model, which is the theory that fosters the behaviorist approach. The table analysis shows an evolution of the theory model, which first the firms are concern on the psychic distance terms, secondly on the firms' relationships in the networks and lastly the knowledge and experience of the firm which can positively impact the internationalization via electronic commerce.

It is important in this process that the firm has a good network position, in order to create relationship and commitment with different companies. As well it is essential the learning exchange beneficial to create trust between companies in the net. Hereupon, these aspects might help the firms to a rapidly entry in different markets, leveraging the firm's opportunities and capabilities. This analysis goes along with Bilkey and Tesar (1977); Czinkota (1982); Cavusgil (1980) and Reid (1981); Johanson and Vahlne (1990), which state that in the IB and IM the internationalization is a process in which the firm gradually increases its international involvement by overcoming different stages.

The electronic commerce did not contemplate the involvement in any economic theories described by Hymer (1960), Vernon (1966) or Buckley and Casson (1976). However because of the internet, which abled the globalization to overcome distance barriers and provided a greater acceleration in the business process (Andersson and Svensson, 2009), firms are very rapidly internationalizing or even global born from inception, going along with the theories of entrepreneurial and born global firms from Oviatt and McDougall (2005); Knight (1996) and Knight and Cavusgil (2004).

Stating this position, all the variables from table 4: psychic distance measurement, channel relationship cooperation, information technology increase relationships, use of the internet for network, firm's international experience, firm's innovative and marketing capabilities, use of the internet for entry speed, level of firm experience, firm's technical experience, firm's experiential learning, firm's export intensity, firm's export experience and firm's knowledge on existing export channels, can positively impact the internationalization of electronic commerce firms and goes along with the above analysis.

The second research question is answered with different export barriers which might be considered when analyzing the market entry. According to table 4 the internet can help the electronic commerce to overcome different export barriers such as: high psychic distance countries and the need of physical presence since electronic commerce is an online business. However different environmental, organization, managerial and strategic barriers as stated by Ford and Leonidou (2013) and are also analyzed in the electronic commerce internationalization process, according to all variables from table 4, such as: the availability

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of internet for all customers, website police security in order to avoid governmental problems, the delivery availability of products, services in different countries, the firm's technological infrastructure and the country cultural issues differences.

These variables, goes along with Doole and Lowe (2008) argument stating that the market entry decision depends on the firm objectives, attitudes and capabilities toward an international market. Hereby, it is important for the internationalization process of an electronic commerce firm, be concern on different managerial analysis in order to select the best market.

As the internationalization of electronic commerce is a gradual internationalization process, the entry mode that underpins the electronic commerce is the export mode, which uses the internet to export its products and services (Hollensen, 2007). The electronic commerce influence the market entry decision in regards of the internet environment, since the export is enabled trough this technology. Different export barriers might be considered in this process, in the same way as it is in the normal internationalization process of firms, however, the only difference is that there is no physical presence that represents the firm, just an online environment represented by a website, and therefore specific online export barriers are concern in this process.

In regards of the third research question which is concern on the influence of electronic commerce in the marketing strategy, it is seen that in the electronic environment all the four marketing mix strategy are described when analyzing the variables, such as when the online environment is seen for communication strategy, for sales channel and used to show product, promotion and price. These variables goes along with Quelch and Klein (1996); Kotalbe and Helsen (1998); Allen and Fjermestad (2001); Constantinides (2002; 2006), when relating that the marketing mix is influenced by the information technology, which is required to have a special internet marketing strategy.

Besides the electronic commerce be considered as an entry mode in the internationalization process theories, as pointed in analysis of the last two research questions, the electronic commerce in the marketing strategy is also considered a sales channel for the business-to-business and business-to-consumer environment. This goes along with Doole and Lowe (2008) and Van de Poel and Leunis (1999), when considering the channel as a direct sale and/or a reseller. For this instance, it is important for the marketing strategy consider logistic strategies and supply chain management in regards of sales channel characterization, as described in the variables from table 4.

Another point noted in the articles analysis is the concern on e-business quality and the electronic CRM (customer relationship management). Cagliano et al., 2003 explain that the electronic commerce is part of an online business strategy called e-business, confirming that there is a quality concern on this aspect. As described by Damanpour and Damanpour (2001) the electronic market became a company's internet technology investment, which improve customer satisfaction and brand awareness. In order to complement this theory the CRM might be considered in the customer satisfaction and brand awareness since it is related to the customer relationship firm's management.

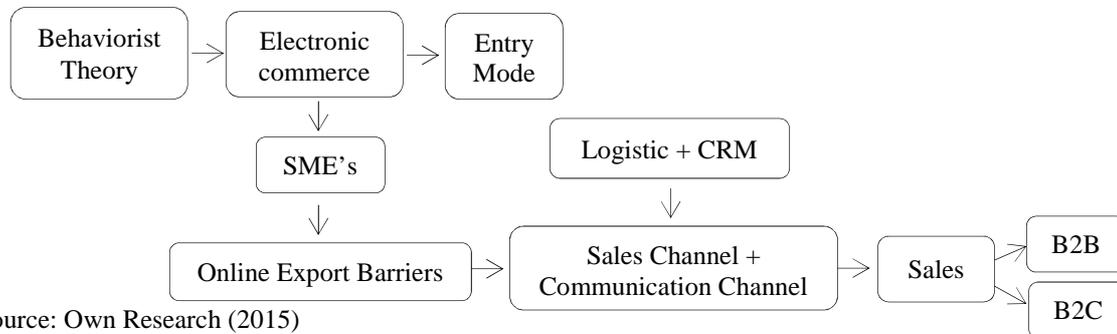
In this regards the electronic commerce influence the four marketing mix strategies of the firm being oriented to an online strategy, which might consider the electronic commerce as an important sales channel for direct and indirect customers in different markets across

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boundaries. Figure 1 represents the above analysis, showing that the electronic commerce is underpinned by the behaviorist theory of International Business Literature.

Figure 1

How internationalization theories explain the electronic commerce



Source: Own Research (2015)

For Small and Medium size enterprises, the electronic commerce is considered as an entry mode, in which face different online export barriers. Thus, the electronic commerce, in the International Marketing literature, is considered a sales channel as well as a communication channel that depends of logistic process and CRM to generate sales for the B2B and B2C environment.

4 Conclusion

In order to understand how much the electronic commerce influences the traditional internationalization process theory, a bibliometric study of the internationalization process of this phenomenon was provided. Three different research questions were developed and a deeply understanding of the articles found in the bibliometric study was settled.

By doing so, the first research question which aimed to answer the internationalization process that underpins the electronic commerce is answered by the explanation that the electronic commerce is a gradual process concern on psychic distance, network relationships and firms' knowledge and experience, which enable the company to rapidly internationalize because of the network environment and its internal capabilities.

It is seen that the electronic commerce follows the behaviorist approach on the international business theories, since the psychic distance is an important measurement of the gradual internationalization process. Thus, it is relevant for the companies to be integrated in relationship channels, in order to exchange experience and knowledge with each other. That provides a better relationship with different customers and suppliers; and rapidly enters in different markets. In regards of the electronic commerce influence in the market entry decision, might be considered different export barriers as it is seen in the traditional internationalization process. However in the electronic commerce, these export barriers are concern on the online environment, as well as according to the analysis, this process in considered an online export entry mode.

The mainly concern on this part are on the website security and culture aspects, besides on high psychic distances, which might create a proximity because of the internet. It is also matters the delivery availability and technology infrastructure of customers.

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In complement to the internationalization process the marketing strategy is concern on an online strategy which the electronic process is mainly considered a direct and indirect sales channel from the Business –to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) environment. This channel might be concern on different online strategies and might act with different strategies from the traditional marketing mix, especially related to logistics process and customer relationship management because of the sales channel environment.

Therefore it is possible to conclude that the electronic commerce is an export entry mode which considers different stages to internationalize and is concern on different export barriers connected to the online environment. Besides the process is compound of an online marketing strategy, mainly characterizing the electronic commerce as a sales channel that might be aware of logistics process and customer relationship management, in order to lead the firm to success in sales.

It is seen in the articles researched that most studies from table 3 do not consider electronic commerce as an entry mode theory of the international business, since internet is seen as an aid for the closeness relationships in the net, however not seen as a main character of the internationalization process. Therefore, the main gap spotting of the internationalization of electronic commerce is in regards of the recognition of electronic commerce as an entry mode in the international business theories, going according to the proposed research question.

By this, the first preposition is created affirming that the electronic commerce might be considered as an entry mode in the internationalization theory, since the process follows a gradual process, same as the normal export internationalization process; however it is acknowledge an online environment for export barriers and marketing strategy.

The second preposition affirms that for the SME's and born globals, the electronic commerce is considered an entry mode. However for the big companies it is considered only a sales channel.

This study might also have different implications such as the fact that only 28 articles were analyzed and the study of these articles were mainly about SMEs in the United Kingdom country. Therefore it would be interest replicate this study in different companies in order to attest the prepositions suggested. Besides this study provide an initial guidance for scholars to consider the electronic commerce as an internationalization process phenomena that might affect different countries due to its rapid growth.

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