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SME Internationalization: How Does the Opportunity-Based International Entrepreneurial Culture Matter?

Abstract

We employ the opportunity-based international entrepreneurial culture (IEC) comprehensive notion that draws upon the opportunity-based view (OBV). The OBV supports the idea that entrepreneurs mold the organizational behavior and characteristics of their firms to pursue opportunities abroad. We set out to explore possible attitudinal differences as regards exploitation of opportunities within firms in each of three internationalization dimensions that are previously identified in the literature, notably time to internationalization, country market presence and international mode. We perform eighteen case studies on high-performing internationalized small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in knowledge intensive sectors. The evidence refines the OBV as it manifests how three IEC characteristics (namely risk attitude, market orientation and networking propensity) matter for firms in the three internationalization dimensions. The study further adds to the international entrepreneurship literature that has until now myopically focused on international new ventures as if they were the sole opportunity-driven group of internationalized SMEs.

Keywords Internationalization dimensions; opportunity-based view; international entrepreneurial culture; international new ventures; global small firms; micromultinational enterprises

1. Introduction

The international entrepreneurship literature has hitherto examined mainly the activities of international new ventures (INVs). INVs are typically small firms that go abroad from inception and their activities are contrasted to those of incremental internationalized firms that enter foreign countries long after their establishment (McDougall et al., 1994; Oviatt and McDougall, 1994, 1995). Hence, the international entrepreneurship literature has focused on the *time to internationalization* dimension. However, the activities of international entrepreneurial firms can be multifaceted and complex, and the time to internationalization dimension on its own cannot explain their diverse behaviors and dissimilar ways to tap opportunities abroad. In the words of Mathews and Zander (2007:395), the activities these firms follow are “open to almost infinite variation and disaggregation”. This suggests that both INVs and incremental internationalizers may choose to go abroad in markets of dissimilar levels of customer sophistication; and, with advanced or exporting modes. In other words, there is variation within INVs and incremental internationalized firms in respect to both foreign country presence and mode choices.

Hence, the international entrepreneurship literature has relatively recently paid some attention to two other dimensions whose examination may add to a more holistic account of the behavior of the opportunity-seeking internationalized small firm. Jones and Coviello (2005) posit that the foreign markets and range of cross-border modes chosen over time mold the international behavior of the firm. Thus, apart from time to internationalization, *international market presence* differentiates between global small firms (GSFs) that actively seek and achieve market presence in the lead international markets of their industries; and, intercontinental small firms that are absent from the

lead markets of their industries (Berry et al. 2002; Dimitratos et al., 2010). The other dimension is *international mode* that differentiates between micromultinational enterprises (mMNEs) that adopt advanced entry modes beyond exporting such as licensing, joint ventures and subsidiaries; and, exporting small firms (Dimitratos et al., 2003, 2014; Prashantham, 2011).

Our conjecture is that behavioral differences for the firms within each of these dimensions (time, market presence, mode) may be attributed to international entrepreneurial culture (IEC) characteristics. We employ the concept of IEC in this research since an opportunity-based IEC serves as an encompassing notion that captures international entrepreneurial activities of the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) that seeks to identify and pursue opportunities abroad. In other words, we posit that differences between INVs and incremental internationalizers, GSFs and intercontinental firms, and mMNEs and exporters can be enlightened through examining attitudinal characteristics of the IEC. We compare the two disparate groups within each of the three dimensions identified in the literature. The selection of the three dyads, which also originates from prior research findings, seeks to extend the applicability of the IEC in the SME internationalization field. The IEC draws from the opportunity-based view (OBV) as it identifies organizational characteristics that firms may pursue to look for profitable prospects abroad. The IEC is a comprehensive concept that pinpoints behavioral entrepreneurial aspects of the internationalized SME (Dimitratos et al., 2012; Zahra, 2005) beyond international entrepreneurial orientation made up of proactiveness toward competition, innovativeness and risk attitude abroad. In the next section we discuss the six characteristics that comprise an opportunity-based IEC. Among the IEC

characteristics, we draw from prior literature and examine in this research international risk attitude, international market orientation and international networking orientation. Prior empirical findings suggest that these attributes are specific to the three internationalization dimensions.

This present study refines the OBV as it suggests how these three attitudinal characteristics distinguish the behavior of opportunity-seeking internationalized SMEs. In doing so, it contributes to the international entrepreneurship field that has largely overlooked the international market presence and mode dimensions. The single-mindedness on INVs has demarcated the boundaries of the international entrepreneurship area narrowly around the time to internationalization dimension up to now constraining its theoretical development and links to the mainstream entrepreneurship literature (cf. Zander et al., 2015). The identification of opportunity-based IEC characteristics renders the OBV central in this study and enriches the international entrepreneurship field with notions from the mainstream entrepreneurship field (Jones et al., 2011). At a managerial level, the identification of IEC characteristics provides insights to managers into how they can develop and nurture organizational attributes to perform specific international activities. SME internationalization dimensions may be associated with superior performance abroad (Mathews and Zander, 2007).

Hence, the research question in the present study is *how can characteristics of an opportunity-based IEC illuminate behavioral differences between INVs and incremental SME, GSFs and intercontinental firms, and mMNEs and exporting firms.*

Toward this objective, we provide evidence from research on knowledge intensive internationalized SMEs with enhanced performance.

This article is structured as follows. In the second section, we explore the research background behind the OBV and opportunity-based IEC; and, the three internationalization dimensions of time to internationalization, international market presence, and international mode. In the third section, we provide details on the methodology we employed in this study. In the fourth section, we discuss the findings related to IEC dimension differences of internationalized SMEs, and advance three relevant sets of propositions. In the concluding section, we provide implications for research and management, and suggestions for future research directions.

2. Research background

2.1. OBV and the opportunity-based IEC

The OBV suggests that opportunity identification and exploitation are critical aspects that drive behaviour of the firm (Davidsson, 2015). While most studies in international entrepreneurship espousing the OBV assign primary significance to the time to internationalization as the main dimension (e.g. Chandra et al., 2012; Oviatt and McDougall, 2005), an increasing number of articles (see Mainela et al., 2014 for a literature review) support the notion that such a perspective could apply to the whole range of international activities of the firm concerned, and hence, all three internationalization dimensions. The OBV posits that the individual-opportunity nexus is crucial as there should be a fit between the entrepreneur and opportunity (Venkataraman, 1997). This implies that entrepreneurs with their knowledge bases, traits and characteristics impinge on the organizational culture that can subsequently

accommodate alertness to and exploitation of specific opportunities (Brown et al., 2001; Stevenson and Gumbert, 1985). Entrepreneurial firms seek to discover and exploit opportunities in the marketplace (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990) through novel ways compared to their competitors (Low and MacMillan, 1988; Schumpeter, 1934). It follows that differences in IEC attitudinal characteristics may be associated with different levels of pursuit of opportunities and internationalization dimensions (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005).

Dimitratos et al. (2012) empirically identify six dimensions that make up an opportunity-based IEC, namely international market orientation, international learning orientation, international innovation propensity, international risk attitude, international networking orientation, and international motivation. First, *international market orientation* refers to the propensity of the firm to seek superior value for its customers abroad. It includes international customer orientation, interfunctional coordination of resources within the firm, and competitor orientation. Second, *international learning orientation* includes the proclivity of the firm to actively accomplish intelligence on foreign markets and use it effectively. Third, *international innovation propensity* concerns the tendency of the firm to support novel and original ideas, products or processes for foreign markets. Fourth, *international risk attitude* includes the level of commitment of the firm for wide-ranging and venturesome activities abroad. Fifth, *international networking orientation* incorporates the extent to which the firm accesses resources from its external environment through cooperative arrangements for its activities abroad. Sixth, *international motivation* pertains to the origination and invigoration of management and employee behavior toward ventures abroad.

The OBV is closely linked to the IEC in that different IEC dimensions can be intertwined with different opportunity pursuit routes and internationalization dimensions (Dimitratos et al. 2012; Gabrielsson et al., 2014). An opportunity-based IEC shapes the way entrepreneurs in INVs become alert to and act on market prospects (Zahra et al., 2005). IEC can holistically describe the activities of internationalized SMEs seeking to tap opportunities (Armario et al., 2008). Gabrielsson et al. (2014) recently examine how the IEC characteristics change over time as INVs grow and mature. The following section explores how salient dimensions of an IEC pertain to the three internationalization dimensions, namely time, market presence and mode.

2.2. Time to internationalization

In her seminal article examining INVs, McDougall (1989) argues that these are small and young firms that go abroad shortly after their inception. Therefore, the time to internationalization dimension refers to the interval lag between the founding of the firm and initiation of international activities (cf. Zucchella et al., 2007). This dimension differentiates between INVs that go abroad from inception; and, incremental internationalized SMEs that pursue their initial foreign venture a long time following their establishment (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977, 1990). This temporal dimension has captured the biggest share of attention in the international entrepreneurship literature hitherto. Nevertheless, Keupp and Gassmann (2009) in a literature review stress that there are conflicting arguments in the INV literature on why some firms are able to internationalize earlier than others.

In studies that simultaneously examine differences between INVs and incremental internationalizers, Reuber and Fischer (1997) investigate the influence of the international experience of the top management team on the international behavior of SMEs. Bell et al. (2004) attest to noticeably different internationalization strategies of INVs and incremental internationalized SMEs. In a similar vein, Chetty and Campbell-Hunt (2004) note that from their establishment INVs adopt a more rapid and proactive approach to learning. Rialp et al. (2005) further posit that the approach of INVs as opposed to incremental internationalizers in the international marketplace can be more strategy-driven in that the focus and pace of internationalization assists them in implementing a niche strategy. The two categories of firms are also dissimilar in terms of learning and networking capabilities (Zhang et al., 2009). Johanson and Martín-Martín (2015) empirically show that international commitment and level of internationalization may distinguish the internationalization process between these two groups of firms. Gerschewski et al. (2015) further find that INVs score comparatively higher in terms of innovativeness, proactiveness and market orientation. Their findings additionally suggest that personal networks and employment of a niche strategy are less important for INVs compared to incremental internationalizers.

Nonetheless, there is some consensus in the literature (e.g. McDougall and Oviatt, 2000; McDougall et al., 1994) that international risk attitude is an IEC characteristic that substantially differentiates the activities of INVs and incremental internationalizers. INVs appear to be distinguished by a venturesome mindset and

interweaved risk attitude, which make them perceive opportunities in situations that other firms interpret as risks (Harveston et al., 2000). In contrast to incremental internationalized SMEs, INVs do not notice risk in the marketplace abroad easily, and thus, they enter their internationalization process early and promptly in order to take advantage of untapped market opportunities (Gabrielsson et al., 2014; Kuivalainen et al., 2004). However, we apparently lack evidence on what are the underlying mechanisms that guide this process. Although risk attitude and the interlaced perception of opportunities are expected to be higher among INVs, in the current research we seek to explore what may elucidate such a difference between INVs and incremental internationalized SMEs. For instance, does this possible risk attitude dissimilarity stem from the entrepreneurial team, their background, expertise etc. or the environment, and how does it affect subsequent alertness to opportunities?

2.3. International market presence

The international market presence has been considered in the international entrepreneurship literature from the viewpoint of INV activity. McNaughton (2003) finds that INVs satisfy the needs of customers in a higher number of countries compared to other internationalized SMEs. In an effort to differentiate between types of INVs that target dissimilar geographic destinations, Kuivalainen et al. (2007) provide evidence that INVs with a high degree of “born globalness” compete more aggressively *vis-à-vis* their competitors in international markets than “born-internationals”. In a similar vein, Luostarinen and Gabrielsson (2004) distinguish between international INVs whose major foreign markets are within their domestic continents; and, globalizing INVs that target markets outside their domestic continents. There is further some research (e.g. Gabrielsson et al., 2014; Lopez et al.,

2009) that suggests that most INVs are essentially “born regional” rather than “born global” firms, meaning that they internationalize in geographically close countries of their regional bloc rather than around the world.

However, there is an emerging stream of literature that argues in favor of the international market selection and presence dimension outwith the INV activity. Berry et al. (2002) posit that GSFs actively seek and achieve market presence in the lead markets of their industries. An example of a GSF can be that of a biomedical equipment producing small firm that purposefully markets its products in the Triad region countries (if one assumes that the Triad market region includes the lead (most significant) markets worldwide in this industry). In essence, GSFs pursue to service the most demanding international customers wherever they are located. In doing so, they fine-tune their organizational processes to tap profitable opportunities and effectively provide superior products and services. In contrast, intercontinental SMEs are absent from lead markets, and even if they have presence in some or all of these markets, this is not the end-result of a determined stance (Berry et al., 2002). Intercontinental firms shy away from lead markets as they may not possess the mindset, ambition, resources or systems to successfully service challenging international customers, hence possibly foregoing demanding but lucrative market prospects.

In seemingly the sole empirical related study, Dimitratos et al. (2010) compare GSFs and intercontinental small firms in relation to their organizational attributes. They find that proactiveness toward international opportunities, risk attitude and innovativeness of GSFs are stronger than those of intercontinental firms. However, this scant

evidence draws from a study on a sample of firms in the “traditional” gold and silversmith sector, hence exhibiting limited generalizability.

Given the importance of the customer servicing aspect for the international market presence dimension, we would expect that market orientation is likely to be a salient IEC aspect that differentiates global and intercontinental SMEs as to their opportunity alertness and exploitation. An international market oriented firm possesses those customer oriented processes that can positively cater to the sophisticated requirements of challenging clients ahead of competition (Cadogan and Diamantopoulos, 1995). It may be that an international market orientation is strongly associated with those marketing capabilities that energize opportunity identification as regards market servicing of demanding customers (Murray et al., 2011). Hence, we seek to explore whether market orientation distinguishes the activities of GSFs and their intercontinental counterparts, and if so, what are the underlying mechanisms behind this.

2.4. International mode

The dimension pertaining to international mode advances the argument that internationalized SMEs can select advanced modes (beyond exporting) to identify and cater to the needs of foreign customers. International mode is a key decision for internationalized firms as it is allied to strategic, resource-related and operational aspects of the involvement of the firm in the foreign country (Jones and Young, 2009). Engagement in a particular entry mode signals a stance against competitors and stakeholders in the foreign country, and entails significant resource involvement

that takes much time to change. Increasingly SMEs acknowledge that utilization of exporting modes is likely to be associated with exploitation of limited foreign market prospects; and, lead to an exporting-based route that constrains the growth of the internationalized firm (cf. Leonidou, 2004). Some internationalized SMEs employ exclusively licensing, joint ventures and subsidiaries to attain market expansion abroad (Allison and Browning, 2006; Ibeh et al., 2004).

Mathews and Zander (2007:390) posit that mMNEs constitute “the new species of multinational enterprises in the global economy”. The scant literature on mMNEs does not take INVs and time to internationalization as the starting point in its investigation but examines purely international mode (Jones et al., 2011). mMNEs may provide excellent customer service and collect prompt feedback on market conditions abroad through advanced modes (Dimitratos et al., 2003). In effect, mMNEs can seek to take advantage of opportunities in the international marketplace, and follow a different and novel internationalization route than exporting firms through pursuing those modes (Ibeh et al., 2009). Failure to prioritize opportunities in foreign markets stands out as a key core rigidity that inhibits mMNE growth (Dimitratos et al., 2009).

There is scant empirical evidence on mMNE activities. The studies of Dimitratos et al. (2003) and Dimitratos et al. (2009) are based on limited case research, while other articles (Allison and Browning, 2006; Ibeh et al., 2004) offer some evidence that is rather descriptive in nature. It is only recently that Prashantham (2011) provides evidence that mMNEs employ higher stocks of cross-border coethnic (Indian) social capital than exporters, which assists them to identify opportunities abroad.

Furthermore, Dimitratos et al. (2014) find that risk-taking propensity and networking with domestic and international partners increase the probability that a (Chilean) firm will become an mMNE.

This limited empirical evidence suggests that networking orientation is an IEC characteristic differentiating activities of mMNEs and exporting SMEs. Exporting SMEs frequently use networks to go abroad, yet it seems that mMNEs rely heavily on network resources and knowledge to exploit foreign market opportunities. This necessitates different organizational forms such as franchising, joint ventures, strategic alliances or other equity arrangements. In this study, we investigate whether mMNEs compared to exporting SMEs employ to a higher degree networking for their expansion abroad; and, if this is indeed the case, what mechanisms dictate higher levels of networking arrangements.

3. Methodology

3.1. The case study approach

The case study method was selected as it is related to the objectives of this research. The case method offers an in-depth understanding of both the investigated phenomenon of activities of internationalized SMEs and the broader context of organizational behavior in which this phenomenon occurs (cf. Carson and Coviello, 1996; Dubois and Gadde, 2002). Such an understanding is particularly important given that there is insufficient knowledge on possible differences of opportunity-based IEC characteristics for investigated internationalized SMEs. This choice concerning methodology is also in accordance with recommendations that call for more case study research in international business in order to develop substantive

knowledge about organizational idiosyncrasies (Andersen, 1993). Further, it is in line with calls for more contextual study in the international business (Michailova, 2011; Welch et al., 2011) and entrepreneurship (Zahra, 2007) fields.

The current study employed a multiple case research design that suggested a replication logic whereby a set of cases were used to investigate the theme of identification of opportunity-based IEC characteristics. This theme is linked to the employment of different entrepreneurial opportunities and internationalization dimensions. We used purposive sampling to identify internationalized firms that actively sought opportunities in vibrant knowledge intensive settings (cf. Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Specifically, examined firms had to meet the following five criteria in order to be included in the study: a) be independent firms; b) employ less than 250 employees (which corresponds to an EU cut-off point for being an SME); c) be active in high-technology sectors as the three categories of entrepreneurial firms (INVs, Global SMEs and mMNEs) are more likely to be found in these knowledge intensive contexts; d) have international activities for at least three years; and, e) have achieved enhanced (above industry average) international and overall performance during the recent three years. Performance was based on annual international sales growth; profitability from international activities; and, profitability from all (international and domestic) activities. Respondents provided information on these performance measures, albeit oftentimes in ranges or ballpark figures as regards profitability figures. In relation to the annual international sales growth, the figures given by the respondents were triangulated with the data reported in the sampling frames used. The unit of analysis in this research was the opportunities exploited during the last three years for each firm. Opportunity was defined as the set of environmental conditions

that led to the introduction/ adaptation of product offerings in the international marketplace (Dutta and Crossan, 2005). It follows that opportunities were evaluated by firms according to the future value the firm assigned to them (cf. Haynie et al., 2009).

Eighteen knowledge intensive internationalized SMEs with enhanced performance were examined in order to investigate whether, and how, if at all, there were differences in terms of IEC attitudinal characteristics linked to pursuit of international opportunities. Investigated small firms included enterprises in the three different internationalization dimensions, notably INVs and incremental internationalizers; GSFs and intercontinental internationalizers; and, mMNEs and exporting firms. Most studies in international entrepreneurship concern activities of firms originated from a single country, most frequently the USA. We collected data from three countries, namely the USA, UK and Greece. The data collection in three countries sought to potentially enhance generalizability of the findings rather than pinpoint cross-national differences that were beyond the focus of the present research. We investigated the same number of firms, notably six in each of the three countries. We also intentionally included all types of investigated small firms for each of the internationalization dimensions in every individual country. The sampling frames in the USA and the UK were the *Dun and Bradstreet* database and in Greece the *ICAP Greek Financial Directory*. These are sampling frame sources for firms typically employed in these countries.

INVs in this research are firms that internationalized within a period of six years following their establishment; and, incremental internationalizers those that have gone

abroad after six years following their foundation. We chose six years as the cut-off point because this appears to be a common threshold for inclusion in many INV studies (e.g. McDougall et al., 2003; Zahra et al., 2000). Besides, six years appears to be a common threshold for newness of the firm in the entrepreneurship literature (Coviello, 2015). In addition, GSFs are firms that derived more than 50% of their sales from their lead industry markets. The 50% cut-off point was chosen to ascertain that GSFs actively sought for presence in their major markets worldwide (Berry et al., 2002). We further prompted managers to ensure that their enterprise presence in lead markets had been the outcome of a proactive rather than opportunistic stance. Intercontinental enterprises derived less than 50% of their sales from their lead industry markets. Moreover, mMNEs refer to firms that used licensing/franchising, joint ventures/strategic alliances and subsidiaries to expand in foreign markets (Dimitratos et al., 2003). Exporting firms did not have any of those advanced operations abroad.

3.2. Sources of evidence and analysis of findings

Based on the recommendations of Yin (1989), we obtained evidence from a variety of data sources including: (a) forty-four in-depth personal interviews; (b) examination of enterprise documents, archival data and trade publications; and, (c) observation in the settings of investigated firms. In all firms at least two respondents were interviewed, while three managers were interviewed in medium-sized firms. The interviews were conducted with owners and management who played a critical role in the initiation and coordination of international activities of investigated firms such as managing directors; and, managers involved in international operations, exporting, marketing or sales. The identification of respondents was based on a snowballing method and

followed recommendations by Huber and Power (1985) for improving the accuracy of retrospective reports. Each interview was individually conducted and lasted between one and one-and-a-half hours. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

During this phase of data collection interviewees were invited to elaborate freely (cf. Oppenheim, 2000) on themes relevant to international activities and internationalization dimensions; and, perception and exploitation of opportunities in the international marketplace. We did not predispose interviewees to terms like “opportunities”, “international entrepreneurial culture” or “entrepreneurial characteristics” of SMEs. In addition, we searched for ways that firms identified and exploited opportunities. When we realized that there were differences between firms regarding their approach to opportunities, we explored the IEC characteristics of risk attitude, market orientation and networking propensity, which could be linked to those differences, and the possible mechanisms that would illuminate them.

The data from interviews were supplemented with other sources of information including enterprise archival data and documents as well as trade publications; and, observation. The study of enterprise data and trade publications enabled us to better understand the *modus operandi* of investigated firms in foreign markets; the ways that those SMEs grasped and tapped opportunities across different internationalization dimensions; and, the discovery of attitudinal characteristics associated with opportunities (cf. Welch, 2000). Additionally, detailed observation was undertaken involving attendance at meetings related to international activities; and, internal presentations in order to illuminate aspects of opportunity-based IEC contexts of the case study firms. In order to increase the accuracy of the findings, the impressions and

insights gleaned from the field were converted into detailed field notes on the same day of the data collection, as the 24-hour rule of Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) recommends.

The analysis of results was based on inductive logic and drew on recommendations by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Miles and Huberman (1994), and Strauss and Corbin (1998). Data were content-analyzed based on the constant comparative analysis approach and systematically put into categories by means of the ATLAS.ti software index. According to Locke (2001), constant comparison entails the discovery of important categories; identification of properties of these categories and relations between the categories; extension of discovered categories to higher levels of conceptualization or abstraction, and, arrangement of these categories in relation to each other. Replication logic facilitated the comparison of case study evidence and identification of convergent or divergent patterns of data across cases. Toward this end, data were arrayed following techniques for cross-case pattern sequencing and tabular displays (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

4. Findings and discussion

4.1. The case study firms

Information concerning the nationality, industrial sector, size, age, international experience and number of exploited opportunities for the eighteen examined firms appears in Table 1. All firms operated in knowledge intensive sectors including computer software and hardware, electronics, pharmaceuticals and medical instruments. In order to ensure that investigated SMEs actually satisfied the requirement of knowledge intensive firms, we checked their profiles against external

sources involving trade publications. Examined firms were of different sizes, employing from ten to 248 persons. Some firms were as young as ten years old, while others were significantly older having been established up to 41 years ago. Their international experience also was diverse, ranging from three to 39 years.

Insert Table 1 about here

The performance of investigated firms measured in terms of annual international sales growth, profitability from international activities, and overall profitability was at high levels. In all eighteen cases, respondents revealed that these performance measures were very high and above industry averages, which was a finding that supported available secondary data from the sampling frames in the three countries. Hence, the fact that all examined firms were knowledge intensive and had increased performance levels ensured that they shared a certain set of features. This rendered examination of investigated IEC characteristics feasible, despite the fact that these SMEs were based in three different countries.

As the evidence in Table 1 shows, all types of firms (INVs, GSFs, mMNEs, and their counterparts) were examined in each country. The managers of investigated firms believed that the Triad region countries were the lead markets of their industries in the sense that active market presence in these countries implied international excellence for the firms concerned. This stemmed from the fact that SMEs in these markets dealt with the most important customers, suppliers and competitors worldwide. This is a quite expected finding given that examined small firms operated in knowledge intensive sectors. All examined mMNEs used joint ventures to expand abroad and for some firms their shares in those alliances were sizeable. All US and UK software

INVs were additionally involved in licensing agreements with organizations abroad. Opportunities were prospects that the firm pursued such as the servicing of a new international electronics client or the obtainment of a new patent to produce a pharmaceutical drug. The (absolute) numbers of exploited opportunities firms pursued were high (8-10) when the SME was an INV, GSF and mMNE; low (2-4) when it was an incremental internationalizer, intercontinental and exporter; and, at intermediate levels (4-8) when the firm was an INV and/or a GSF and/or an mMNE. As the discussion in subsequent sections shows, the findings were similar among the three countries. Also, these findings seemed to apply to all firms regardless of their varying age levels. The same conclusion holds for size with the sole exception of interfunctional coordination (part of market orientation) as the following discussion presents.

4.2. Differences of IEC characteristics between firms

The findings of this study suggest that IEC characteristics within each internationalization dimension varied and were linked to changing levels of “entrepreneurialness”. We elaborate on those IEC attitudinal characteristics that regularly distinguished the investigated firms in each of the three internationalization dimensions. Tables 2, 3 and 4 present case-ordered descriptive matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994) featuring that opportunity-based IEC attribute that was found to be of especial interest to each of the three internationalization dimensions. These IEC characteristics turned out to be the *likelihood* of the potential gain (risk attitude) for INVs; *customer orientation* and, to some extent, *interfunctional coordination* (market orientation) for GSFs; and, *alliances with competitors* (networking propensity) for mMNEs.

Time to Internationalization. As far as this dimension is concerned, the evidence of Table 2 suggests that management teams in INVs were characterized by different levels of risk attitude compared to incremental internationalizers. We found that such a difference in risk attitude pertained to the *likelihood* of gain that INVs perceived to enjoy from exploiting a particular opportunity abroad rather than to the *magnitude* of the expected gain. The likelihood of gain has to do with the probability to harvest positive returns from entering the international marketplace, whereas the magnitude of gain with the size or extent of expected positive returns (cf. Mullins and Forlani, 2005). Using the analogy that Mullins and Forlani draw upon, *likelihood* would refer to the probability of sinking or missing the boat and *magnitude* to the size of the boat. The managing director of the US software INV Alpha stated that:

“We entered early the UK and Germany since we had very good knowledge of these markets from sophisticated market research and contacts.... significant preparation lowers risk expectations regarding the failure of the endeavour [likelihood]. Once this happens, we are willing to pursuit rewarding prospects, no matter which target niches they lie in and the size of the order [magnitude].”

Insert Table 2 about here

This evidence of the present research suggests that INVs perceived likelihood of low risk because of chiefly prior knowledge of the entrepreneurial team. Subsequently likelihood could influence the magnitude of risk-taking of opportunity seeking. Likelihood of risk was also likely to be favourably affected by prior educational background and professional experience of the founder of the INV. Such was the case with the founder of the US hardware firm Epsilon, who possessed an engineering degree and had worked long with *Apple* in the past, hence having considerable expertise on profitable market opportunities outside the US. Therefore, given that

there was a stock of personal and organizational knowledge that pre-existed and prompted internationalization at a specific point of time, INVs might not necessarily be that *new*. This contention is in agreement with the view that INVs are not that “new” if one espouses an organizational emergence process standpoint (Hewerdine and Welch, 2013). The evidence of the current research extends this line of thinking by advancing forward the argument that the likelihood of low risk abroad in opportunity-seeking INVs may be the critical driver inducing the fast internationalization process.

Nevertheless, a perceived likelihood of low risk does not necessarily lead to a high magnitude of opportunity seeking. A very good example supporting this finding draws from the UK software INV Theta that entered the US, Dutch and Finish markets fast due to the contacts that the top management team of the firm had (likelihood); but was very cautious in pursuing in these countries sizeable orders outwith the particular medical application software sector they knew well (magnitude). Therefore, this study identifies that the two components of risk attitude may affect INV behavior differently, yet it is the perceived likelihood of low risk that is the most important criterion that induces rapid internationalization.

On the other hand, incremental internationalizers in the study were much more cautious in their international activities inasmuch as they perceived a much stronger likelihood of (high) risk in pursued opportunities than INVs. A completely different viewpoint typified the posture of incremental internationalized SMEs because, although they could have foreign activities for a large number of years, they seldom thought of new operations abroad as a low-risk project to undertake (cf. Paul, 2000).

The statement of the international operations manager of the Greek medical instruments incremental internationalized firm Ro was characteristic of this claim:

“Unlike domestic expansion, international growth is not a relatively safe enterprise. We have been operating in ten foreign countries during the last eight years... but if we have to enter another foreign market... well, it will be hard to find out the right association between foreign market revenue exposure and corresponding risk for this international market.”

Therefore, managers of the investigated knowledge intensive incremental SMEs perceived significant likelihood of risk in the highly turbulent environment they operated in. This may have to do primarily with the personal risk aversion of the manager (Greek electronics firm Omikron: *“I better go slowly abroad to reach the top fast”*); but also the relative inexperience of the management team (Greek software firm Ksi: *“we are a still young firm testing the waters abroad”*) and the domestic focus of the firm (UK medical instruments firm Mu: *“the domestic market is still very vibrant”*). The fact that firms in high-technology sectors were incremental internationalized firms because of perceived likelihood of high risk contradicts the argument of Hennart (2014). Specifically, Hennart (2014:117) posits that firms with products of moderately low communication, transportation, and adaptation costs tend to unavoidably internationalize fast due to the nature of their business model (“what they sell, how they sell it, and to whom”). The evidence of the present research refutes this argument as it shows that SMEs with those characteristics may be incremental internationalizers due to the likelihood of high risk they perceive.

In two cases incremental internationalizers exhibited strong levels of magnitude of risk after having entered the foreign markets: the US hardware firm Zeta invested a substantial amount of capital with its joint venture partner to manufacture parts of its products in China; and, the Greek medical equipment producer Sigma spent

significant financial and human resources to acquire a patent with its US collaborator. Thus, a likelihood of high risk does not necessarily entail a low magnitude of risk toward opportunities for examined incremental internationalized SMEs.

Taking all these findings into account, we advance the following propositions.

Proposition 1a: INVs differ from incremental SMEs in that they perceive significantly lower likelihood of risk toward opportunities abroad.

Proposition 1b: Likelihood of risk may not affect magnitude of risk for INVs and incremental SMEs.

International Market Presence. The findings of Table 3 show that GSFs employed a much more customer-centered approach than intercontinental SMEs, unlike interfunctional orientation, and especially, competitor orientation. International customer orientation involves a thorough comprehension of customers by placing the interests of the customers above all others (Cadogan et al., 1999). The customer-centred approach of GSFs was related to activities linked to identification and exploitation of opportunities since these firms actively searched for what demanding worldwide customers required in the lead industry markets. The assertion of the owner of the UK software GSF Eta attested to this finding:

“We serve our most significant international customers in the most competitive markets worldwide. We continuously seek to comprehend their needs, provide them superior service and, above all, measure their satisfaction through advanced technologically market research systems.”

Insert Table 3 about here

Therefore, GSFs had market research systems that facilitated systematic scanning regarding customer needs; assisted thorough comprehension of customer

requirements; and, eventually, enhanced customer-response capability in their lead international markets. These sophisticated market research methods aimed at identifying opportunities in lead industry markets were present among all examined GSFs.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that customers of global SMEs were involved in their value-creation process through working together to provide customer-tailored products in the most significant international markets; and, effectively exploiting opportunities in them (Chandra and Coviello, 2010; Kim et al., 2011). This was, for example, the case with the US electronics manufacturer Gamma that collaborated with major industrial electronics clients in France, Germany and Spain to manufacture state-of-the-art electronic equipment for digital radio and television broadcasting. These “lead clients” set demanding standards to Gamma that assisted it to upgrade the whole system of its manufacturing operations and marketing processes, according to the export manager of this firm. This evidence that GSFs in high-tech sectors identified and captured international opportunities through tying in their product offerings with challenging customer requirements is in line with that reported in the internationalized knowledge intensive SME literature (Ruokonen et al., 2008).

In contrast, intercontinental SMEs appeared to follow a much more passive approach as far as satisfaction of customers is concerned inasmuch as fulfilment of needs of the most exacting customers in lead markets was not their primary goal. As the marketing manager of the Greek pharmaceutical intercontinental firm Pi avowed:

“I should acknowledge that mainly we care about marketing our products as widely as possible. We offer customers a good product but this is primarily the output of what our R&D engineers design and come up with rather than what our customers may have asked for at the first place.”

These intercontinental firms exhibit a rather “production orientation” (firms Zeta, Ksi and Omikron) or “R&D orientation” (firms Beta, Lambda, Mu and Pi), which hindered them from actively listening to foreign customer requirements in lead markets. This was complemented by a rather short-term and non-systematic approach to pursuing foreign opportunities as the firms either responded to unsolicited international orders (Greek electronics firm Omikron: “*customers abroad follow us on Twitter and learn about our latest circuit boards updates and then order our products*”); or, thought that international customers were not always cost-effective to pursue (US software firm Beta: “*it takes much more time and effort to adapt these communications equipment products to foreign country specifications than one thinks*”).

As to interfunctional coordination, bigger GSFs showed a higher tendency than intercontinental firms to align all organizational resources with a view to generating a market responsive firm. Analytically, a strong interfunctional coordination among investigated GSFs had to do with the advanced information systems that were geared towards collection of foreign market information. Big GSFs due to their high level of resources had advanced internal information systems that could transmit and disseminate information across different functions and departments of the firm. As the international operations manager of the US hardware (big) GSF Epsilon emphasized, “*our internal management information systems do a very good job in data mining that subsequently facilitate extrapolation of information and forecasting of overseas customer trends*”.

GSFs that were smaller in size were lagging behind in terms of interfunctional coordination seemingly due to the sizeable cost of effectively developing and implementing such systems. A notable exception to this was the US software GSF Alpha that was too small to disseminate information on foreign customers easily with regular personal meetings and face-to-face communication. Its CEO acknowledged that “*we are small enough [employing 10 persons] to easily socialize market information between us*”. GSFs of intermediate size and intercontinental small firms were distinguished by rather weak levels of interfunctional coordination. Concerning intercontinental SMEs, low levels of interfunctional coordination were linked to weak levels of customer orientation (Table 3), which is a finding confirming the scant evidence as regards the association between these two constructs (Cadogan et al., 2001).

With respect to competitor orientation, the findings of the present study suggest that there were no major differences between global SMEs and their intercontinental counterparts. Competitor orientation for both categories of firms was at rather low levels. Global SMEs competed in niches of the lead countries in their industries avoiding face-to-face confrontation with established big rivals that operated in larger mass markets of these countries. The owner of the Greek medical equipment producer Sigma endorsed this conclusion by avowing that “*we are a very small fish to employ a piranha tactic with well-known contenders, we better choose our unique market slot wisely and tap opportunities in that*”. This finding is in line with the scant evidence reported on global SMEs by Dimitratos et al. (2010). It additionally corroborates the research findings in favor of customer orientation having a more significant role than competitor orientation in small enterprises (Reijonen and Komppula, 2010).

Intercontinental firms similarly did not assign especial importance to competitor orientation with the exception of Lambda and Ksi. These firms perceived domestic competitors to be their chief rivals also in the foreign countries they had presence. Consequently, these two intercontinental SMEs believed that a continuous evaluation of competitive strategies and speedy response to their moves to service foreign clients differently was warranted.

Hence, according to these findings the following propositions are advanced.

Proposition 2a: Global SMEs exhibit significantly stronger customer orientation than intercontinental SMEs.

Proposition 2b: Big and very small global SMEs exhibit stronger levels of interfunctional coordination than medium-sized global SMEs and intercontinental SMEs.

Proposition 2c: Global SMEs exhibit similar (relatively low) levels of competitive orientation to intercontinental SMEs.

International Mode. The evidence presented in Table 4 suggests that mMNEs relied on strong linkages *with competitors* abroad to a much higher degree than exporting SMEs. Investigated mMNEs did not form wholly-owned subsidiaries; and, as the owner of the US electronics mMNE Delta noted, “[*this*] is a way to align interests of local collaborators with those of the partnership”. mMNEs actively developed both alliances with direct competitors, and loose relationships with suppliers, distributors, customers and state agencies. An example of the former collaborative arrangement was joint R&D activities (with prominent mMNE cases of the UK electronics firm Kappa and the Greek medical equipment firm Sigma, which formed R&D ventures

with competitors in the foreign countries). On the contrary, two examples of the latter were the sharing of costs in the foreign country with non-competing organizations (with the example of the UK medical instruments exporter Mu that distributed and shared distribution and marketing costs with Chinese and Brazilian suppliers in these markets); and, the participation in an educational seminar organized by a state agency in the foreign country (as the Greek medical instruments exporter Ro did in order to become familiar with the legal specifications of selling its products in Japan).

Insert Table 4 about here

Alliances with competitors turned out to be an IEC attribute that seemingly differentiated activities of mMNEs from those of exporting SMEs. mMNEs relied on alliances with competing firms in order to benefit from product-related expertise, share resources on strategic aspects of the firm's involvement in the host country or gain market knowledge. These three benefits are reflected on the following mMNE behaviors, respectively: *"In this Canadian joint venture we gain product-specific experience and know-how from a technologically advanced competitor"* (owner of the Greek software firm Ksi); *"we split the R&D investment cost towards developing the new drug with our Malaysian collaborator"* (sales manager of the Greek pharmaceutical firm Pi); and, *"through licensing our technology to an established competitor in Finland we manage to derive considerable royalties and access to an unknown market for us - we learn about customer needs in our marketing systems"* (CEO of the UK software firm Theta). This very last example demonstrated that a major benefit that mMNEs enjoyed through these alliances was that they could internalize "insider knowledge" on foreign market opportunities (cf. Liesch and Knight, 1999).

mMNEs through their involvement in alliances with competitors were further likely to circumvent their potential disadvantage of foreignness and smallness in the international marketplace (cf. Fernhaber and Li, 2013; Huett et al., 2014). Because they were viewed as “semi-local” firms, they were likely to be able to pursue opportunities in foreign countries aggressively. This is illustrated in the example provided by the sales manager of the UK electronics mMNE Iota:

“The overriding objective for us to establish a ‘joint office’ in the USA with our American partner has been to create the perception of a US firm. Our CEO had a strong desire to be perceived as a US firm since he felt that being seen as a small UK start-up projected a negative image in this market.”

The top management team’s willingness, eagerness and perseverance to circumvent the smallness disadvantage mMNEs faced in international activities were the seemingly common attribute in all these mMNE examples. This disadvantage drew from the realization that mMNEs encountered significant barriers in the foreign market that had to be addressed through teaming up effectively with foreign competitors (cf. Nakos et al., 2014). This is manifested with the assertion of the marketing manager of US hardware mMNE Zeta that *“strong alliances with competitors empower our position as a vigorous player in the foreign market... this position would not have been feasible without these partnerships”*. The evidence of the current study is in line with the scant MNE findings suggesting that these SMEs are “network seekers” (Dimitratos et al., 2003) and rely on social capital (Dimitratos et al., 2014; Prashantham, 2011). The present evidence extends these findings since it specifies that mMNEs seek out alliances with competing firms in particular.

Conversely, exporting SMEs due to their unsophisticated mode of involvement assumed a rather “lonely route” in their pursuit of international opportunities. The statement of the managing director of the Greek software exporting firm Nu was characteristic of this claim:

“The fact that we are simply exporters, although cost effective, may potentially be a barrier to our growth abroad. I often feel quite isolated in the international markets because I cannot count on my export agents to advise me on what I could do in these countries.”

The sole type of alliances that exporting firms had some involvement was relationships with *non-competitors* (Table 4). These relationships were deemed to be efficient, easy to pursue and appropriate for the low engagement that exporting firms sought abroad. The comment of the export manager of the pharmaceuticals exporting firm Lambda is indicative of this argument: *“There is no need to put in more time in collaborations with rivals in a foreign country since we do not have aspirations to expand for the time being... ties with distributors and suppliers perfectly fit our current exporting plans and are straightforward to administer”*. It appears that objectives of management of exporting SMEs preclude them from spending resources to take part in alliances with competitors, which could be more time-consuming and risky endeavors in nature.

Relationships with non-competing organizations were also employed by mMNEs at moderate levels because *“they enrich and facilitate our operational activities in terms of acquiring some information and familiarizing ourselves with the host market”* (sales manager of the UK software mMNE Eta). mMNEs apparently viewed these relationships as supportive or auxiliary to their alliances with competitors. As the international operations manager of the US electronics mMNE Delta posited, *“regular exchange of information with industrial distributors on the client specifications in the*

competitive German market facilitated our goals to enter a win-win consortium comprising us and our key competitors”. Nonetheless, as Table 4 shows, the degree of participation in these relationships with non-competing organizations was not considerably different between mMNEs and exporting firms.

Taking all these findings into account, we put forward the following propositions.

Proposition 3a: mMNEs engage in alliances with competitors to a higher extent than exporting SMEs.

Proposition 3b: mMNEs participate in relationships with non-competitors at similar (intermediate) levels to exporting SMEs.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Implications

We investigated dyads of internationalized SMEs in each of three internationalization dimensions, notably INVs and incremental internationalizers (time to internationalization), global and intercontinental SMEs (international market presence), and mMNEs and exporters (international mode). These three dimensions follow from the internationalized SME literature. Similarly, the dyads in each of the dimensions are the contrasting groups that prior empirical findings suggest. The evidence showing that firms within each of these dyads exhibit dissimilar levels of opportunity-based IEC characteristics has significant implications.

The first implication for research is that the findings enrich the OBV as it shows which specific aspects of the IEC are associated with different levels of opportunity identification and how. The IEC is a holistic notion that encompasses the wide range

of attitudinal aspects of entrepreneurialness of the firm abroad since it goes beyond the three customary international entrepreneurial characteristics (Dimitratos et al., 2012; Zahra, 2005). In relation to the time to internationalization dimension, apparently the differentiating criterion between INVs and incremental internationalized SMEs is the likelihood of risk toward international opportunities. This is seemingly the first time such an identification between likelihood and magnitude of risk (the latter failing to act as a distinguishing aspect between the two categories of firms) is made in the international entrepreneurship literature. The mechanisms that are likely to elucidate likelihood of risk are prior knowledge, expertise and educational background of the management team among INVs. Drawing upon the premise of the OBV that the entrepreneur-opportunity nexus is decisive for opportunity identification, we identify the characteristics of the management team, which affect perception of risk and pursuit of opportunities in the two groups of firms.

In the current study, the differentiating features between global and intercontinental SMEs are seemingly customer orientation and, to some degree, interfunctional coordination. This delineation of different market orientation aspects in relation to their impact on opportunity-seeking internationalized firms further adds to the international entrepreneurship literature. Sophisticated market research systems and involvement of “lead clients” in the firm’s value-creation process are the mechanisms enlightening stronger customer orientation among global SMEs. Similarly, advanced internal information systems (in big firms) or personal socialization mechanisms (in small firms) are the mechanisms illuminating stronger levels of interfunctional coordination among global SMEs. Concerning international mode, the differentiating

features between mMNEs and exporting SMEs can be alliances with particularly competitors rather than all wide-ranging networking arrangements as argued in previous literature. The willingness, eagerness and perseverance of the management team to bypass the smallness disadvantage are the mechanisms enlightening higher engagement in alliances with competitors among global SMEs.

In short, the discovery and demarcation of specific IEC characteristics affecting international opportunity pursuit refines the OBV view; and, contributes to the international entrepreneurship field that has surprisingly given little attention to entrepreneurship-related features (Jones et al., 2011). The role of opportunity is central in the international entrepreneurship area (Mainela et al., 2014) and opportunity-seeking internationalized SMEs can mostly be INVs, global small firms and mMNEs.

The second implication for research is that in shifting emphasis to the examination of opportunity-based IEC characteristics the present study also extends the international entrepreneurship literature that until now has focused primarily on INV activities. INVs are not the single opportunity-driven group of internationalized SMEs; and, international entrepreneurship studies ought to focus not solely on the time to internationalization dimension. The narrow-minded emphasis of the international entrepreneurship literature on INVs up till now has made this area less thought-provoking and insightful than it could have been. As Zahra (2005:3) puts it, “[in the international entrepreneurship field] logic would suggest that *how* firms compete once they enter the global market arena is important, and perhaps the most decisive factor [rather than time to internationalization]”. The findings of the present study suggest

that research in this literature can shift attention from the study of INVs to that of all opportunity-driven types of internationalized firms (primarily INVs, GSFs and mMNEs). In essence, the evidence of this research contributes to this literature through suggesting that the examination of merely the INV as the single point of investigation fails to provide a comprehensive account; and, an entrepreneurship portrayal of the study in international entrepreneurship. International market presence and mode are equally valuable dimensions to evaluate the behavior of opportunity-seeking internationalized small firms.

As regards implications for management, this study offers evidence on how internationalized SMEs can exploit opportunities abroad. Effective detection of opportunities is key to attainment of competitive advantage (Lumpkin and Lichtenstein, 2005; Minniti and Bygrave, 2001) and pursuit of successful internationalization routes (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005; Mathews and Zander, 2007). The evidence of this research indicates that solely introducing product offerings abroad as early as possible following the inception of the firm may not be enough for management to tap prospects successfully. Actively acquiring knowledge to lower the perception of risk toward opportunities abroad; developing market research and internal information systems; involving lead clients in the firm's value-creation process; and, persisting in alliances with competitors to bypass the smallness disadvantage faced by internationalized SMEs are specific routes that management can follow in order to effectively exploit opportunities in foreign markets.

5.2. Future research directions

The study faces potential limitations that may guide directions for further research. We explore five of those. First, in this study we compared dyads of internationalized SMEs within each of the three internationalization dimensions. Nonetheless, various combinations of internationalized SMEs exist, which were not examined in this article. For instance, an INV can be a GSF but not an mMNE, whereas a GSF may be an mMNE but not an INV. The nature and intensity of opportunity-driven IEC characteristics is likely to vary across these combinations of firms, and future research can provide illuminating insights as to their prevalence and IEC-characteristic dissimilarities. Second, the relationship between opportunity-driven internationalized SMEs, on the one hand, and international performance, on the other, requires further investigation. In the present research, all investigated firms had enhanced performance to ensure that they shared some common features. Internationalized SMEs use both financial and operational indicators to assess their performance (Gerschewski and Xiao, 2015). Future research may investigate different international performance indicator variations that exist across groups of internationalized SMEs.

Third, memory recall bias of managers could have challenged the findings because management was interviewed on past international behavior, hence possibly not being able to accurately recollect all events. Research in the future can refer to interviews regarding very recent activities of the firm or incorporate nested case-control designs. Fourth, this study draws from evidence collected in knowledge intensive industries in three countries. Further research can enhance the transferability of the findings in other “traditional” sectors and national contexts. Fifth, the current study employs a qualitative case study in order to capture the complexities and idiosyncrasies associated with internationalization routes, dimensions and characteristics of an

opportunity-based IEC. Additional research may build upon the power of contextualization and dense descriptions provided by qualitative research as a means to unravel the emergent nature of internationalized SME activities (cf. Birkinshaw et al., 2011).

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Table 1
Details of Investigated Firms

| Firm | Nationality | Sector | No of Employees | Age of Firm (Years) | Years Abroad | No of Oppor tunities | INV/ Incre mental | GSF/ Inter con'l | mMNE/ Exporting |
|----------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Alpha | US | Software | 10 | 24 | 24 | 9 | INV | GSF | mMNE |
| Beta | US | Software | 70 | 11 | 8 | 7 | INV | Intercon | mMNE |
| Gamma | US | Electronics | 227 | 18 | 18 | 6 | INV | GSF | Exporting |
| Delta | US | Electronics | 225 | 22 | 19 | 9 | INV | GSF | mMNE |
| Epsilon | US | Hardware | 248 | 22 | 20 | 5 | INV | GSF | Exporting |
| Zeta | US | Hardware | 60 | 20 | 11 | 4 | Increm | Intercon | mMNE |
| Eta | UK | Software | 104 | 13 | 13 | 10 | INV | GSF | mMNE |
| Theta | UK | Software | 40 | 10 | 8 | 9 | INV | GSF | mMNE |
| Iota | UK | Electronics | 30 | 11 | 9 | 8 | INV | GSF | mMNE |
| Kappa | UK | Electronics | 33 | 18 | 17 | 9 | INV | GSF | mMNE |
| Lambda | UK | Pharmaceut | 150 | 15 | 4 | 4 | Increm | Intercon | Exporting |
| Mu | UK | Medical | 48 | 12 | 3 | 2 | Increm | Intercon | Exporting |
| Nu | Greek | Software | 22 | 15 | 13 | 5 | INV | GSF | Exporting |
| Ksi | Greek | Software | 30 | 12 | 3 | 3 | Increm | Intercon | mMNE |
| Omikron | Greek | Electronics | 180 | 25 | 10 | 2 | Increm | Intercon | Exporting |
| Pi | Greek | Pharmaceut | 237 | 41 | 39 | 8 | INV | Intercon | mMNE |
| Ro | Greek | Medical | 56 | 28 | 8 | 4 | Increm | GSF | Exporting |
| Sigma | Greek | Medical | 72 | 14 | 4 | 6 | Increm | GSF | mMNE |

Table 2
Time to Internationalization & Risk Attitude

| Firm | INV or Incremental | Likelihood of Risk | Magnitude of Risk |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Alpha | INV | ● | ● |
| Beta | INV | ● | ◎ |
| Gamma | INV | ● | ◎ |
| Delta | INV | ● | ■ |
| Epsilon | INV | ● | ■ |
| Eta | INV | ● | ◎ |
| Theta | INV | ■ | ○ |
| Iota | INV | ● | ■ |
| Kappa | INV | ● | ● |
| Nu | INV | ● | ◎ |
| Pi | INV | ● | ○ |
| Zeta | Incremental | ◎ | ■ |
| Lambda | Incremental | ○ | ◎ |
| Mu | Incremental | ◎ | ◎ |
| Ksi | Incremental | ◎ | ◎ |
| Omikron | Incremental | ○ | ○ |
| Ro | Incremental | ○ | ◎ |
| Sigma | Incremental | ◎ | ● |

● strongly present ■ partly present ◎ weakly present ○ absent

Table 3
International Market Presence & Customer Orientation

| Firm | GSF or Intercon'l | Customer Orientation | Interfunctional Coordination | Competitor Orientation |
|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Alpha | GSF | ● | ● | ⊙ |
| Gamma | GSF | ● | ● | ⊙ |
| Delta | GSF | ■ | ■ | ○ |
| Epsilon | GSF | ● | ● | ⊙ |
| Eta | GSF | ● | ⊙ | ○ |
| Theta | GSF | ● | ⊙ | ○ |
| Iota | GSF | ● | ⊙ | ⊙ |
| Kappa | GSF | ● | ○ | ⊙ |
| Nu | GSF | ● | ⊙ | ○ |
| Ro | GSF | ● | ⊙ | ○ |
| Sigma | GSF | ● | ⊙ | ⊙ |
| Beta | Intercon'l | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Zeta | Intercon'l | ○ | ○ | ⊙ |
| Lambda | Intercon'l | ⊙ | ⊙ | ● |
| Mu | Intercon'l | ○ | ○ | ⊙ |
| Ksi | Intercon'l | ○ | ○ | ■ |
| Omikron | Intercon'l | ⊙ | ⊙ | ○ |
| Pi | Intercon'l | ○ | ○ | ○ |

● strongly present ■ partly present ⊙ weakly present ○ absent

Table 4
International Mode & Networking Propensity

| Firm | mMNE or Exporting | Alliances with Competitors | Relationships with Non-Competitors |
|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Alpha | mMNE | ● | ◎ |
| Beta | mMNE | ● | ◎ |
| Delta | mMNE | ● | ■ |
| Zeta | mMNE | ■ | ◎ |
| Eta | mMNE | ● | ● |
| Theta | mMNE | ● | ◎ |
| Iota | mMNE | ■ | ● |
| Kappa | mMNE | ● | ◎ |
| Ksi | mMNE | ● | ◎ |
| Pi | mMNE | ● | ◎ |
| Sigma | mMNE | ● | ◎ |
| Gamma | Exporting | ○ | ■ |
| Epsilon | Exporting | ○ | ◎ |
| Lambda | Exporting | ○ | ● |
| Mu | Exporting | ■ | ◎ |
| Nu | Exporting | ◎ | ◎ |
| Omikron | Exporting | ○ | ◎ |
| Ro | Exporting | ○ | ◎ |

● strongly present ■ partly present ◎ weakly present ○ absent