



**HAL**  
open science

## Identifying factors influencing Moroccan SMEs internationalization

Adama Tahirou Younoussi, Jamila Jouali, Salah Baba Arwata

► **To cite this version:**

Adama Tahirou Younoussi, Jamila Jouali, Salah Baba Arwata. Identifying factors influencing Moroccan SMEs internationalization. *International Journal of Economics and Management*, 2013, 1 (3), pp.www.ijem.net. hal-00880353

**HAL Id: hal-00880353**

**<https://hal.science/hal-00880353>**

Submitted on 7 Nov 2013

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

# Identifying factors influencing Moroccan SMEs internationalization

Tahirou Younoussi Adama

Jamila Jouali

Departement of management, Mohammed V University Rabat Souissi  
Morocco  
Avenue Mohammed Ben Abdallah Ragraoui Al Irfane BP 6430 Rabat  
Morocco

Salah Baba Arwata

Departement of management, Cadi Ayyad University Marrakech Morocco  
BP 2380 Daoudiate Marrakech Morocco

Corresponding author:

Tel: +212664797849

Tahirouyounoussi@gmail.com

## **Abstract:**

With the unpredictable business environment, unstable economic conditions and worldwide integration of markets, internationalization activities have become an important way to Moroccan SMEs development and a big challenge for the national agency for SMEs promotion (NAPSME). Despite the implementation of policies aimed at increasing the internationalization capacity of these companies prior to the entry of new players in the domestic market, obstacles remain. By using a data of 64 recognized people working in the field and considered as experts because of their qualifications, experience and positions, we examines the factors influencing Moroccan SMEs internationalization. The results show that various factors including contingency, networking, information and external factors are critical for these organizations internationalization. They also reveal that government support, manager's motivational aspects, industry, geographic proximity, language similarity with other Maghreb countries and their impact on the completion of a transaction have influence on Moroccan SMEs internationalization process.

Keywords: Influencing factors, internationalization, Moroccan SMEs, Experts

## 1. Introduction

The international activities of small firms are attracting growing interest from scholars interested in internationalization, entrepreneurship, and small business growth (Andersson & al 2004). With the growing instability of the environment, the integration and liberalization seen in international markets, SMEs are forced to change their behavior to adapt to the new realities of free trade if they want to survive. Developing strategic skills to take advantage of international markets has become essential for their growth especially in countries like Morocco where the domestic market's absorption power is limited. Whether internationalization of activities is deliberate to meet the SME's growth objective, or forced to make it more competitive, it is regarded as a strategic decision aligned with the personal objectives of the SME owner- manager. Most of the firms started international operations when they are still comparatively small and gradually develop their operations and business in other countries (He 2011).

An OECD (2000) report on SMEs' access to international markets shows a little accurate data on the international activity trend of these companies and available studies show their weak involvement in international activities. As doing business abroad is more complex, many SMEs have preference for the domestic market, or those of the same culture and the same language. The literature suggests that internationalization remain a major challenge for them given their lack of resources and tends to regard large company as the only unit of analysis despite the increasing role played by SMEs in foreign markets (Coviello & McAuley, 1999). Few researches have identified the factors influencing the SMEs internationalization, especially in developing countries. According to Kuada & Sørensen (2000), this kind of subject is not yet fully explored in these countries. Therefore, it encouraged some additional work for a better understanding of this process.

In Morocco where SMEs are encouraged to internationalize their activities through coaching strategies and support, no study on the factors influencing this process has been carried out. Since 2000, the country has continued to increase the number of business partners and is considered as one of the most competitive African countries. The report of the economic policy management office in 2006 show that SMEs represent 98% of all Moroccan companies and 43% of jobs created. They also represent 40% of private investment, 44% of the total workforce and 31% of the value added. But only 8% of these companies are considered exporters and mainly concern the textile industry, agricultural products and fisheries. Key partners are European with France and Spain at the top, Middle East and African countries. Our main goal in this study is to analyze the factors influencing the internationalization of Moroccan SME and to facilitate the understanding of the internationalization process. It will certainly help the authorities of the country's ministry of commerce and chamber of commerce in their policy of reinforce SMEs capabilities.

## 2. Material and methods

### 2.1. *The literature review*

What do we know about the internationalization of SMEs? Over the past three decades, researchers have presented various descriptions and analyze the behavior of SME internationalization. Three main approaches have been identified in the literature: the gradual, the economic and the network perspective. The gradual perspective includes several models that have in common to understand internationalization as a linear and sequential process composed of a set of stages called establishment chain (Coviello & McAuley, 1999). Also known as behavioral approach, it offers two analytical models of internationalization: the Uppsala model which focuses on the experience gained gradually in foreign markets (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977) and the innovation model (Bilkey & Tesar, 1977; Cavusgil, 1980; Czinkota, 1982) in which internationalization process is described as an

adoption sequence of new product or technology (Li & al, 2004). In this gradual perspective, the nature and number of stages vary according to the authors whose work is associated with this approach. However, more recent works (Gankema & al 2000; Pope, 2002) tend to question the generality of these models.

The Uppsala model is known following the work of Johanson and Vahlne that took place in the 1970s in the research program of the Uppsala University. It's an incremental process driven by the interaction between learning, knowledge acquisition and international operations in one hand and engagement in international affairs in the other (Johanson & Vahlne, 2003 (a) 2003 (b)). Its basic assumption is the acquisition, integration and gradual use of knowledge about foreign markets and operations through an ongoing commitment. Since knowledge is developed gradually, international expansion takes place incrementally. The authors emphasized that firms follow a sequential process divided into four stages: irregular and opportunistic export activities, export via an independent agent, establishment of a branch / subsidiary of sale, production in the foreign country. According to (Laghzaoui 2006), the model concerns the psychological distance which is defined as the set of cultural and language differences affecting the information flow and decision-making in international transactions. It shows that when the international experience increases, the psychological distance between the SMEs in the new foreign territories is reduced, favoring a larger increase and fuller use of the opportunities offered by the various countries discovered.

In the model of innovation, internationalization is seen as an innovation for the firm and the internationalization process is described as the sequence of adoption of new products or new technologies (Li & al, 2004). This approach which takes as reference the innovation diffusion theory of Rogers (1962) to explain firms export behaviors is widely shared by many authors to justify the SMEs internationalization. The best known models of innovation are those of Bilkey & Tesar (1977), Cavusgil (1980) and Cinzkota (1982) which consider each stage of firm's evolution (from its disinterest to foreign markets to its decision to exploit them) as an innovation for the company (Gankema & al., 2000). The main difference between the different models lies in the initiating mechanism of international behavior of the firm (Andersen, 1993) and in the choice of stages, their number and the initiating mechanism of SMEs internationalization (Ageron, 2001). However, these models, by retaining the two major principles (gradual involvement of firms and the existence of the psychological distance through knowledge acquired by experience in the foreign markets) remain very close to the Uppsala school (Khayat, 2004).

While many works corroborate the theory of internationalization stages, others invalidate this approach and criticize it. For example Millington & Bayliss (1990) argue that the stages approach would be an exception to the rule and can't be imposed to the SMEs. According to Pett & Wolff (2000), even without being born already international, firms can miss some stages, for example, from direct export to the creation of a foreign subsidiary. Others choose to stay simply at the export stage. Oviatt & McDougall (1994) observed that some companies are international from their creation and offer two distinct modes of internationalization: one in stages and the other from the outset. Gankema & al. (2000) found that the degree of internationalization of SMEs is increasing over time, but at very different rates. They also observed that some SMEs skip intermediate stages. Others, for fear of being too dependent on international markets, would interrupt their internationalization process before reaching the final stage.

The economic approach resulted in a vast body of theoretical data like the internalization theory, the transaction cost theory, the monopolistic advantage theory and the eclectic paradigm (Ruzzier & al 2006). Several authors have relied on these theories to explain the international development of firms.

For example, Dunning (2000), Buckley & Casson (1995) have attempted to explain the internationalization process of SMEs through the contributions to the theory of transaction costs. In this perspective and especially the theory of direct foreign investment, firms'

internationalization is seen as a choice between internalization and externalization of activities. The firm chooses the organizational form that minimizes transaction costs. But critics of this theory emphasize the fact that it allows the understanding of the investment behavior but does not include a vision of international long-term development (Coviello & McAuley 1999). Developed by Dunning (1988), the eclectic paradigm shows that the decision of a firm to enter the foreign market, particularly its modes of entry is determined by three types of advantages: the advantages of ownership of the tangible and intangible resources accumulated by the company, the location advantages related to the institutional and geographical context and the internalization advantage, which is related to the ability of a company to coordinate its activities internally. Finally, the internalization theory which focuses on the notion that firms aspire to develop their own internal markets, sees the internationalization process as a vertical integration upstream or downstream of firm's activities (Buckley & Casson 1995).

The network approach which explains also the internationalization of firms has its roots in the extension work of the Uppsala school. Based on their previous work, Johanson & Vahlne (1990) have highlighted the importance of the corporate network in explaining the motivations and modalities of internationalization (Laghzaoui 2006). The extension of the model involves investments in networks that are new to the firm, whereas penetration means developing positions and increasing resource commitments in networks in which the firm already has positions (Ruzzier & al 2006). Internationalization is therefore defined as a network that grows through trade relations with other countries realized via three stages defined by Johanson & Mattson (1988): extension, penetration and integration. According to Laghzaoui (2006), the extension is the first stage taken by companies to join the network. It is accompanied by new investments for the firm. Penetration is linked to the development of resources and positions of the company within the network. The integration is to expand and coordinate national networks. Aldrich & Zimmer (1986) argue that formal and informal network contacts are important in the internationalization process by developing contact exchanges and practices. Therefore, they constitute an important base to young SMEs development.

The network approach provides a new perspective for interpretation of the internationalization process of the firm, particularly when it comes to small firms whose development can't be understood without taking into account membership in a network (Laghzaoui 2006).

## **2.2. Methodology**

To meet the research objectives, we rely on an exploratory study in accordance with the suggestion of Yin (1994) as the internationalization process and the factors influencing it were never been analyzed deeply in Morocco. The study of the internalization of firms is regarded as a complex phenomenon necessitating suitable methods to generate enough results. As Sinik & al (2010) did on their study of Malaysian context, we select the Delphi method not only to record the opinions of experts in a field of SMEs in Morocco but to gather input remotely via internet or fax without their meetings required. We want also to facilitate the work of identification and selection of experts and controlled feedback as suggested by Paliwoda (1983), Okoli & Pawlowski, (2004). According to Linstone & al (2002), Delphi "may be characterized as a method of structuring a group of communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem" (p.3). Its aim is to collect through an open questionnaire a justified opinion of a panel of experts in various areas. The procedure, based on feedback avoids the confrontation of experts and preserves their anonymity. The results of the first questionnaire are communicated to each expert and are accompanied by a summary of general trends and specific opinions and justifications (Booto Ekionea & al 2006). However, even if this method increases the interpretivism approach of the SME's internationalization study, it is generally

less used. Indeed, the study of the internationalization of SMEs has always relied on positivist studies (Bell & al 2001).

The selection of experts on SME's internationalization was based on four steps as suggested by Booto Ekionea & al (2006): the development of criteria for the selection of experts, the development of the list of potential experts and assigning an anonymous number to ensure anonymity during the administration of the questionnaire, contact with selected experts and finally, inviting experts to participate in the study by using the telephone or the electronic mail. Qualifications and experience were the criteria that have produced an important feedback. The data and works of national agency for the small and medium businesses promotion and our own research in special magazines and reviews help us to identify the names and affiliation of the experts who are highly knowledgeable on the subject. Moreover, their positions and professions reflected this expertise as suggested by Okoli & Pawlowski (2004). A sample of 64 experts is composed of 37 men and 27 women from five different areas: universities (UN 25%), consulting firms specialized in exports (CF 10%) the national agency for promotion of small and medium enterprises (NAPSME 25%), the National Association of SMEs (NAS 25%), the Ministry of Foreign Trade (MFT 15%). Members of the panel who came from universities were professors; some who came from the ministry of foreign trade and the national agency for the promotion of small and medium enterprises were policy makers who have been working for many years on implementing programs to develop SMEs or to find solutions for their internationalization.

Semi- interviews were planned in the summer of 2012. It begun in November of that year until March 2013 and realized between 25 and 30 minutes. A detailed summary of the study to be conducted was sent to experts. The steps taken to implement the Delphi method are described in Table 1

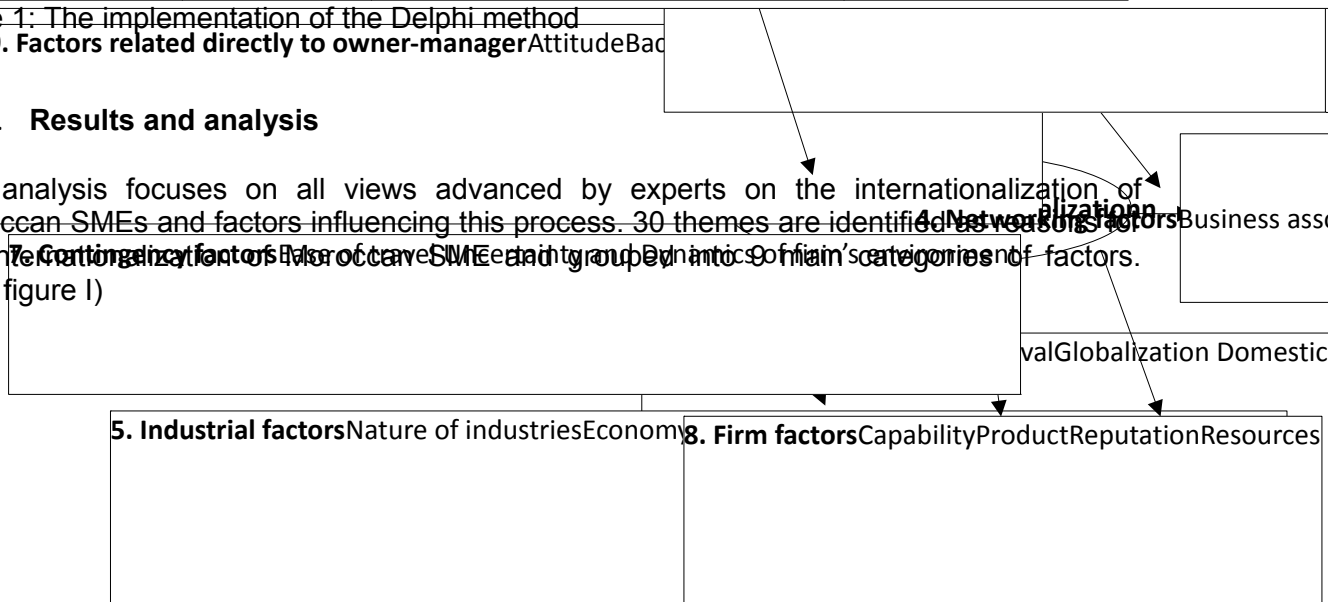
<b>Preliminary work</b>	<b>Procedures for selection of experts</b>	<b>Process of administering the questionnaire</b>	<b>Developing and Confirming Themes</b>
<i>Extensive literature work on the concept of internationalization of SMEs</i>	<i>Organization of Expert selection criteria</i>	<i>Sending the questionnaire responses and consolidation to experts</i>	<i>Analyzing the responses</i>
<i>Research of potential experts with diverse background to participate in the study.</i>	<i>Preparation of experts list</i>	Q1: <i>What motivates Moroccan SMEs to internationalize?</i> Q2: <i>What factors affect the internationalization of Moroccan SMEs?</i> Q3: <i>What are the barriers to the internationalization of Moroccan SMEs?</i> Q4: <i>How do the SMEs aware of international opportunities?</i> Q5: <i>Which modes do they take for their internationalization?</i>	<i>Identification of the themes</i>
<i>Development of preliminary questions</i>	<i>Contact listed expert and invitation to participate in the study</i>		<i>Comparing the emerging themes and categories with the literature.</i>
			<i>Factors influencing the internationalization determined</i>
			<i>Confirming with the experts on influential factors as well as the 30 categories.</i>
			<i>Discussed the appropriateness of the items within the categories with fellow researchers</i>

Table 1: The implementation of the Delphi method

**9. Factors related directly to owner-manager**

**3. Results and analysis**

The analysis focuses on all views advanced by experts on the internationalization of Moroccan SMEs and factors influencing this process. 30 themes are identified as well as factors influencing the internationalization of Moroccan SMEs and grouped into 9 main categories of factors. (See figure I)



**5. Industrial factors** Nature of industries Economy  
**8. Firm factors** Capability Product Reputation Resources

Figure I: Factors influencing Moroccan SMEs internationalization

The results obtained have highlighted the importance of all these factors.

The first group of factors is related to information and 25 items classified in two categories have been identified by experts. 88% of them believe that access to international information on business opportunities which are represented in the study by 12 items is very important to SME internationalization. 86% of them believe that sufficiency and reliability of information inputs represented by 13 items is absolutely essential to any internationalization process. These experts emphasized that having information on foreign customer needs, market imperfections and opportunities is critical to Moroccan SMEs internationalization in European and African countries.

In the second group of factors considered as external, 32 items have been identified. These items are classified into four categories, and selected as follows: 69% of experts consider that economic factors with 11 items have a great importance for SMEs internationalization, 68% of them believe that considering seriously political factors represented in the study by 8 items minimizes risks in internationalization activities. 50% of them consider that technology represented in the study by 5 items as essential to any internationalization process while 25% found that the society with 8 items have a major influence on the country's SMEs internationalization. These experts argued that understanding external factors is absolutely necessary for Moroccan SMEs to overcome the difficulties associated with the internationalization process. Using information technology can enhance their international activities by facilitating contacts with foreign customers and suppliers. Political contexts must be taken into account in the internationalization of SMEs in order to prevent disastrous economic consequences on their activities. Economic factors like the financial crisis, change of the monetary policy should be considered because to their direct impact on the internationalization process.

The third group of factors is related to psychological proximity and 22 items classified into two categories have been identified by the experts. 100% of them believe that the proximity



with Europe and West African countries represented in the study by 10 items helps to expand their activities in these countries. In recent year, it has encouraged an increase of trade agreements and business cooperation to facilitate free movements of persons. This allowed many SMEs of the textile, leather and construction industries to expand their activities in some neighboring countries. 83% of experts asserted that the similarity of language between Moroccan managers and their partners of the neighboring countries with 12 items facilitates the SMEs internationalization. They found that Moroccan SMEs that have recently discovered the Mauritanian and Tunisia markets may even not perceive their foreign activities as exporting due to the language and cultural similarities.

The fourth group of factors is related to the relationships developed by the SMEs and 27 items have been identified by experts and classified in three categories. 82% of them believe that business associates represented by 8 items are important to the SME internationalization. 100% of experts identified that institutions represented in the study by 12 items plays a key role in the SMEs internationalization process. 81% of them identified that personal relations with 7 items is very important in the internationalization process. Many of them think that since the liberalization of the textile industry in 2005, the relationships developed with European partners have promoted the export of finished products and encouraged many SMEs to engage in the exploitation of the Spanish and French markets.

The fifth group of factors is related to the industry and 31 items that influence the SME internationalization have been identified by experts and classified in four categories. 56% of them identified the nature of industries as important to SME internationalization. 11 items were influential in this category. 65% of them asserted that the economy scale is important and 5 items was identified. 79% of them believe that the intensity of competition represented by 9 items has a strong influence of the internationalization process, and 64% identified that the foreign market attractiveness represented by 6 items is very important in the decision for internationalization. They emphasized that the recent years' domestic competition in the fishery and textile industry and they dynamic nature, the attractiveness of the citrus market in southern Spain prompted some SMEs to expand their activities.

The sixth group of factors is related to motivation and 56 items classified into six categories are considered by experts as reasons for Moroccan SMEs internationalization. 27% of them asserted that to survive to the intensity of competition represented by 10 items, some Moroccan SMEs choose to internationalize their activities. 47% of them asserted that globalization is one of the reasons for the internationalization and 9 items linked to it have been identified. 69% of them believe that the domestic conditions with 11 items are a motivation for SMEs internationalization. 68% of them believe that resource seeking represented by 12 items and 29% of them think that following suppliers are motivations for Moroccan SMEs internationalization. 8 items have been identified in the last factor. Finally, the market issue is considered by 73% of experts as one of the leading causes of the commitment of SMEs to internationalize their activities. Most of them think that the pressures by domestic competitors do to the entry of new competitors (Chinese and Europeans in particular), opportunities in West African and Middle East markets and external resources and encouragement by external agents in the last decade have led many managers to make up a decision for their company's internationalization.

In the seventh group of factors, 25 items classified into three categories have been identified by the experts. 77% of them believe that easy travel to foreign countries represented in the study by 12 items is essential to SME internationalization. 53% of them believe that the dynamics of firm's environment with 13 items have an important effect on Moroccan SMEs internationalization process. Many experts think that the uncertainty of the environment due to the rapid change in technology, consumers behavior, and recent years regulations have encouraged some SMEs to exploit west African countries markets.

The eighth group of factors is related to firm factors, 36 items have been identified by experts. 68% of them believe that firm's capability with 9 items, is important to the internationalization process. 65% of them believe that the importance of resources with 13

items and product with 10 items are essential to exploit foreign markets. 37% of them believe that the reputation of the firm with 8 items has to be taken into account in the process of internationalization. Most of them think that a recent successful internationalization of some Moroccan manufacturing SMEs in Mauritania, Senegal and Gabon is due to their capacity to develop and maintain a competitive advantage based on their distinctive resources and capabilities. Some of them have a reputation for expertise in these countries. Consequently, it facilitated their market penetration in Mali and Guinea.

The ninth category of factors is related to the manager's characteristics and 38 items have been identified by experts. 87% of them considered that manager's attitude with 9 items, and 69% of them think that their backgrounds with 11 items are very important to the SMEs internationalization. Finally, manager's skills and ability with 18 items are considered by 88% of experts to be decisive for the internationalization process. They found that Moroccan SMEs managers who have a positive attitude and perception toward internationalization, who worked in foreign countries and know foreign cultures, or possess international experience in selling on European, African and Middle East markets are those who have enhanced the country's export efforts and its SMEs internationalization capacity in the past two decades:

#### **4. Discussion**

This study has identified through the collection of experts opinions, various factors that influence Moroccan SME internationalization. Factors such as the access to international information on business opportunities and reliability of information inputs are considered to be essential to Moroccan internationalization process. This confirms the previous works of Johanson & Vahlne (1977), (Bradley 1999). The result about external factors that are seen by experts as essential to any internationalization operation of Moroccan SMEs is in line with the works of Bilkey (1978), Falbe & Welsh, (1998) Pett (2008). For example, Bilkey (1978) show that most SMEs export came after an external stimulus. (He 2011) found that by given support to SMEs, political implication is important to their internationalization. Falbe & Welsh, (1998) suggested that economic conditions especially trade agreements have a great influence on SMEs internationalization.

The identification of psychological proximity factors in the study supports the works of Johanson & Vahlne (1977), Czinkota (2004) on the major role of physical closeness to international markets on export activities. Geographic closeness and language similarity are considered by experts as an extension of domestic market, but Czinkota (2004) argue that the geographic closeness do not necessarily translate into real closeness to the foreign customer.

Experts have stressed the importance of the firm position in a network developed through foreign trade partners. By having a financial, market and technological links with other market participants, some Moroccan SMEs can expand gradually their connection and extend their activities beyond national borders to become international. Therefore, these relationships are crucial to their activities by creating some opportunities on foreign markets. This result confirms the existing empirical findings (Gemser & al 2004; Johanson & Mattsson 1988,) which show that the firms' internationalization is facilitated by their influential behavior of formal and informal relationships built over time. In these networks, there are business associates, government institutions and personal relations.

According to experts, nature of industries, economy of scale, market attractiveness and intense competition stimulate Moroccan SMEs decision to initiate and to develop international operations. This result supports the works of Cavusgil & Zou (1994), Calantone & al. (2006), Boter & Holmquist (1996), on the influence of industry characteristics and foreign market on the internationalization of firms. The nature of industries reinforces the finding of Boter & Holmquist (1996) on understanding the international behavior of small firms. The attractiveness of a market as reason for Moroccan SMEs internationalization due to the profit, market access and potential, cost of serving it confirms Jobber's (2004) work.

Moroccan SMEs expand their activities abroad because of the domestic conditions, the market issue and to following suppliers according to the experts. This idea supports the work of Wiedersheim-Paul & al. (1978), Pett (2008), Czinkota (1982), Johnston & Czinkota (1982), Leonidou (1989), Bogart & Pavord 1975) on the opportunity of foreign market, and fierce competition in the internal market as reason for firms to export. The motivation for internationalization due to the globalization is in line with the arguments of Ruzzia & al (2006) on the steady dismantling of trade barriers, financial deregulation and the international connectivity of markets. Moreover, having access to external resources and trying to survive to the complexity of the environment and competition are considered as antecedents to the decision of Moroccan SMEs to internationalize and is in line with the work of Le & Luong (2009) on the case of Vietnam. The contingency factors identified by experts support the work of Falize & Coeurderoy (2012) Vera & Dmitrienko (2013) which show that the uncertainty and dynamics of firm's environment are considered to have an important impact on firm's decision to go abroad.

The importance of firm's unique resources and product, technological and employees' competence as well as, capabilities and spending in research and development complete some of the work already done on the subject by Koh (1989) and Leonidou (1989). For experts, having a good reputation with partners and a heavy use of information and communication technology are absolutely essential in SMEs internationalization process and support previous work on the subject (Ruzzier & al 2006; Moen 2002, Hamill 1997, Melen 2009). For example, some experts believe that by using the internet, SMEs remains in direct contact with their customers and partners and pursue their activities without being physically present.

The findings support also some of the theoretical arguments (Reuber & fisher 1996, Campbell 1997; Bloodgood & al 1996) that SME owner manager's personal skills and ability, vision, experience, attitude and background are characteristics that show the propensity to international expansion. As the creation or development of these organizations is based on a specific product, managers' skill or technique, his influence is decisive in the internationalization process.

Finally, the results of the study complete and go beyond those obtained in some recent works (He 2011, Senik et al 2010, Ciszewska-Mlinaric & Mlinaric 2010, Sari & al 2008) in the case of China, Malaysia, Slovenia and Indonesia.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study has highlighted the complex nature of Moroccan SMEs internationalization and factors influencing it. It also provided information on the current situation of the country's SMEs while highlighting the challenges they face in their business environment.

Following the literature review conducted on the prospects, it is clear that this field of research is one of the most pioneering ways and more established literature on internationalization as stated by Leonidou & Katsikeas (1996). An articulation of different theoretical approaches (network, economic and gradual) carried out show that these SMEs internationalization is plural and takes place at different levels. As they do not have enough resources and contacts, they are not sufficiently informed about potential partners and business opportunities in foreign markets. While indicating obstacles to the internationalization process, the results obtained through experts opinions, provide some suggestions to Moroccan SMEs managers on how to improve the performance of their business by increasing their knowledge on the internationalization. Respectively, internal, external, motivational and industrial, factors described, show the importance of the manager's role and vision in the internationalization process. Other factors like the

psychological proximity, access to international information on business opportunities, the ease of travel, and the uncertainty and dynamics of firm's environment have also been considered as very important to the internationalization process.

The study may also help to understand how Moroccan SMEs can change their competitive strategy when they decide to explore the foreign market. It shows how Moroccan SMEs managers' can take advantage of the fact that internationalization does not necessarily mean export and achieve it by occupying a very specific position in the international value chain. It helps the country's national agency for SMEs promotion (NAPSME) in its effort to strengthen SMEs capabilities and constitute for non-exporters a useful tool for the preparation of a first attempt to export.

However, these contributions are not without limits and represent paths for future research. Indeed, the methodology used may limit the understanding of Moroccan SME internationalization process. Therefore, we cannot claim a generalization of results, but future research could take an interest in a much large number of experts or conduct a quantitative study that would involve more Moroccan SMEs or their managers.

## 6. Reference

Ageron, B. (2001), "La construction d'une capacité de réponse d'une PMI à l'international: une mise à l'épreuve des faits du modèle de Bilkey et Tesar", *Revue Internationale PME*, vol. 14, n° 2, pp 9-39

Andersson, S., Gabrielsson, J., & Wictor, I. (2004), "International activities in small firms: examining factors influencing the internationalization and export growth of small firms", *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, 21 (1), pp. 22-34.

Allali, B. (2003), "Vision des dirigeants et internationalisation des PME marocaines et canadiennes du secteur agroalimentaire", Thèse de doctorat, HEC de Montréal.

Bell, J., McNaughton, R. and Young, S. (2001) 'Born-Again Global' Firms: An Extension to the 'Born Global' Phenomenon', *Journal of International Management*, 7(3), pp 173-189

Bilkey, W. & G. Tesar (1977), "The export behaviour of smaller sized Wisconsin manufacturing firms", *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol.8, n° 1, pp. 93-98.

Booto Ekionea, J P, Bernard P & Plaisent M (2006), consensus par la méthode Delphi sur les concepts clés des capacités organisationnelles spécifiques de la gestion des connaissances, *recherche qualitative*, Vol. 29(3), pp. 168-192.

Bradley, F (1999). *International Marketing Strategy*, Hemel Hempstead, England: Prentice Hall.

Buckley, P.J & M. Casson (1995) "The economic theory of multinational enterprise" New York, St-Martin's Press.

Cavusgil, S.T. (1980), "On the internationalization process of firms", *European Research*, vol. 8, pp. 273-280.

Czinkota, M. & G. Tesar (1982), *Export Management*, New York: Praeger Publishers.

Coviello, N.E. and McAuley, A. (1999) Internationalization and Smaller Firms: A Review of Contemporary Empirical Research, *Management International Review*, 39(3), pp 223-240

Coviello, N.E. & H.J. Munro (1997), "Network relationships and the internationalization process of small software firms", *International Business Review*, vol. 6, n° 4, p. 361- 386.

Dunning, J.H. (2000), "The eclectic paradigm as an envelope of economic and business theories of MNE activity", *International Business Review*, n° 9, pp. 163-190.

Etemad, H. (2005), "SME'internationalization strategies based on a typical subsidiary evolutionary life cycle in three distinct stages", *Management International Review*, vol. 45, n° 3, pp. 145-186.

Etrillard, C. (2004), "L'internationalisation des PME : pour une relecture en termes de stratégies entrepreneuriales", 7ème Congrès International Francophone en Entrepreneuriat et PME, 27, 28 et 29 Octobre, Montpellier.

Gemser, G., M.J. Brand & A. Sorge (2004), "Exploring the Internationalisation Process of Small Businesses: A Study of Dutch Old and New Economy Firms", *Management International Review*, vol. 44, n° 2, pp. 127-150.

He S. (2011). "The Influential Factors on Internationalization of the SMEs in China: on Wenzhou's Shoe Industry and Policy Implications," *Research in World Economy*, 2(1): pp 48-57

Johanson, J. & J.E. Vahlne (1977), "The internationalization process of the firm: A model knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments", *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 8, n°1, pp. 23-32.

Johanson, J. & F. Wiedersheim-Paul (1975), "The internationalization of the firm- four Swedish cases", *Journal of Management Studies*, vol.12, n°3, p. 305-322.

Johanson, J & L-G. Mattson (1988), « Internationalization in industrial systems- A Network approach », *Strategies in global competition*, Neil Hood and Jan-Erik Vahlne, London: Crom Helm, pp. 287-314.

Johanson, J. & J.E. Vahlne (1990), "The mechanism of internationalization", *International Marketing Review*, vol. 7, n°4, pp. 11-24.

Johanson J & Vahlne J-E (2003a): "Business relationship learning and commitment in the internationalization Process", *Journal of international entrepreneurship*, vol1, N°1, Netherlands, mars pp: 83-101

Johanson Jan & Vahlne J-E (2003b) ; « Building a Model of firm internationalization », dans Blomstermo et Sharma, *Learning in the internationalization process of firms*, UK, New Horizons in International Business, pp 3-15.

Khayat, I. (2004), "L'internationalisation des PME : Vers une approche intégrative", 7ème Congrès International Francophone en Entrepreneuriat et PME, 27,28 et 29 Octobre.

Laghzaoui Soulaïmane : " l'internationalisation des PME : pour une relecture en termes de ressources et compétences", 8ème congrès international francophone en entrepreneuriat et PME (CIFE PME), HEC, Fribourg, Suisse, Octobre 2006.

Leonidou, L.C. & C.S. Katsikeas (1996), "The export development process: an integrative review of empirical models", *Journal of International Business Studies*, vol. 27, n° 3, pp. 517-551.

Le Q. et Luong M.H (2009), Barrière et stimuli à l'exportation perçus par les entrepreneurs d'un pays en transition : le cas des PME en Vietnam, Colloque International: La vulnérabilité des TPE et des PME dans un environnement mondialisé, 11ème journées scientifiques du réseau entreprenariat, 27,28 et 29 mai 2009, Trois Rivières, Canada

Li, L., D. Li & T. Dalgic (2004), "Internationalization Process of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises: Towards a Hybrid Model of Experiential Learning and Planning", *Management International Review*, vol. 44, n° 1, pp. 93-116

Linstone, H. A., & Turoff, M. Helmer O (2002). Introduction. In H. A. Linstone, & M. Turoff (Eds.). *The Delphi method: Techniques and applications* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company. pp. 3-12.

Millington, A. & B. Bayliss. 1990. The process of internationalization: UK companies in the E.C. *Management International Review*, 30(2) :pp 151-61.

Ciszewska-Mlinaric M & Mlinaric F (2010) "Small Firms in a Small Country: Managerial Factors, Internationalization and Performance of Slovenian SMEs" *Managing global transition*, Vol 8 (3) p 239

Oviatt, B.M. and McDougall, P.P. (1994) 'Toward a theory of international new ventures', *Journal of International Business Studies* 25(1): pp45-64.

Paliwoda, S.J. (1983). Predicting the future using Delphi. *MD*, 21 (1).

Pawlowski S D & Okoli C (2004), The Delphi Method as a Research Tool: An Example, Design Considerations and Applications, *Information & Management*, Vol 42, Issue 1, December 2004, pp 15–29

Pope, R. (2002), "Why small firms export: Another look", *Journal of Small Business Management*, vol.40, n° 1, pp.17-26.

Sari D, Alam Q, Beaumont N (2008), Internationalization of Small Medium Sized Enterprises in Indonesia: Entrepreneur Human and Social Capital, paper presented at the 17th Biennial Conference of the Asian Studies Association of Australia in Melbourne 1-3 July 2008

Senik, Z, Isa R, Scott-Ladd, B., & Entekin, L. (2010). Influential factors for SME internationalization: Evidence from Malaysia. *International Journal of Economics and Management*, 4 (2), pp 285-304

Yin, R.K. (1994) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Sage Publication: Thousand Oaks.