

# The Role of Digital Social Media Marketing in Internationalization of Swedish Apparel SMEs

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Muhammad Wasiq

## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of digital social media marketing in the internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs. In an era marked by digital transformation and globalization, the role of digital social media marketing in the internationalization strategies of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has gained prominence. This study investigates the specific context of Swedish apparel SMEs and their utilization of digital social media marketing as a catalyst for international expansion. The purpose of this research is to explore the extent to which digital social media marketing influences the internationalization efforts of Swedish apparel SMEs.

### **Main Research Questions**

1. How does digital social media marketing contribute to the internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs?
2. What challenges and opportunities arise for Swedish apparel SMEs when utilizing digital social media marketing for international expansion?

### **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews with key decision-makers within a diverse sample of Swedish apparel SMEs. A total of 4 people were interviewed who are in managerial positions of apparel SMEs. By engaging in in-depth conversations, this research seeks to uncover the nuances of digital social media marketing practices and their influence on internationalization. The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, themes, and insights.

### **Findings**

The findings of this study reveal that digital social media marketing plays a pivotal role in the internationalization endeavors of Swedish apparel SMEs. These SMEs strategically utilize various digital platforms, such as social media networks, influencer collaborations, and online advertising, to enhance their visibility and engagement in international markets. The ability to target specific demographics, communicate brand values, and foster customer relationships through digital channels emerged as significant advantages.

### **Theoretical & Practical Contribution**

Theoretical implications arise from this study's contribution to the understanding of how digital social media marketing intersects with the internationalization theories within the context of Swedish apparel SMEs. The

study highlights the dynamic interplay between digital strategies and traditional internationalization frameworks, offering a nuanced perspective on the evolving landscape of SME internationalization.

Practically, this research provides valuable insights for Swedish apparel SMEs seeking to expand internationally. By recognizing the potential of digital social media marketing, these SMEs can tailor their strategies to leverage digital platforms for enhanced market entry, customer engagement, and brand recognition. Policymakers and industry stakeholders can also benefit from these findings to support SMEs in adopting effective digital marketing strategies.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge surrounding the role of digital social media marketing in the internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs. By shedding light on the strategies, opportunities, and challenges associated with digital social media marketing, this research underscores the transformative impact of digitalization on SME internationalization efforts.

**Keywords:** Digital Social Media Marketing, Swedish Apparel SMEs, Internationalization, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Global Expansion,

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# 1. Introduction

*This introductory chapter provides background information on the subject. then the reader will be introduced to the research problem and purpose of the study. The chapter will end by giving delimitations and the structure of this thesis.*

## 1.1. Background

Internationalization of business has been widely studied in how businesses are entering foreign markets ([Coviello et al., 2017](#)). International markets and overcoming corporate borders are key strategies to ensure success in the long run ([Kozak & Buhalis, 2019](#)). [Hilmersson and Johanson \(2020\)](#) argued that internationalization has been criticized for being overly opportunistic and exploiting employees in underdeveloped countries, as well as for diluting their own culture and history. Despite criticism, the world is transitioning to a global economy driven by consumer demands, facilitated by advances in technology, though this shift presents challenges for local economies and traditional industries ([Kotabe & Helsen, 2022](#)). According to [Hervé et al. \(2020\)](#), internationalization has been established for decades, and digital platforms and technology have been developed to improve the economics of cross-border commerce, changing who participates, how it is conducted, and where economic gains come from ([Hervé et al., 2020](#)). The term 'Internationalization' refers to a corporate strategy that makes goods and services as versatile as possible that enables them to quickly enter various national markets. ([Lionbridge, 2021](#)). The recent advancement of digital technology is a crucial facilitator of resource-efficient internationalization and the development of corporate strategy ([Glonti et al., 2021](#)).

Organizations today are global, from large firms to one-person operations, but the study focused on small and medium-sized businesses ([Stentoft et al., 2021](#)). Companies must understand many components of dynamic interaction to be successful ([Ghosh et al., 2022](#)). Management research and entrepreneurship are two sectors that have begun to handle digitalization, but few studies have looked into emerging digital technologies to theoretically analyze and empirically verify their characteristics in global company management ([Furr et al., 2022](#); [Hannibal & Knight, 2018](#)). Several SMEs want to expand their businesses by expanding their product lines to appeal to consumers throughout the world ([Lin & Ho, 2019](#)). A key ingredient for expansion is digitalization, which is the use of digital technology to create new business models and value in industrial ecosystems but is often seen as the answer to corporate growth projects ([Parida et al., 2019](#)), also the expansion is supported by new consumer habits ([DHL, 2017](#)), supporting studies on the impact of digitalization on SMEs ([Dethine et al., 2020](#)).

Galdino et al. (2019) identified that SMEs frequently encounter several obstacles to internationalization, including a product-centric emphasis, resource constraints, a lack of market expertise, and the conventional attitude of business owners and management. Tolstoy et al. (2021) investigate that on the other hand, it might not be a viable strategic decision for SMEs to start competing neck-to-neck with large platform-based businesses (i.e., AliExpress, Amazon, and eBay). Instead, businesses must engage with consumers in carefully chosen market sectors. Working on an international market is very different from conducting business traditionally, and will typically necessitate changing the company's business plan. The business plan of an SME is tailored to the local environment and makes use of the special conditions in its domestic markets (Child et al., 2017; Kolagar et al., 2021). SMEs need digital capabilities to effectively navigate the competition and modify value propositions for clients in international marketplaces, which is essential for resource-constrained firms' performance (Pinho & Prange, 2016). Digital social media marketing is an effective way for SMEs to improve their marketing capabilities, as it provides a cost-effective and efficient way to reach their target audience, build brand awareness, and engage with customers. By leveraging social media, SMEs can increase their visibility and establish themselves as industry leaders (Rajendra & Uttam, 2023; Susanto et al., 2023).

Internationalization has been linked to increased profitability and long-term growth for SMEs, as demonstrated by studies (Bojnec & Tomšič, 2020). Digital Social media marketing is an important tool for SMEs as it is cost-efficient and can be organized with fewer financial resources. It also allows SMEs to reach a wider audience and engage with customers in real-time, which can help build brand loyalty and increase sales. SMEs need to have a clear social media strategy in place (Bocconcelli et al., 2018; Sharma et al., 2022). Digital Social media marketing is essential for SMEs to increase market share and seize additional opportunities while minimizing marketing expenses and it also allows SMEs to engage with customers and receive feedback, leading to increased customer retention and revenue growth (Erlangga, 2021; Malesev & Cherry, 2021).

Many sectors include firms of various sizes competing against each other, which means that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) frequently compete with their bigger industry competitors (Becker & Schmid, 2020). Larger companies have greater resources and professional knowledge, which presents various obstacles for SMEs (Lahiri et al., 2020). Despite high differential requirements, managers and business owners work to identify opportunities in global markets and use access to these markets to boost their company's development and competitiveness (Orero-Blat et al., 2021). Businesses are more likely to take advantage of new possibilities with creative methods to engage potential consumers and be instantly active on a global scale by integrating new digital technologies into the value chain and handling a large quantity of data. Digitization has enabled businesses to access resources, acquire skills, and develop knowledge in other markets (Coviello et al., 2017). According to the European Commission (2022) report, small and medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are no exception to this trend, as they can use social media to level the playing field with larger businesses by reaching

their target audience with minimal resources and in Sweden, SMEs make up a significant portion of the country's economy, contributing to more than 60% of the total employment in the country

Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States are counted as the world's most-innovative economies ([WIPO, 2022](#)). According to [Ecommerce \(2023\)](#) stats, the fashion sector in Sweden will be expected to generate \$4.15 billion in revenue in 2023 and by 2027, a projected market volume of US\$5.66 billion is anticipated as a consequence of revenue growing at a projected annual rate of 8.11% (CAGR 2023–2027). [Kim and Suh \(2022\)](#) find that the growth of the Swedish fashion industry is driven by the increasing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly clothing, as well as the rise of e-commerce platforms. In addition, the adoption of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality in the fashion industry is expected to further boost market growth ([Rathore, 2023](#)). New perspectives on internationalization models that were more applicable to SMEs were able to be developed when entrepreneurial enterprises with a quick internationalization goal began to appear and grow more often ([Rissanen et al., 2020](#)). These new perspectives challenged the traditional view that internationalization was a gradual and slow process, highlighting the importance of digitalization and speed in the internationalization of SMEs.

## **1.2. Problem Discussion**

The research problem is the main issue or question that the study seeks to address. In this case, the research problem is to determine whether Swedish clothing SMEs are successful in their efforts to go global by utilizing digital social media marketing strategies. The study specifically attempts to comprehend how Swedish clothing SMEs may utilize digital social media marketing to effectively traverse worldwide development and accomplish sustainable growth in overseas markets.

Internationalization has significant growth potential for SMEs given current globalization. Businesses may improve their competitive edge, generate more money, and ensure their long-term survival by participating in foreign marketplaces. Internationalization does, however, come with several alluring rewards as well as catastrophic hazards, like insolvency, if it fails ([Cassetta et al., 2020](#); [Westerlund, 2020](#)). According to [Yip \(2022\)](#), more than 60% of SMEs fail. The failure rate of Swedish SMEs is high, requiring more support and resources to increase their chances of success and longevity in the market. The government and other organizations should provide assistance and guidance to help them overcome challenges and thrive ([Albaz et al., 2020](#); [Fairlie & Fossen, 2021](#)).

Research on internationalization is largely based on empirical evidence from large corporations and/or developed nations, and the focus on SMEs needs to be increased ([Edeh et al., 2020](#)). Small-and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) frequently enter industrial markets abroad by using business relationships because of innate

resource shortages ([Tolstoy et al., 2023](#)), such as restricted financial, informational, and human resources, they must be flexible and cost-effective to effectively handle these resources properly ([Mohammadian et al., 2020](#)). SMEs often struggle to grow due to lack of funding due to lack of collateral and track record, leading to them turning to bootstrapping or crowdfunding to finance their growth ([Rao et al., 2021](#)). Employer branding is a procedure used to attract and retain the best candidates for employment in internationalization, but there is a lack of research on it in the context of SMEs ([Szegedi et al., 2023](#)).

Digital persuasion is essential for SMEs to consider in their global expansion strategy ([Denga & Rakshit, 2023](#)). SMEs can use digitalization to enhance their business model and increase their value by using e-commerce and a strong digital presence to enter international markets ([Tolstoy et al., 2021](#)). Business models face various challenges as a result of internationalization, but contemporary advances in digital technology are key enablers of resource-efficient internationalization and corporate growth, an innovation that SMEs find appealing ([Kraus et al., 2019](#)). In industrial networks, digitization offers fresh prospects for value creation. However, the phrase "digitalization" is applied broadly as the all-encompassing answer to all corporate growth endeavors ([Joensuu-Salo et al., 2018](#)). Adopting new habits to differentiate oneself from competitors, anticipating future changes, and making investments with uncertain returns are all effective ways to differentiate oneself but a major challenge in themselves ([Soluk & Kammerlander, 2021](#)).

Companies embrace digital transformation to stay competitive and relevant in today's market. By doing so, they are leveraging the benefits of technology to innovate their business models and create new revenue streams ([Competitive & Empirical, 2019](#); [Enjolras et al., 2019](#)). Understanding how digitalization can enhance every aspect of the business model and, as a result, raise the value that is produced, distributed, and captured is crucial ([Reim et al., 2022](#)), by keeping in mind the demand of consumers which includes self-service choices, appealing online sales platforms, practical payment solutions, and speedy and affordable delivery ([Kim et al., 2017](#)). SMEs are struggling to assess the impact of internationalization due to a lack of knowledge and difficulty identifying the challenges that lie ahead. SMEs need to conduct thorough market research and seek expert advice to determine the best entry method when entering a new overseas market. This will help them navigate the challenges and increase their chances of success in the international market ([A. A. Chandra et al., 2020](#)).

Nevertheless, the gap between the competence that is currently available and the skills required for effective internationalization is an issue for Swedish Companies. This raises the possibility of unpredictable, unwise behavior impeding internationalization ([Achtenhagen et al., 2017](#)). Studies focus on how digitalization can support internationalization, but these insights are mostly of use to large companies. There is a lack of specific matching for SMEs to identify how certain business model challenges can best be addressed by digitalization activities ([Pino et al., 2018](#)). Due to their ability to protect the environment and make up for taking risks,

Swedish fashion firms need to grow to succeed. They mostly consist of members of the marketing sales team and business development team who lack the marketing expertise required to promote the company ([Szegeedi et al., 2023](#)). Digital Social media strategies use has been found to have both positive and negative impacts on internationalization, with positive benefits such as brand recognition and consumer involvement, and negative implications such as information overload and difficulty distinguishing oneself from rivals. Studies have found that it can have both good and bad consequences ([Hurmelinna-Laukkanen et al., 2020](#); [Strange et al., 2022](#)).

Besides this the empirical research has investigated the phenomenon of internationalization within the framework of entrepreneurship, encompassing dimensions such as entrepreneurial opportunity novelty, improvisation, and network adaptation ([Hilmersson et al., 2021](#)), particularly Swedish retail-SMEs ([Tolstoy et al., 2021](#)), the role of customer knowledge, networking & cultural knowledge in the market orientation of Sweden SME's ([Billore & Billore, 2020a](#)), role of digitalization and challenges facing by SMEs in internationalization ([Reim et al., 2022](#)) and few studies have studied the impact of digital technologies to the internationalization ([Hervé et al., 2020](#)), but no studies have been done on the direct impact of digital social media strategies on Swedish Apparel SME's in internationalization. As a result, a research gap exists regarding the impact of digital social media marketing strategies that can create an impact on the internationalization of Swedish SMEs in the fashion industry.

A research gap refers to the lack of information or an unexplored area in the existing literature that the research intends to fill. Prior research has mostly concentrated on bigger companies or generic SMEs without highlighting the sector-specific environment of the Swedish garment industry ([Owalla et al., 2022](#)). This study intends to close this gap by revealing insights into the unique difficulties, chances, and best practices associated with utilizing digital social media marketing for international growth, customized to Swedish clothing SMEs. This information vacuum may be filled by the study, which will benefit academics and practitioners alike and help comparable SMEs in the garment sector and elsewhere create successful internationalization plans.

Among most of the aspects mentioned above, taking SMEs to the global level, the one that can be addressed in this research is that SMEs often use commercial ties to penetrate industrial markets abroad due to a lack of resources to use advanced digital technologies ([Tolstoy et al., 2023](#)). These commercial ties can take the form of partnerships, joint ventures, or licensing agreements with foreign companies. By analyzing successful marketing campaigns, the study will provide insights into how clothing companies can effectively promote their brands and products in different markets. This strategy allows SMEs to access new markets and gain valuable knowledge and expertise from their partners ([A. A. Chandra et al., 2020](#)). SMEs are facing new competition due to unwarranted demand in a healthy market. However, they have limited organizational, budgetary, and human resource limitations that limit their ability to expand their market. There are strategies for enhancing

SMEs, such as developing the infrastructure of new markets and overcoming corporate resistance. Data link technologies can be used to assist SMEs (Bocconcelli et al., 2017). Recent studies on the development and broad usage of social media have inspired SMEs to learn how to market their products and services in more direct and universal ways (Crammond et al., 2018).

This study will specifically explore the impact of digital social media marketing strategies in the internationalization of the apparel industry of Swedish SMEs. The study aims to identify the specific social media platforms that are most effective for SMEs in expanding their international reach, as well as the types of content that generate the most engagement and lead to increased sales. Additionally, the research will explore any challenges or barriers that SMEs face when using social media for internationalization purposes.

### **1.3. Research Purpose & Research Question**

The purpose of this research is to determine, “the role of digital social media marketing in internationalization of Swedish Apparel SMEs”. The study fills the research gap by identifying how digital social media marketing helps Swedish apparel SMEs to expand in international markets by overcoming the challenges. The study will examine how traditional business connections are commonly used to enter foreign industrial markets, often due to limitations in adopting advanced digital technologies. By examining the factors contributing to this phenomenon, the research aims to provide valuable insights and recommendations that can help Swedish apparel SMEs develop more effective and innovative strategies for global expansion. Based on that, the research questions are identified:

1. How does digital social media marketing contribute to the internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs?
2. What challenges and opportunities arise for Swedish apparel SMEs when utilizing digital social media marketing for international expansion?

### **1.4. Research Objective**

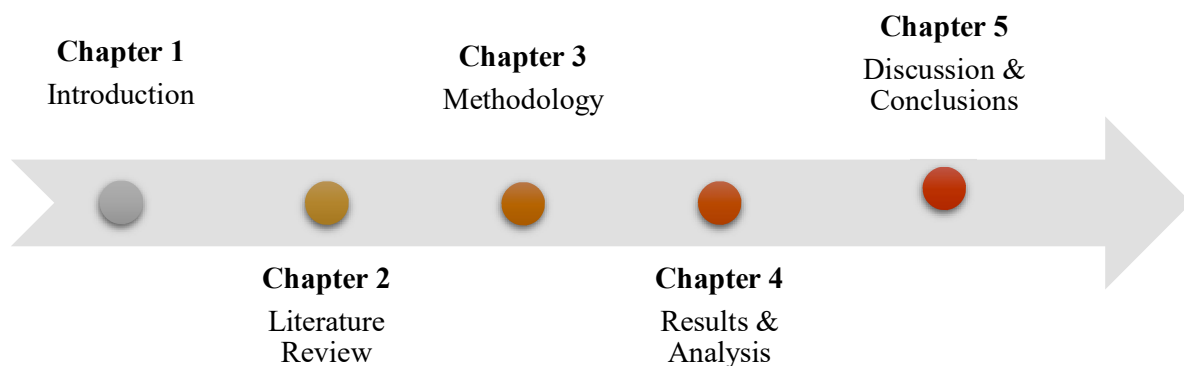
The study will achieve the following research objectives based on the research questions:

1. To assess the contribution of digital social media marketing in facilitating the internationalization process of Swedish apparel SMEs.
2. To analyze the challenges and opportunities presented by the utilization of digital social media marketing for international expansion by Swedish apparel SMEs.

## 1.5. Delimitations

Delimitations are the limits that the researcher establishes in a research study, choosing which factors to include and which to exclude. The study won't provide guidance on which country or market to enter, as this decision should consider unique internal and external factors related to the specific market and offerings. This research will specifically concentrate on Apparel Swedish SMEs among the Swedish SMEs. Furthermore, this study excludes medium-sized and large cooperatives in favor of concentrating on small business owners and solopreneurs. As far as in this digital era there is no such company that hasn't included online marketing in their communication strategy but still, this study excludes entrepreneurs who are not involved in online marketing.

## 1.6. The Structure of the Thesis



*Figure 1 Thesis Structure*

### Explanation:

Five in-depth chapters are included: Chapter 1 presents the context of the study, which includes a description of the topic, a problem definition, a research gap, and the study itself. Chapter 2 refers to a detailed examination of prior data collected concerning the chosen subject, which is a literature review. According to the approach described in Chapter 3: Methodology, the technique used for this study is how we have structured our whole research. Following the document, Chapter 4 conducts a critical examination of the research questions, and Chapter 5 presents the study recommendations and future directions in the Conclusion. Overall, the methodology chapter provides a clear and comprehensive overview of the research approach, while the subsequent chapters offer a thorough analysis of the research questions and insightful recommendations for future studies. The structure of the thesis is well-organized and easy to follow, making it a valuable contribution to the field.



## **1.7. Chapter Summary**

The first chapter, which also introduces the research context and the companies of garment brands, provides a comprehensive summary of the study. The chapter analyses a portion of the research issue, shedding light on the study's primary emphasis, based on the identified research gaps. Before the theoretical foundations were incorporated into the main research model, as was discussed in the second and third chapters, the study topic was given research questions and aims. Definitions of the keywords that were offered were given in this chapter. The chapter came to a close with a succinct overview of the key ideas discussed in each of the next six chapters.

## 2. Literature Review

*The study looks into the role of digital social media marketing in the internationalization of Swedish Apparel SMEs. This section of the study will discuss the main areas, theories, and concepts utilized throughout the study in detail. It discusses internationalization, market orientation, foreign market entry modes, digital social media marketing in internationalization, challenges faced by SMEs, and "internationalization theories are explained with the most relevant literature and will help to develop research questions that will lead to the results of the final chapters.*

### 2.1. Globalization

Globalization plays a crucial role in shaping the internationalization strategies of Swedish apparel SMEs and is characterized by the integration of national economies into the global economy through trade, direct foreign investment by corporations and multinationals, short-term capital flows, international labor, and human migration, and technological migration ([Mark C. Green, 2020](#); [Salvatore, 2019](#)) lays the foundation for SMEs to explore new avenues of growth and expansion. The term "globalization" was first coined by [Acs and Preston \(1997\)](#) to describe this transformative process that spans various dimensions of economic, social, and technological interactions on a global scale. For Swedish apparel SMEs, internationalization represents a strategic imperative to thrive in the competitive global marketplace. It offers an array of benefits, ranging from heightened competition on a global stage to improved product quality and access to cutting-edge technology. Additionally, the internationalization of SMEs has substantial economic implications, fostering job creation, increased foreign exchange inflows, and maintaining a favorable fiscal balance ([Luong, 2021](#)). These positive impacts contribute significantly to the overall growth and competitiveness of the Swedish economy in the global arena. As Swedish apparel SMEs embark on their global expansion journey, understanding the dynamics of globalization and the associated advantages of internationalization becomes paramount. By effectively leveraging digital social media marketing within their internationalization strategies, these SMEs can navigate the complexities of the global marketplace and position themselves for sustainable growth and success in an increasingly interconnected world ([Kusi Appiah, 2022](#)).

By boosting return on investment, offering a global stage for competition, resulting in better product quality, and granting access to more advanced technology, internationalization also plays a significant role in the development of businesses. By creating jobs, increasing the flow of foreign exchange, and maintaining the fiscal deficit while enhancing that flow of foreign exchange, it also helps to improve the economy. Additionally, the expansion of businesses encourages more innovation and research, which can result in the creation of novel

goods and technologies. This may help the economy grow and become more competitive on a global level (Carlos Pinho, 2007).

## **2.2. Internationalization and SME**

SMEs are important to the economy because they help with hiring and economic expansion. Additionally, they are frequently more adaptable and creative than larger corporations. Small-to-medium businesses, also known as SMEs, are generally understood to be businesses that employ somewhere between 10 and 250 people (Partanen, 2021). Internationalization is often an important step for SMEs, as reaching foreign markets relatively early is often needed to expand the Swedish industry. However, SMEs should carefully assess the risks and costs associated with international expansion before leaping. Conducting market research and seeking guidance from experts can help mitigate potential challenges (Schweizer & Vahlne, 2022). The term "internationalization" was first used in the 1920s, when organizations started to frame cross-border relationships within market economies. The importance of SMEs to the economy of any country is now being recognized by researchers. In the 1970s, the first studies on internationalization from the perspective of SMEs were conducted in the Nordic region, where researchers were more interested in the internal workings of small and medium-sized businesses. They developed their hypotheses about the apparel industry to learn about the other factors involved in SMEs' internationalization. These hypotheses were supported by the experiences of Nordic SMEs in the apparel sector, which had to deal with issues like scarce resources, a lack of market knowledge, and fierce competition (Ruzzier, 2006). An extensive body of study has looked at how medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) understand and take advantage of the variety of possibilities present in the global market (Zahoor & Lew, 2022). Managers and company owners use access to global markets to increase competitiveness and expand their companies, and both researchers and company owners prioritize the critical elements in the success of SMEs worldwide (Orero-Blat et al., 2021).

## **2.3. Market Orientation**

Market orientation is a business approach that prioritizes understanding and meeting the needs of customers to achieve long-term success. It involves conducting market research, gathering customer feedback, and adapting strategies to match changing consumer preferences (Sundström et al., 2021). Market orientation has a positive impact on how businesses perform, and considering cultural perspectives in market orientation has a positive impact on how businesses stay stable (Ong et al., 2015; Ramamurti & Singh, 2009). Previous studies have related the market to the company's different segments' performances. Market orientation is a key driver of higher profit generation, but its effectiveness is dependent on organizational capabilities such as innovation, flexibility, and adaptability. This paper discusses the relationship between market orientation and customer

knowledge, networking, and cultural knowledge. It highlights the importance of developing a customer-centric culture and investing in training programs to improve management skills ([Baker & Sinkula, 2009](#); [Boso et al., 2013](#); [Ramamurti & Singh, 2009](#)).

### **2.3.1. Customer knowledge & Market Orientation**

According to [Cavusgil and Knight \(2015\)](#), market orientation is focused on managing segmentation needs and developing customer-specific solutions. To do this, a thorough understanding of regional, and market circumstances, growth potential, and both indirect and direct stakeholders is required. Situation-specific marketing necessitates that businesses modify their plans following the distinct wants and needs of each market they serve, taking into consideration regional cultural norms and values. Failing to do so may result in unsuccessful campaigns and the passing up of growth possibilities. Companies need to be able to adapt and retain their worldwide marketing skills. Knowing their customers better enables businesses to develop market-focused strategies that increase value for customers and provide them with a competitive edge. As a result, there is an uptick in consumer happiness and loyalty, which raises earnings ([Shah et al., 2015](#)). Modern firms imitate innovative approaches to improve customer relationships and generate loyalty, such as CRM software, social media engagement strategies, and personalized marketing campaigns, to enhance customer experience and build long-term relationships ([Carlos Pinho et al., 2014](#); [Li et al., 2017](#)). While consumer dynamics tend to vary between markets, it is important to repeat research evaluating the value of customer knowledge in other scenarios. This highlights the necessity to confirm the authenticity and dependability of the results.

### **2.3.2. Networking and Market Orientation**

Networking is an important tool for a firm to identify market gaps and opportunities, which can be used to develop new products or services that meet customer needs and preferences ([Musteen et al., 2010](#)). Networks aid in the dissemination of information developed through the study of markets and actors. Strategically connecting with peer organizations, industry analysts, local government agencies, and other stakeholders produces marketing intelligence that influences businesses' attitudes about marketing. Employee education on this information and its incorporation into decision-making procedures can result in enhanced customer requirements and more successful marketing campaigns ([Aarikka-Stenroos et al., 2014](#)). To ensure that employees can successfully navigate regional markets and modify their marketing strategies to better meet regional consumer needs, businesses should invest in ongoing learning and development programs ([Wang & Chung, 2013](#)). When companies develop expertise and knowledge, they should progressively grow their commitment to international markets to reduce risk and accommodate cultural and institutional variations, also discussed in the Uppsala Model ([Johanson & Vahlne, 2009](#)). Businesses must become "instant internationals" to survive due to high start-up costs, a small home market, and reduced product lifecycles. Young businesses

born globally are present in complex developing market economies, speeding up the process of internationalization (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). Governments may promote internationalization by lowering barriers to trade and supporting free trade agreements, and networks can aid SMEs in entering international markets by providing market surveys, financial support, and networking opportunities (Felzensztein et al., 2015). Networks and their impact on businesses have been studied, but there is still a gap in research regarding the importance of network organizations in developing economies. More study is needed to understand how networking influences marketing approach and market position, and how laws and rules from the executive branch have shaped the networking environment in emerging nations. Research in the future may examine how these elements interact with networking organizations to affect marketing focus and competitor positioning (Chung et al., 2015).

### **2.3.3. Cultural Knowledge and Market Orientations**

Considering social and cultural surroundings and the behavior of connected stakeholders is the goal of market orientation, which aims to produce value for consumers and unique positioning for the company (Mahmoud et al., 2016). Market culture is essential for a competitive edge and market dominance. It is determined by six values: collaboration, kindness and compassion, commitment, openness, and trust. These values are the motivating factors for organizational change, such as collaboration, kindness and compassion, commitment, openness, and trust (Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Gebhardt et al., 2006). underlined the significance of knowing culture since it significantly affects how people view themselves and the shared rules of behavior. Acknowledging why things take place the way they do may help businesses increase their awareness of other cultures and reduce cultural barriers and issues. As a result, the company will have a stronger and more successful market orientation (Carlos Pinho et al., 2014). Businesses should invest in creating a culture that supports their strategic objectives and encourages workers to think like businesspeople, which can lead to increased performance and market competitiveness (Billore & Billore, 2020b). The connection between culture and the strategic alignment of the firm's management has been studied in MNEs, according to a recent survey on foreign SMEs in Asian markets, but there is little available information for SMEs, and the study guarantee in discovering the obstacles they face has been relatively neglected (Pauluzzo & Shen, 2018). The most important details are that there is little research on the connection between marketing orientation and the achievement of small- and medium-sized businesses in developing economies and that further research is needed to investigate the background of entrepreneurial orientation of SMEs in emerging markets (Amin et al., 2016).

## 2.4. Foreign Market Entry Modes

The theory's name for the general tactics of internationalizing a corporation or organization is "global market entrance possibilities" or "entry modes.". The amount of a firm's expertise abroad and the stage in the growth of its worldwide participation should be taken into consideration when choosing the specific form of entrance, the authors suggest ([Hutt & Speh, 2021](#)). Managers must consider the firm's history of doing business abroad and current global engagement when deciding on a strategy (ibid). When growing internationally, experience is essential and is valued far more than what is known as "objective knowledge" (knowledge that can be learned) in the field of international marketing ([Whitelock, 2002](#)). A corporation has to exhibit some entrepreneurial behavior to expand internationally, and being able to see possibilities successfully and efficiently in other markets is a crucial step in internationalizing a business and its brand ([Göppel & Mrabure, 2013](#)). Yet, despite its significance, studies demonstrate that companies choose their internationalization strategies haphazardly and without adopting particular criteria, in part because the interdependence between market selection and entrance mode is rarely discussed in current literature ([Francioni et al., 2014](#); [Musso & Francioni, 2014](#)). Several studies have shown the value of SMEs, particularly in emerging and developing nations. Competitive SMEs today should think about preserving development as well as their responses to environmental demands. SMEs are significant contributors to economic growth and job creation in many countries. Therefore, they must adopt sustainable practices that align with environmental regulations and consumer expectations. Fast-fashion retailers are obliged to produce their clothing from cheap materials, which are not environmentally friendly. This resulted in the release of harmful chemicals and dyes into the aquatic environment, as well as carbon dioxide emissions. Another significant issue is the quantity of waste produced by the textile industry, which adds to the problem of landfills and incineration. To lessen their impact on the environment, including waste from dye and caustic solutions, retailers must prioritize ethical and sustainable production practices. All of these issues, which have seriously harmed the environment over time, are the result of fast fashion ([Claudio, 2007](#)).

### 2.4.1. Exporting

Exporting is the most popular way for businesses to do business worldwide ([Wild et al., 2003](#)). In this comparatively straightforward entry mode, the company produces its products domestically and exports them through merchants, distributors, or importing companies ([Göppel & Mrabure, 2013](#)). Companies can gain expertise in other markets and grow their operations over time by taking a targeted strategy to internationalization, allowing them to customize their goods and services to meet the unique requirements of the target market ([Hutt & Speh, 2021](#)). Companies frequently begin by exporting to a nation that is geographically, technologically, and culturally close to the home market, claiming that these multiple types of proximity (geographical, technical, and cultural) are typically what guides a company's first step in international

expansion rather than systematic methods or strategies (Igwe et al., 2021). Through the expertise, they acquire from the network of partners and distributors, firms that export may increase their engagement in international markets. As a result, they are better able to create their own business abroad and eventually transition from export to more complex foreign direct investments (Göppel & Mrabure, 2013). While being relatively straightforward, internationalizing businesses nonetheless face challenges from a lack of funding, foreign government regulations, poor understanding of foreign sales techniques, inadequate distribution, and a lack of relationships in other markets (Singh, 2010). Sweden is a globally competitive manufacturer and exporter of clothing products, renowned for its high quality, diversity, and timeless elegance. It exports a wide range of styles, including traditional clothing, catwalk fashion, and casual wear. The majority of Sweden's well-known fashion brands and apparel manufacturers are based in Borås and Stockholm. Sweden is a sought-after location for the production of apparel due to its high level of technological advancement, skilled workforce, and cutting-edge infrastructure (Manufy, 2023)

#### **2.4.2. Franchising**

Franchising is a unique type of license that allows a franchisee to carry out specified commercial operations while using the name of a particular company, such as McDonald's. The franchisee agrees to abide by strict guidelines for how to conduct commercial activities. Franchising is a cost-effective way to establish a global presence at a low cost and risk. It eliminates many of the expenses and dangers associated with starting up on its own in a host nation. However, quality control is an issue. For example, Best Western Hotels' guests expect the same level of service wherever they stay. To ensure consistency in quality, franchisors often provide training and support to their franchisees. Additionally, they may implement strict guidelines and regulations to maintain brand standards across all franchise locations (Miravalls, 2014).

#### **2.4.3. Licensing/ Contracting**

Businesses must consider financial key numbers, sales and distribution channels, culture, the economy, competition, consumer behavior, the price index, logistics, and distribution when deciding if the market is suitable for design and lifestyle. Legal expertise, customs knowledge, and the capacity to create contracts and commercial terms are necessary to correctly draft a contract with an agent or distributor. Geographically remote markets are difficult due to trade restrictions, cultural subtleties, and the difficulty of constantly being present. To overcome these challenges, a distribution agreement is needed. To ensure success, it is important to work with the right person and confirm that the agent is appropriate for the brand and has the required relationships (Svengren Holm & Tijburg, 2013).

#### **2.4.4. Strategic Alliances**

In earlier times, businesses could be run independently, but today's businesses are based on an intricate web of information, interaction, and change. Relationships have become one of the most important components of business, and companies must use the advantages of other organizations to succeed. In today's client-driven, networked economy, a strategic alliance between two or more organizations is essential for success (Fashion, 2012) "SMEs are increasingly networking into international alliances to leverage their limited resources and capabilities in R&D, human resources, financial resources, and marketing" (Svetličič et al., 2007). Depending on the role the SME plays in the partnership, this entry mode could also result in competitors for the SME in the future, and conflicts could weaken the alliance's effectiveness, especially if contractual provisions don't prevent this. As a result, before choosing an entry mode, SMEs should carefully weigh the advantages and potential risks associated with each. To avoid disputes and increase the likelihood of success, it is essential to establish clear communication lines and expectations with partners (Wild et al., 2003). Establish objectives, expectations, and a written contract to ensure accountability and avoid misunderstandings (Rothkegel et al., 2006). A major company acted uncommittedly in its alliance with an SME, limiting its access to resources and obstructing its chances for development and growth. This lack of dedication may have detrimental effects on the SME, limiting its access to resources and obstructing its chances for development and growth (Das & Teng, 2001). Businesses must carefully choose alliance partners and set clear expectations to reduce the risk of failure (Rothkegel et al., 2006).

#### **2.4.5. Joint Venture**

One important school of thought in this literature suggests that inter-organizational cooperation might help address these problems (Killing, 2017). Such collaborative connections assist SMEs in overcoming resource constraints, establishing legitimacy and reputation, and developing specialized talents for less risky international entrance. To put it another way, collaborative internationalization may be a significant source of competitive advantage for SMEs expanding internationally (Suntikul et al., 2010). "An entry strategy for one target country in which the partners share ownership of a recently established business entity." (Mark C. Green, 2020). Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are dependent on their relationships with other companies and the outside world. It is common knowledge that SMEs begin international operations as soon as they are founded, enter foreign markets, enter several countries at once, and form joint ventures without prior experience. To spread their products on the global market, businesses need networks. They look for partners who complement their own skill sets and take into account various kinds of interpersonal dynamics. A company can expedite its internationalization process by joining a network (Osarenkhoe, 2010). Additionally, Partnering with a SME business can lead to win-win situations and support local economic expansion (Mark C. Green, 2020).



### **2.4.5. Foreign Direct Investment**

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has historically been dominated by large corporations with substantial financial resources. However, with the relaxation of trade and investment restrictions, smaller businesses can now also benefit from participating in international trade and investment (Contractor et al., 2020). For Swedish businesses, one of the primary motivations to expand abroad or engage in FDI is cost-effectiveness. Increased market openness and trade deregulation have intensified competition for Swedish manufacturing companies, while the country's high factor costs and regulations have made it comparatively expensive to conduct business (Sobczyk, 2021).

Although the opportunities for FDI are evident, newcomers to international cooperation encounter numerous obstacles. Challenges such as a lack of specific management and organizational skills, limited funding, linguistic barriers, and cultural differences can hamper the success of FDI initiatives. To effectively participate in global cooperation, businesses must address these issues and develop comprehensive strategies (Kotabe & Helsen, 2022).

### **2.4.6. Globalization Strategy**

These global business strategies focus on how an organization adapts its product lineup and marketing strategy to suit a variety of local market preferences, clientele, and cultural norms. These two strategies typically suggest that a company may either utilize the multinational strategy to adjust its products and advertising to each of its market economies independently or if the product lets it, not alter and sell the same items using the same marketing techniques everywhere. The first stage for small and medium enterprises that are expanding internationally is to determine the best way to enter a new foreign market. Once there, the company needs tactics to assist them to compete. After all, a key component of successful internationalization is demonstrating an organization's appeal to partners, prospective employees, and customers, and building a strong brand is perhaps the most crucial aspect of this (Svetličič et al., 2007).

## **2.5. Digital Social Media Marketing in International Business**

Digital social media marketing has emerged as a powerful tool in the domain of international business, reshaping marketing and communication strategies for companies worldwide. In this section, we explore the academic literature on the growing significance of digital social media marketing in facilitating international expansion for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), with a particular focus on the Swedish apparel industry. Through a systematic review of scholarly works, this literature review aims to identify the impact, challenges, and opportunities associated with digital social media marketing adoption in SMEs' internationalization efforts.

Digital social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, have become key channels for international marketing and communication. Studies ([Chaffey & Smith, 2022](#)) explored that these platforms enable SMEs to reach a global audience, fostering brand awareness, engagement, and customer interaction in foreign markets. Furthermore, according to ([Devereux et al., 2020](#)), digital social media marketing allows SMEs to build targeted and personalized marketing campaigns, tailoring content to suit specific cultural contexts and preferences in international markets. This customization enhances the brand's relevance and resonance with global consumers, leading to higher conversion rates and customer loyalty. Research ([Chatterjee & Kar, 2020](#)) highlights several advantages of digital social media marketing for SMEs venturing into international markets and these advantages include cost-effectiveness, as digital marketing requires lower financial investments compared to traditional advertising methods. Moreover, digital social media marketing offers real-time performance tracking and analytics, enabling SMEs to gauge the effectiveness of their marketing strategies in real-time and make data-driven decisions for better international market penetration.

Despite the numerous benefits, SMEs encounter challenges when adopting digital social media marketing for international expansion. Language barriers, cultural nuances, and varying regulations across countries can impede the effectiveness of social media campaigns ([Close & Wang, 2020](#)). Additionally, Lee et al. (Year) highlight resource constraints and limited digital marketing expertise within SMEs as obstacles to fully leveraging digital social media platforms ([Devereux et al., 2020](#)).

Empirical studies indicate that successful integration of digital social media marketing positively correlates with SMEs' internationalization performance. Higher levels of online engagement, brand awareness, and customer loyalty translate to increased sales, market share, and overall business growth in international markets ([Pereira et al., 2023](#)).

The literature on digital social media marketing in international business underscores its crucial role in SME internationalization, particularly in the context of the Swedish apparel industry. While digital social media marketing offers significant advantages, SMEs face challenges in its implementation. By understanding and addressing these challenges, SMEs can capitalize on the benefits of digital social media marketing, effectively expanding their global reach and competitiveness.

## **2.6. Challenges Faced by Swedish SMEs during Internationalization**

If effective internationalization is to be realized, various obstacles must still be addressed in addition to choosing the right entrance route. According to the research of over 5000 UK SMEs, both high-growth organizations and those with the potential to become such enterprises share the perception that there is a shortage of managerial talent. ([Aarikka-Stenroos et al., 2014](#)). According to the study's findings, ensuring that businesses may

experience rapid development and sustain it over time should be prioritized when formulating public sector policies. Public policy can solve a wide range of issues, but it is unlikely that it could regulate the supply of management abilities.

### **2.6.1. Market Selection**

Recent advancements in an already-evolving global business environment, such as trade liberalization, increased technologies, trade deals, and shifts in the political climate, have helped SMEs expand internationally. (Brouthers & Nakos, 2005; De Wild, 2016). Brouthers and Nakos (2005) The authors concluded that a "systematic international market selection" (SIMS) procedure produced superior export outcomes for SMEs. The knowledge and information required to organize these processes are easily accessible through government and trade promotion organizations. The study did not account for the kind of business, but the SME's worldwide performance rises greatly if the SIMS process adheres to a specified, organized model. SMEs often exhibit a non-systematic, passive approach to international market selection and entry mode selection due to a lack of resources and knowledge. They also tend to do EMS and IMS concurrently without reasoning (Musso & Francioni, 2014). SMEs should make their products ready for international markets before export to improve performance, firms that focus on international markets and focus on a smaller number of markets at once are more successful in some countries (Musso & Francioni, 2014). Organizations grow, but global experience has negatively impacted export performance, possibly due to FDI in many of their main international markets. This suggests that export is less important (Brouthers & Nakos, 2005). IMS is a methodical strategy that uses statistical techniques to analyze possible markets (Fashion, 2012). Unsystematic strategies are based on generalizations, such as picking a market with minimal psychological distance (Andersen & Buvik, 2002). The relationship strategy is the third option recommended by the authors, which focuses on the foreign client rather than which nation to choose. It works best when there is behavioral ambiguity and specialized expenditures are needed, and is correlated with the firm's resource commitment when entering a new market through contractual entry modes (ibid.).

### **2.6.2. Customer Acquisition**

Branding is a strategy to attract consumers, while client acquisition is essential for SMEs to build their brands (Merrilees, 2007). Relational capital is a portion of a company's intellectual capital (IC) made up of its ties with customers, which is used to target foreign clients rather than foreign markets. This strategy is a relatively recent method of market selection (Mertins et al., 2006). Internationalizing businesses must control their IC and provide consistent reporting on their intangible assets to ensure success (De Wild, 2016; Mertins et al., 2006). An ICS can be used to systematize a company's IC management, with examples provided throughout the report. (ibid.). The Federal Ministry of Economics and Labor (FMEL) defines Intellectual Capital (IC) as "existing

knowledge of an organization that is important to success". In case unifies the many IC management models used across Europe. In case will focus on expanding SMEs' expertise in two areas: (1) acquiring fresh insight into alleged valuation mechanisms in both intangible and intellectual resources, and (Fashion, 2012), supplying a management tool that aids in selecting actions to build a knowledge base by their company and knowledge strategy (ibid). Recruiting consumers is essential for successful CRM activities, as it helps to establish and maintain relationships with customers (Payne & Frow, 2006). Businesses must incorporate programs into their strategies to determine the value that customers receive from the company and the value the company receives from customers, while also utilizing CRM to create value and foster favorable relationships (Fawcett et al., 2014; Hutt & Speh, 2021).

## 2.7. Frame of Reference

A "Frame of Reference" was created to help the reader better understand and summarize the literature evaluation. This approach aids in identifying the hypotheses (or "Items") that are present in the various "Subjects" of the research and the "References" that support those theories, as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1 Frame of Reference**

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>Theory</b>	<b>Reference</b>
<b>Market Selection</b>	Systematic & Unsystematic IMS	Musso & Francioni, 2014
	Relationship Approach	Andersen & Buvik, 2002
	Relational Capital	Mertins et al., 2006
<b>Customer Acquisition</b>	CRM	Buttle & Maklan, 2015
	Dual Value Creation	Payne & Frow, 2006
	CBBE Model	Hutt & Speh, 2010
<b>Internationalization</b>	Uppsala Model, Transaction Cost Theory	Johnson et al., 2021; Chen & Li, 2021
<b>Strategies</b>	Resource-Based View, Market Orientation	Brown et al., 2020; Garcia et al., 2021
	Product Life Cycle Theory	Smith et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021
	Competitive Advantage Theory	Competitive Advantage Theory
<b>Market Entry Modes</b>	Contracting	Keegan & Green 2017
	Strategic Alliances	Wild & Wild 2016
	Joint Ventures	Keegan & Green 2017
	FDI	Keegan & Green 2017

One of the more complex aspects of this research pertains to market selection, which encompasses two fundamental hypotheses, as illustrated here. Several authors have made significant contributions to the body of knowledge on these theories, as international market selection (IMS) can be approached either systematically or unsystematically. All these authors are duly cited in the references section on the right. In addition to these

theories, the relational approach also plays a crucial role in market selection. However, being a relatively new concept, it has garnered comparatively fewer references. Furthermore, customer acquisition heavily relies on the foundational ideas and theories of Customer Relationship Management (CRM), which have been extensively explored by over 20 authors. In addition to these well-established theories, it also benefits from two distinct concepts: relational capital and dual value creation, each of which naturally has fewer references ([Wittig, 2022](#)), as far as concerns mentioning references in this thesis, one update has been mentioned.

Under the subject "Internationalization Strategies," two prominent theories are discussed. The Uppsala Model and Transaction Cost Theory provide insights into the process of internationalization and the factors influencing firms' choices of market entry modes ([Bergamaschi et al., 2021](#)). These theories are covered in research papers by Johnson et al. (2021) and Chen & Li (2021), respectively. For the subject "Strategies for Internationalization," theories like Resource-Based View and Market Orientation are considered. These theories shed light on how firms can utilize their resources effectively and align their strategies with customer needs in international markets ([Abbasi, 2023](#)). The studies by Brown et al. (2020) and Garcia et al. (2021) delve into these theories.

Internationalization strategies are crucial for Swedish apparel SMEs to succeed in global markets. By adopting tailored strategies for market entry, product adaptation, and customer acquisition, SMEs can secure a competitive edge and capitalize on opportunities. Digital social media marketing can also be leveraged to strengthen brand identity, build customer loyalty, and foster meaningful relationships. Well-crafted internationalization strategies drive sustainable growth and long-term success in the interconnected business landscape. To ensure that all of the major study topics were covered by the interview questions and to look at how SMEs typically proceed when internationalizing.

## **2.8. Chapter Summary**

This chapter provides an overview of the theories covering market selection, client acquisition, branding, entry modes, and employer branding. It also introduces the clothing brands and the research setting. Based on the research gaps found, the chapter analyses a piece of the research problem and clarifies the study's primary focus. The study subject was assigned research questions and purposes before the theoretical underpinnings were included in the primary research model. The suggested keywords' definitions are provided.

### 3. Methodology

The consumer may find an overview of the research technique used to acquire data and draw results in this section of the study. The selection process for the research goal, the research methodology, and the work's overall strategy will all be covered. We'll talk about data collection and analysis techniques. In addition, the reader will be given clear explanations of the validity and reliability of the study's findings. Regarding the technique to be used to achieve the study's research goal, approach, strategy, sample, data gathering methods, and analytic methodologies, there were several options. The table below provides a summary of these options.

**Table 2: Overview of Methodology Choices**

<b>Methodology Overview</b>	
Research Purpose	Descriptive, exploratory
Research approach	Deductive, qualitative
Research strategy	Holistic multiple-case studies
Data collection methods	Semi-structured interviews
Sampling methods	Non-probability, self-selection, convenience
Analysis methods	Within-case analysis, cross-case analysis

Table 2's methodology is based on theories by ([Baxter & Jack, 2008](#); [Bozhinoski et al., 2019](#); [M. David & C. Sutton, 2016](#); [Harrison, 2013](#); [Host et al., 2012](#); [Saunders et al., 2009](#)). These decisions will be discussed in detail in the remaining sections of chapter three, as well as the explanation of why these specific decisions were best suited for this research.

#### 3.1. Research Purpose

The goal of every study is divided into three different categories: (1) "Descriptive" studies, which aim to properly depict people, events, or circumstances. Sometimes descriptive studies are included in exploratory or explanatory. "Exploratory" studies, seek out novel information and pose inquiries to evaluate numerous occurrences. Exploratory investigations seek to understand what is occurring, which is highly helpful, for example, when the cause of a problem or phenomenon is unclear. (3) 'Explanatory' studies that "establish causal relationships between variables" are the third and final type of research ([Saunders et al., 2009](#)). Some studies benefit most from a combination of methods; for example, descriptive and exploratory research work extremely well together. Since it seeks to shed light on difficulties and advance knowledge of challenges associated with internationalizing apparel Swedish SMEs, this study is exploratory. This study was also descriptive in the sense that it drew on previously published research to derive a general picture of how to successfully internationalize

apparel Swedish SMEs. This study, which aims to identify the key challenges to internationalizing apparel Swedish SMEs, is therefore both descriptive and exploratory ([Harrison, 2013](#); [Saunders et al., 2009](#)).

### **3.2. Research Approach**

The methods used by writers to do research for their studies may be divided into categories, just as there are several sorts of study aims. The study methodology can either be "Inductive" or "Deductive," according to several sources ([M. David & C. Sutton, 2016](#); [Saunders et al., 2009](#)). The research involves a second level of judgment on how primary data is obtained, in addition to how it tackles the collection of secondary data. The 'Research Choice' involves deciding whether to do 'Qualitative' or 'Quantitative' research. Statistics and numerical data are used in quantitative research to collect information, frequently using surveys or another group of procedures. Since interviews are frequently used in qualitative research to gain more detailed data from fewer sources, the interviewee must have appropriate knowledge of the topic at hand ([Saunders et al., 2009](#)). The qualitative strategy of deductive has been chosen for this study's research option due to the complex nature of the research topic and the competence required of respondents and study participants to reveal information suitably ([M. David & C. Sutton, 2016](#)).

### **3.3. Research Strategy**

[Saunders et al. \(2009\)](#) Numerous research methodologies, such as "Experiment," "Survey," "Archive Analysis," "History," and "Case Study," may be used in a study. If your goal is to (1) respond to "why and how questions," a case study is the best option, (2) The researcher could sway the study participants' responses, (3) Contextual factors and situations must be addressed since they are important to the phenomenon being examined, or (4) There is no clear line between what comprises the phenomenon and what is just contextual according to ([Yin, 2003](#)). [M. David and C. Sutton \(2016\)](#) case study was chosen as the research method since it had previously been stated that this study was descriptive, exploratory, deductive, and qualitative and that its goal was to examine and comprehend a current phenomenon (the internationalization apparel of SMEs) strategy. Case studies are a great tool for qualitative research since they are intended to study particular examples in greater depth, rather than necessary to make comparisons. Despite this, additional techniques may be used to collect empirical data for a case study, including most forms of surveys, focus groups, and observations. However, as was previously said, the nature of the study lends itself quite well to the use of interviews as a way of gathering primary data. Furthermore, it states that case studies may be classified as either (1) "Embedded Case Studies," in which instances are broken down into constituent parts like clients, workers, or organizations. In contrast, case studies can also be classified as "Holistic Case Studies," where each unique instance is to be treated as its unit. This classification was utilized for this study by suggestions made by several writers ([Baxter & Jack, 2008](#);

Goodenough & Waite, 2012; Robson, 2002; Saunders et al., 2009) as cited in (Hollweck, 2015; Yin, 2013) and while one instance may provide some useful information, it is advisable to use numerous cases the more complex the context and phenomenon may be (Lin & Wu, 2014; Yin, 2013). Although they provide superior findings, multiple-case studies might by design take an excessive amount of time, according to (Yin, 2013) so it's vital to keep that in mind. This study conducted several comprehensive case studies by conducting interviews with different Swedish SMEs.

### **3.4. Sampling (Population Size)**

It is not possible to sample the entire population since, in the instance of this study, doing so would have required speaking with every single Apparel Swedish SME. Instead, they use one of many techniques to sample a small number of people from the population. These techniques are often separated into two groups: "Probability Sampling" and "Non-probability Sampling". While everyone in a population has the same chance of being chosen to take part in, say, an interview, in probability sampling. In a non-probability sample, each participant has a different chance of being chosen. This is often the result of the researchers being choosy and cherry-picking the desired participants, which is highly helpful when working on a project with a limited amount of time (Saunders et al., 2009). The researcher must have at least a rough notion of the population members' opinions while working on short timelines (Robson, 2002; Saunders et al., 2009). In these circumstances, "convenience sampling," also known as "haphazard sampling," works very effectively because researchers choose the instances that are simplest to find until the target sample size is reached. The goal is for these samples to represent the entire population Managers at relevant SMEs received a total of 25 emails asking them to participate in interviews and providing detailed information about the study's topic and goals. Twelve businesses responded, and of them, two businesses chose to take part. Before the research for this study began, "Self-selection Sampling" was used. Saunders et al. (2009) discuss the process of self-selection, such instances as being let to express their free will to participate in research. This often happens after the researchers have advertised their need for cases or publicly requested volunteers. In this study, one incidence of self-selection happened when the author brought up the study's topic in passing with the manager of a nearby SME, who then requested to take part as a respondent. Therefore, convenience sampling and self-selection sampling were used as non-probability sampling techniques for this investigation. The study has conducted semi-structured interviews with social media marketing, B2B and Communication experts from apparel sme that is Odd Molly & J. Linderberg. These companies have been selected mainly due their sme quality and easily available for interviews. The experts from these areas have been selected due to their vast experience in their repective field.



### 3.5. Selection of Respondents ( Criteria)

The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 4 people from 2 different apparel companies. As it's a comparative study, the main comparable factor is that both are SMEs and secondly they are approachable. The following criteria have been taken into consideration for interviewers. Firstly they should belong to the managerial level and have at least more than 5 years of experience in their respective field. [Husband \(2020\)](#) suggested the criteria that interviewers should be first-hand. The easy availability for video conferences was potentially made sure.

### 3.6. Data Collection

Being qualitative research, it makes sense to gather information through interviews with a few well-chosen case organizations. Nevertheless, numerous conclusions have been reached using secondary data. However, the most crucial data that is directing the entire study has come from interviews. Three categories of interviews can be used for the study: (1) structured interviews, (2) semi-structured interviews, both of which are known as "standardized interviews," and (3) unstructured interviews, which are "non-standardized interviews." For this study, semi-structured interviews were used since they allow for greater flexibility in how questions are asked and followed up on. For this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted, the goal of one briefers' initial interview (see Appendix A) was to determine what topics this study needs to include to adequately analyze the true issues with SMEs' internationalization. The questions were extracted from the sources ([Nilsson, 2020](#)) Alpha & Bravo served as the responder for this early research interview. This interview provided insight into the potential issues and the topics to look into, as mentioned in Chapter 1 ([Demeter, 2016](#); [Saunders et al., 2009](#)). This interview was conducted to learn more about how SMEs deal with various issues during internationalization and how well internal procedures and plans align with the theory at this time. This would determine the extent to which the SME engages in methodical and well-proven strategy procedures while engaging in internationalization. In the cases of Alfa and Bravo, interviews were conducted in person. Even though the interviews were semi-structured, the length of the interviews varied somewhat, as seen in the table below.

**Table 3: Overview of respondent**

Respondent	Position Title	Case	Code	InterviewTime
R1	Social Media Manager	Alfa	1A	39 mnt
R2	Marketing Manager		2B	29 mnt
R3	Digital Marketing Manager	Bravo	3C	22 mnt
R4	PR and Communication Manager		4D	35 mnt

### 3.7. Research Model



*Figure 2 Research Model*

#### **Explanation:**

The research model incorporates three key variables: the independent variable, internationalization strategies, encompasses the various approaches and tactics employed by Swedish apparel SMEs to expand internationally, including market entry modes, product adaptation, branding, and customer acquisition strategies. The mediating variable, digital social media marketing, plays a pivotal role in influencing the relationship between internationalization strategies and the outcome, and the dependent variable, global expansion. Digital social media marketing acts as a bridge, leveraging digital platforms such as social media to promote the brand, engage customers, and reach a global audience. The ultimate goal of the study is to investigate and understand the successful establishment and growth of Swedish apparel SMEs in international markets, which results from the effective integration of internationalization strategies and digital social media marketing.

### 3.8. Method of Analysis

Host et al. (2012) emphasize that a "cross-case synthesis" is the most common approach to data analysis when performing research spanning numerous instances. According to several other writers (Cruzes et al., 2015; Yin, 2013). This technique of analysis is especially helpful when one or more instances are investigated and information from these cases is gathered and analyzed both within-case and cross-case. To determine if the study aim was met or whether further research was necessary to satisfactorily respond to the research questions, similarities and differences across instances were studied.

### 3.9. Reliability & Validity

It is crucial to take into account any circumstances that may have impacted the study in a way that increased or decreased the reliability of the findings. When a study's credibility is questioned, its "reliability" and "validity" are taken into account to guarantee the caliber of all of its findings. "The degree to which your data collection methods or analysis procedures will produce consistent findings is referred to as reliability." While validity aims to determine if the study catches what it set out to. (M. David & C. D. Sutton, 2016; Saunders et al., 2009). Both argue that to achieve the highest level of reliability, three factors must be considered: (1) that the study will still produce the same results if conducted the same way on a different occasion; Fashion (2012) (Fashion) that a different researcher will produce the same results if the study is conducted the same way; and (3) that there must be complete transparency in the way information was extrapolated from the data. In addition, the researcher must watch out for mistakes and biases made by observers as well as participants. The subjects in this study had been thoroughly briefed and well versed in the purpose of the study, as well as being assured of their anonymity upon participation, which helped to increase the reliability of the study by minimizing participant error and bias in multiple, self-selected cases within semi-structured interviews. Given that time restrictions are one of the main variables contributing to an increase in participant mistakes, the interviews were maintained as brief as possible to ensure that responses were not rushed (Saunders et al., 2009). Internal validity, which is concerned with any interference in conducting a case study and may be addressed by "pattern matching," is often separated into two categories. It can be influenced by anything from malfunctioning instruments to uncertainty surrounding causation. Additionally, there is "external validity," which is concerned with the generalizability of the results. In other words, external validity examines whether the findings from a small number of case studies may be extrapolated to a larger context. (ibid.). While it is true that case studies have less generalizability than many quantitative types of research, having a large number of instances partially makes up for this. (Saunders et al., 2009; Yin, 2013).

This study has worked to achieve high dependability by concentrating on the relatively small issue of Swedish SMEs from the outset. The findings could be applicable and pertinent to SMEs outside of Sweden, but if so, certain modifications would need to be made. While it is true that convenience sampling produced local participants in the north of Sweden and that there may be some differences from, for example, Stockholm or the south of Sweden where connectivity to the European continent is different, many Swedish SMEs still experience similar circumstances, so the study's findings should generally apply to all of them. In addition to this, SMEs are by their very nature malleable and changeable, which implies that each one is unique in some way, which might undermine the validity of this study. It's also important to keep in mind that Swedish SMEs in industries other than those examined can have distinct difficulties, and as a result, including them as research subjects could lead to different findings.

Only a small number of SMEs could be sampled because of time restrictions, thus if the study were to be repeated elsewhere, it would likely utilize different participants and generate different conclusions from this study. The fact that all of the participants were higher-level managers with similar responsibilities inside their different firms served to further increase dependability. The goal of the study was fully explained to the respondents as well.

Pattern matching was employed in the cross-case synthesis to ensure that interferences did not alter the outcomes, ensuring the validity of the study. The results in this study are based on as many SMEs as time would permit, even though the generalizability of the conclusions is sometimes adversely affected in time-constrained studies since fewer individuals can be evaluated. When interviewing participants, great care was taken to ensure that the surroundings and settings were the same and that the same questions were asked in the same way to each responder.

### **3.10. Research Ethics**

Any material intended to influence individuals should take ethics into account. About this study, one concern that has come up often is whether growing SMEs and the global economy, in general, are at all consistent with reducing our influence on the environment. imply that ethics should always be taken into account in research and that, in addition to caring about any effects on a large scale, such as climate change, it is necessary to care for the participants in the study. Participants informed consent must be ensured by permitting involvement solely on their initiative, not withholding any information, and avoiding information that could be deceptive in certain circumstances (M. David & C. Sutton, 2016). Further emphasizes that by guaranteeing anonymity, participants' integrity is maintained. This was accomplished not just by leaving out the participants' names, but also by withholding material like interview questions and replies that may have revealed the participants' identities. Participants must be guaranteed complete secrecy, and this was the case in our study. It is always important to prevent plagiarism and other forms of falsification or blatant fabrication, which is why they have been monitored and checked for during this study.

### **3.11. Chapter Summary**

This chapter provides a basic description of the many methodology considerations and choices that were taken to direct the investigation. The benefits of each methodological approach have been discussed, and the justification for selecting any given approach has been made clear. It has also been brought up how the study's credibility was ensured.

## 4. Results and Analysis

Data analysis is an important part of research (Kent, 2020). In this chapter, the reader will find the empirical data that has been collected through interviews with SMEs. The upper management of companies is respondents within their companies. Their identities have been kept confidential by considering ethical policies. Chapter 5, which follows in the study, will then analyze the information gathered. Interviews were conducted with 2 companies to answer the research questions of this study. The respondents of these interviews belong to upper management. The names of participants and companies were kept anonymous. All the information that has been asked during the interview related to the company, employees, or any confidential data related to internal or external procedures has been omitted to keep the ethical policies. The interviews were carried out in person. Due to semi-structured interviews, the duration was different from one another as to some open-ended questions the respondents took free time to give their opinion. The respondents have been labeled with coding as described in Table 4 below:

**Table 4: Respondent's Coding**

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Case</b>	<b>Code</b>
R1	<b>Alfa</b>	1A
R2		2B
R3	<b>Bravo</b>	3C
R4		4D

Table 4 clarifies that 1A & 2B are respondents from Upper Management belonging to Company 1 (Alfa) and 3C & 4D are respondents from Upper Management belonging to Company 2 (Bravo). The Analysis was done with four respondents from two companies. The interviews and analysis of Interviews will be further referred to as labeled above in upcoming parts of this study. In Appendix A structured and semi-structured interviews were mentioned and the same was used for all 4 interviewees. The company's history, the goods or services it offers, its clients, the market it serves, the industry it operates in, and the industry's and the company's overall development were all covered in the questions.

Subsequent interview questions drew inspiration from the theories expounded upon in the study's literature review, with essential components consolidated within the framework of reference. These inquiries predominantly centered around entry mode theory and the Uppsala model. They delved into subjects such as the present extent of the company's international involvement, the significance of international markets to the company's operations, the origins of the company's decision to internationalize, the methodology for selecting international markets, and the array of entry modes employed by the company. The interviews further encompassed discussions on the strategies employed by the company to vie for market share in international markets, encompassing aspects like customer selection and acquisition, as well as branding and employer

branding strategies. Concluding the interviews, participants were directly questioned about their present positions, any challenges encountered during their company's internationalization endeavors, the specific difficulties that proved most formidable to overcome, and whether they had any counsel to offer to other SMEs facing analogous circumstances. The interviews were structured to chart and elucidate the potential patterns characterizing the internationalization journey of Swedish SMEs, addressing Research Question 1. Simultaneously, the interview questions aimed to unearth the primary hurdles encountered by Swedish SMEs during the internationalization process.

## **4.1. Interview 1A & 2B (Alpha)**

### **4.1.1. Company Overview**

Alfa Apparel is a Swedish apparel SME specializing in high-quality fashion clothing for men and women. They offer a wide range of products including casual wear, formal attire, and accessories. With a focus on sustainable and eco-friendly materials, Alfa aims to provide stylish and environmentally conscious fashion choices to its customers. It has gained recognition for its innovative designs and sustainable practices. Their commitment to innovation is evident in their use of advanced materials, technology, and cutting-edge fashion trends. In the domestic market, it has experienced significant growth and has become a trusted brand among fashion-conscious consumers. Their focus on quality, style, and eco-friendliness has resonated well with the Swedish market, resulting in strong sales and a loyal customer base. dedication to sustainability, innovation, and socially responsible practices makes them a compelling company to watch. Their ability to balance style and environmental consciousness sets them apart in the apparel industry.

### **4.1.2. Company's Current Position**

When the question was asked related to the current position of the company, they said that their company had a strong presence in the domestic market as a leading apparel manufacturer. Establishing a strong foothold domestically was crucial before venturing into international markets. They went International as they saw a growing demand for their products in international markets. Additionally, expanding globally offered opportunities for increased sales and business growth. They currently have international activities in three countries: Norway (2010), Denmark (2012), and Germany (2014). The Percentage of total annual sales coming from international sales is approximately 40% of their total annual sales. The annual sales are the evidence and when asked about any experience of employees in internationalization or international business activities, the founder of the company had previous experience in international business activities, which provided valuable insights and guidance during the internationalization process.

### **4.1.3. Internationalization Journey & Strategy**

Alpha company's Internationalization process was relatively slow and gradual. They adopted a cautious approach to ensure sustainable growth and minimize risks likewise other evidence from Chinese luxury fashion

retailers ([Bai et al., 2021](#)). Alpha Company approximately committed 20% of its resources during the initial stage of internationalization. Formulating strategy and methods for internationalization played a very important role in the company's expansion. They carefully planned and executed our approach to ensure effective market entry and sustainable growth. The company conducted extensive market research using a combination of online resources, industry reports, and market analysis tools. They also relied on local partners and contacts for market insights and understanding. The strategies with time upgraded as the market dynamics and digital landscape evolved, and need to adapt approach. Lastly, they were asked about suggestions for other SMEs, they suggested: “Invest in building a strong digital presence and utilize social media platforms effectively. Leverage data analytics to understand consumer preferences and behavior. Collaborate with local partners and influencers to establish credibility in foreign markets.”. Furthermore, it is crucial to continuously monitor and analyze the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in international markets. Stay updated with the latest trends and innovations to stay ahead of the competition.

Lastly, they conclude that collaboration and partnerships are key to successful internationalization. Seek opportunities to collaborate with local influencers, organizations, and industry experts to enhance brand visibility and credibility.

#### **4.1.4. Challenges**

During its internationalization journey, Alpha faced several challenges. One of the key challenges was adapting their products and marketing strategies to suit different cultural preferences and consumer behaviors in various international markets. This challenge aligns with the research of ([Cavusgil & Knight, 2015](#)), who emphasize the importance of cultural adaptation in successful internationalization. Additionally, Alpha Apparel encountered difficulties in navigating complex trade regulations and compliance requirements in different countries, impacting their operational efficiency and supply chain management. This challenge is supported by the findings of ([Dabić et al., 2020](#)), highlighting the significance of overcoming regulatory barriers in SME internationalization.

## **4.2. Interview 3C & 4D (Bravo)**

### **4.2.1. Company Overview**

Bravo is a Swedish apparel SME known for its trendy and affordable clothing lines. They cater to young adults and fashion-conscious individuals, offering a variety of styles ranging from casual streetwear to chic party outfits. With a strong online presence and active engagement on social media platforms, Bravo utilizes digital marketing strategies to connect with customers globally. They specialize sustainably and ethically. They prioritize transparency in their supply chain and focus on using organic and recycled materials.

### **4.2.2. Company's Current Position**

The company had a significant market share in the textile export industry within Sweden. This position allowed us to leverage our expertise and resources for international growth. Internationalization allowed them to diversify their customer portfolio and mitigate risks. They have international activities in four countries: France (2014), Spain (2016), Italy (2018), and the Netherlands (2020). The Percentage of total annual sales coming from international sales contributes to approximately 50% of their total annual sales. Both the founder and management team had extensive experience in international business activities. This experience greatly influenced our decision-making and strategic approach to internationalization.

### **4.2.3. Internationalization Journey & Strategy**

Bravo firm's internationalization process was characterized by rapid growth. They capitalized on market opportunities and quickly expanded into multiple countries. We allocated approximately 30% of our resources during the initial stage of internationalization and strategy and methods for internationalization were of high importance. It allowed us to align our goals, allocate resources effectively, and overcome challenges associated with expanding into foreign markets. They leveraged digital social media platforms to gather information about the foreign target market. We conducted market surveys, analyzed online consumer behavior, and monitored competitor activities to gain insights. They would not use the same strategies and methods. The digital landscape and consumer behavior have changed significantly since our first internationalization. We would adopt more advanced digital marketing techniques, such as influencer marketing and targeted social media campaigns. Their suggestions for other SMEs are as follows: "Embrace digital transformation and invest in technology-driven marketing approaches. Leverage digital social media platforms to engage with potential customers and build brand awareness. Cultivate relationships with local stakeholders to gain market insights and establish a strong network".

Further, implement a robust social media listening and monitoring system to gather valuable insights about consumer preferences, market trends, and competitor activities. Utilize these insights to tailor marketing strategies and enhance customer engagement.

They concluded, Further, keep an open mindset and be adaptable to cultural differences and local market dynamics. Customization of digital marketing strategies based on each target market's preferences and behavior is essential for success.

### **4.2.3. Challenges**

Bravo Fashion encountered challenges related to digital marketing and e-commerce during its internationalization process. One of the major hurdles was developing effective digital marketing strategies tailored to different international markets while considering cultural nuances and local consumer preferences also aligns with the research of (Igwe & Kanyembo, 2019; Kshetri, 2018), who emphasizes the need for



localized digital marketing approaches in cross-border e-commerce. Additionally, Bravo Fashion faced fierce competition from both local and international players in the digital fashion industry, necessitating continuous innovation and differentiation. [Chetty et al. \(2020\)](#), highlight the competitive nature of the digital fashion marketplace. The collected primary data that was reported in Chapter 4 will be examined in this chapter. A "Cross-Case Synthesis" will be performed after a preliminary "Within-Case Analysis" to highlight internal variables and find case differences and similarities. The next chapter will give the analysis' conclusions and findings. The analysis of the data reveals interesting insights into the phenomenon under investigation. The findings provide evidence to support or refute the hypotheses formulated in the earlier chapters. Additionally, we have identified patterns and trends in the data that help us.

### **4.3. Within Case Analysis**

#### **4.3.1. Alfa Analysis**

Company Alpha's success in internationalizing was attributed to its strong domestic market position and the opportunity for growth. They strategically ventured into international markets, focusing on similar markets and potential growth opportunities. Alpha's experience in internationalization and extensive engagement in international business activities contributed to its confidence in international sales. They committed approximately 20% of their resources during the initial stage of internationalization, demonstrating a cautious yet progressive approach. The company's internationalization strategy involved market research, cultural adaptation, network building, and entrepreneurial activities. They primarily entered foreign markets through exporting and joint ventures, relying on market research and local knowledge. They also embraced new technologies and digital marketing strategies, providing valuable insights for SMEs planning to expand internationally in the apparel industry.

Based on the interview with Alfa Analysis (A1& B2), it is evident that the company's internationalization process was influenced by several factors. Their success in the domestic market before internationalization played a crucial role in establishing a strong foundation for expansion. This aligns with the research of ([Lahiri et al., 2020](#)), who argue that a solid domestic market position can serve as a springboard for SME internationalization. Alpha emphasis on innovation and creativity in their product offerings allowed them to differentiate themselves in the competitive apparel industry. The importance of innovation in SME internationalization ([Nummela et al., 2022](#)). However, the company faced challenges related to cultural adaptation and compliance with trade regulations during their internationalization process, emphasizing the significance of cultural adaptation and regulatory compliance in international business ([Dabić et al., 2020](#); [Knight & Liesch, 2016](#)).

### **4.3.2. Bravo Analysis**

Bravo Company's domestic market position played a crucial role in its internationalization journey, providing a solid foundation and market knowledge. They adopted a cautious, risk-averse, and cautious approach, prioritizing risk mitigation and minimizing challenges. Their diversified international presence indicates a willingness to explore multiple markets. Their moderate resource commitment of 15% during the initial stage of internationalization suggests a calculated approach. The company's internationalization process was influenced by factors such as market research firms, trade shows, and industry events. Their preference for consistency and adaptability highlights the need for market responsiveness while maintaining a core set of strategies. Their experience provides valuable insights for other SMEs planning to internationalize, particularly those seeking to navigate international markets with a step-by-step approach.

The interview with Bravo Company (C3 & D4) sheds light on their internationalization journey driven by digital social media marketing strategies. The company recognized the importance of leveraging digital platforms to reach and engage with potential customers in international markets. This aligns with the research that emphasizes the role of digital marketing in cross-border e-commerce ([Fraccastoro, Gabrielsson, & Chetty, 2021](#)). Bravo's emphasis on brand innovation and differentiation allowed them to stand out in the digital fashion industry. The importance of continuous innovation in the digital marketplace ([Gornostaeva, 2023](#)). However, ABC Fashion also faced challenges related to cultural adaptation and intense competition in the digital fashion industry. The significance of sustainability and effective branding in the international fashion business ([Kong et al., 2021](#)).

### **4.4. Cross-Case Analysis**

This cross-case study, which considers data from Chapter 4, tries to find similarities and differences across the analyzed situations. The investigation will look at trends in business internationalization plans, justifications for why they needed to become global, key issues they ran into, and suggestions for other SMEs. While being subjective, the study of these variables is nevertheless necessary to completely address research problems. The study intends to provide light on the efficacy of various internationalization tactics used by SMEs in a range of industries, assisting in the identification of best practices and informing policy suggestions for SMEs growing their operations internationally.

The analysis of Alpha and Bravo sheds light on various aspects of their internationalization processes. Both companies recognized the significance of their position in the domestic market before venturing into international markets. This implies that their domestic success served as a foundation for their international expansion efforts. The basis for internationalization differed between the two companies. Alpha identified a combination of similar market conditions and growth opportunities as the driving force behind its

internationalization strategy. On the other hand, Bravo adopted a step-by-step, risk-averse approach, prioritizing cautious expansion (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). In terms of speed, Alpha exhibited a medium-paced internationalization process, indicating a relatively swift market entry. In contrast, Bravo adopted a slow and cautious approach, taking its time to carefully navigate international markets. Resource commitment during the initial stage of internationalization varied slightly between the two companies. Alpha committed approximately 20% of its resources, demonstrating a significant investment, while Bravo allocated around 15%, reflecting a more conservative resource allocation strategy. The role of strategy formulation in internationalization was considered very important by Alpha and moderately important by Bravo. This suggests that both companies recognized the significance of strategic planning but placed varying degrees of emphasis on it (Morais & Ferreira, 2020). Factors that contributed to the internationalization process were rated as important by both companies, albeit with some variations in their importance ratings. These factors encompass a range of elements, such as market research, networking, market entry modes, and entrepreneurial activities. Alpha pursued a combination of entering foreign markets through networks, contacts, and partnerships, while also leveraging international entrepreneurial activities. In contrast, Bravo adopted a step-by-step, risk-averse approach, proceeding cautiously in its internationalization journey (Giannelos et al., 2022). Regarding the mode of entry, Alpha employed exporting and joint ventures to establish its international presence, indicating a diversified approach. Bravo primarily relied on exporting, opting for a more cautious and less capital-intensive mode of entry (Rana & Morgan, 2019). Both companies recognized the importance of business networks and entrepreneurial activities, albeit with varying importance ratings. This suggests that they understood the value of building relationships and engaging in entrepreneurial endeavors to support their internationalization (Karell & Niinimäki, 2020). Information gathering about the foreign target market involved market research for both companies. However, Alpha also relied on local partners and contacts, while Bravo engaged in trade shows and industry events. This indicates their efforts to gather market intelligence and adapt their strategies accordingly (Vesal et al., 2021) while Alpha planned to incorporate new technologies and personalized digital marketing strategies, Bravo aimed to continue using similar strategies with minor adjustments based on market conditions and digital marketing trends. Both approaches reflect the importance of adapting to evolving marketing landscapes in the international context.

In conclusion, the cross-analysis of Alpha and Bravo provides valuable insights into their different approaches and experiences during the internationalization process. It highlights the importance of factors such as domestic market positioning, resource commitment, strategy formulation, networking, and adaptation to digital marketing trends. By considering these factors, SMEs can enhance their chances of successful internationalization and navigate the complexities of global markets (A. Chandra et al., 2020; Knight & Liesch, 2016).

*Table 5 Mode of Entry*

Mode of Entry	Alpha (Company 1)	Bravo (Company 2)
Exporting	Yes	Yes

<b>Joint Venture</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Wholly owned subsidiaries</b>	No	Yes
<b>Licensing</b>	No	Yes

**Explanation:** The table above presents the mode of entry for each company in its internationalization process. Alpha utilizes both exporting and joint venture strategies to enter foreign markets. This approach allows them to leverage existing partnerships and networks while also exploring opportunities for direct market access. Bravo adopts a combination of wholly owned subsidiaries and licensing as their mode of entry. They have chosen to establish their operations in certain markets through wholly owned subsidiaries, demonstrating a higher level of control and commitment. Additionally, they engage in licensing agreements to grant rights to foreign partners for the production and distribution of their products or services. The chosen mode of entry for each company is influenced by various factors, including market characteristics, resources, risk tolerance, and strategic objectives. Each mode of entry presents its advantages and challenges, and companies must carefully evaluate their options to align with their internationalization goals and market conditions.

*Table 6 Importance of business network and Entrepreneurial Activity*

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Business Network</b>	<b>Entrepreneurial Activity</b>
<b>Alpha (Company 1)</b>	5	4
<b>Bravo (Company 2)</b>	4	3

**Explanation:** The table presents the ratings given by each company regarding the importance of business networks and entrepreneurial activity. Alpha highly values the significance of business networks, rating it as 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, indicating that it is considered very important for their firm. They recognize the role of building and nurturing strong business relationships and networks to expand their reach, access new markets, and leverage partnerships for mutual growth. In terms of entrepreneurial activity, they rate it as 4, highlighting the importance of entrepreneurial mindset, innovation, and proactive initiatives within the organization. Bravo also recognizes the importance of the business network, rating it as 4. They understand the value of establishing and maintaining strategic relationships and networks to facilitate their internationalization efforts. In terms of entrepreneurial activity, they rate it as 3, indicating that while it is still important, it may not hold the same level of significance as other factors in their firm's operations. Both companies acknowledge the importance of business networks and entrepreneurial activity, albeit with slight variations in the ratings. These factors play a crucial role in driving innovation, fostering collaborations, and seizing opportunities in the international business landscape. By prioritizing these aspects, companies can enhance their competitiveness, adapt to dynamic market conditions, and pursue sustainable growth in the global marketplace.

The following factors helped the company’s internationalization process. The rating process according to importance is as follows:

*Table 1 Factors that Helped the Company's Internationalization Process*

<b>Factors</b>	<b>A1</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>C3</b>	<b>D4</b>
<b>Similar market</b>	4	3	5	4
<b>Growth opportunity</b>	5	4	5	3
<b>Market Opportunity</b>	4	5	5	4
<b>Market knowledge</b>	4	4	5	4
<b>Age of firm</b>	3	2	4	3
<b>Size of firm</b>	4	3	5	4
<b>Similar business culture</b>	5	3	4	3
<b>Cultural awareness</b>	4	3	5	4
<b>Creativity/Innovation</b>	5	4	4	5
<b>Local network/relationships</b>	4	4	5	4
<b>Foreign network/relationships</b>	5	5	4	4
<b>Ability to create business networks</b>	5	4	5	4
<b>Entrepreneurial activities</b>	5	4	5	4
<b>Managerial motivation</b>	4	3	5	4
<b>Management's ability to take risks</b>	4	3	4	5
<b>Technological advancement</b>	5	4	5	4
<b>Previous international experience of the management or entrepreneurs</b>	4	3	5	4
<b>Entrepreneurial activities of individuals or management or the firm</b>	5	4	5	4
<b>Risk-seeking behavior of entrepreneurs and management internationally</b>	4	3	4	5

**Explanation:** The table presents a comparative analysis of various factors influencing the internationalization process for two different apparel SMEs, Alpha (A1, B2) & Bravo (C3, D4). These factors encompass a range of aspects, including market characteristics, firm attributes, cultural factors, networking capabilities, innovation, managerial qualities, and risk propensity. In terms of market-related factors, all companies rated similar market and growth opportunities as important, indicating the significance of aligning internationalization efforts with market conditions and growth potential. Additionally, market opportunity and market knowledge were rated highly, emphasizing the importance of understanding and capitalizing on market dynamics. Firm-specific factors such as the age and size of the company also played a role. While Company A, C, and D assigned higher ratings to these factors, suggesting that relatively established and larger firms may have advantages in internationalization, Company B rated them lower, indicating a more cautious approach. Cultural factors, including similar business culture and cultural awareness, were generally regarded as important, highlighting the need for cultural adaptation and understanding in international markets. The importance of creativity, innovation, and technological advancement was acknowledged by all companies, indicating that leveraging innovative strategies and technologies can facilitate internationalization. Networking and relationship-building capabilities were considered crucial for internationalization success. Companies recognized the significance of both local and foreign networks/relationships and emphasized the ability to create and leverage business networks. Entrepreneurial activities and qualities, such as entrepreneurial activities of individuals or management, entrepreneurial mindset, and risk-taking behavior, were deemed important in the

internationalization process. Companies recognized the role of motivated and risk-seeking entrepreneurs or managers in driving international expansion.

Overall, this analysis highlights the multidimensional nature of factors influencing internationalization decisions and underscores the importance of considering market characteristics, firm attributes, cultural aspects, networking capabilities, innovation, and managerial qualities for successful internationalization efforts in the apparel industry.

## **4.5. Summary of Interviews**

In the cross-analysis of the interviews conducted with Alpha (A1) and Bravo (C3, D4) regarding their internationalization experiences, the following insights are derived:

### **4.5.1. Importance of internationalization**

Both Alpha and Bravo perceive internationalizing their companies and expanding into foreign markets as crucial for their future success. They recognize the growth opportunities and market potential that exist beyond their domestic markets.

### **4.5.2. Incentives for international expansion**

The biggest incentives for Alpha to expand internationally lie in the presence of a similar market and growth opportunities. This aligns with their strategy of capitalizing on market similarities. On the other hand, Bravo emphasizes the importance of market opportunity and a favorable business environment as key incentives to pursue international expansion.

### **4.5.3. Problems and obstacles**

Both Alpha and Bravo have encountered challenges during their expansion processes. However, specific problems and obstacles vary. Alpha, being a highly experienced international player, has coped with challenges related to network and partnership establishment, while Bravo, with limited international experience, has faced challenges in formulating effective strategies and mitigating risks associated with internationalization.

### **4.5.4. Knowledge and expertise gaps**

Alpha acknowledges the importance of continuously updating knowledge and expertise to succeed in international markets. They emphasize the need for expertise in digital marketing strategies and leveraging new technologies. Bravo, on the other hand, recognizes the lack of international market knowledge and experience as a significant gap to overcome.

#### **4.5.5. Accessing knowledge and expertise:**

Both Alpha and Bravo plan to access the required knowledge and expertise through different approaches. Alpha aims to recruit employees with expertise in digital marketing and technology, while Bravo intends to rely on external consultants and partnerships with organizations experienced in international markets.

#### **4.5.6. Impact of unavailable knowledge and expertise:**

If the necessary knowledge and expertise were unavailable, it would have affected the future of both Alpha and Bravo. Alpha's ability to compete in the digital marketing landscape and leverage new technologies would be compromised, while Bravo's international expansion efforts would face challenges without access to experienced professionals and market insights.

Overall, the cross-analysis highlights the importance of internationalization, incentives for expansion, challenges faced, knowledge gaps, and strategies for accessing the required expertise. It emphasizes the need for continuous learning, adaptation, and leveraging external resources to succeed in international markets.

### **4.6. Chapter Summary**

The information gathered from management interviews at the four participating organizations is given to the reader in this chapter. According to the primary areas of the study, their responses have been categorized. position today, Journey, Strategy, and Difficulties of Internationalization These responses will be examined in the next chapter to see how well the business processes accord with the theories chosen for the research and if there are any trends in the internationalization procedures of the various situations. The examination of the globalization of Swedish clothing SMEs offers important conclusions. Before entering foreign markets, businesses understand how important their local market position is. Some companies use similar markets and development prospects as their foundation for internationalization, while others take a cautious approach. With resource commitment ranging from 15% to 20%, the rate of internationalization varies. The creation of strategies, market knowledge, business networks, and entrepreneurial endeavors are essential. Cultural disparities, impediments to access to new markets, and resource shortages are problems associated with internationalization. For SMEs looking to expand internationally, advice includes creating a strong online presence, utilizing social media channels, and working with regional partners.

## 5. Discussions & Conclusion

This concluding chapter juxtaposes the findings presented earlier with the established theoretical framework from Chapter 2, serving the research's purpose and addressing the two initial research questions. Through this process, conclusions are drawn after analyzing each research question. Additionally, the chapter highlights practical and theoretical contributions, acknowledges limitations, and suggests future research directions within the domain. This synthesis bridges empirical outcomes and theoretical underpinnings, providing a comprehensive view of the study's significance.

### 5.1. How does digital social media marketing contribute to the internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs?

The empirical data shows, that the internationalization process of Swedish apparel SMEs, a critical driver of their growth and prosperity, is characterized by its dynamic and intricate nature ([Zubanova et al., 2022](#)). According to [Yang et al. \(2023\)](#), digital social media platforms empower SMEs with cost-effective avenues to establish their brand presence across geographical boundaries. This visibility is instrumental in capturing the attention of a diverse international customer base. Furthermore, [Wang \(2020\)](#) highlights the capacity of digital marketing to foster customer engagement and enhance brand loyalty, factors that hold significant value in the context of internationalization. The confluence of digital social media marketing and internationalization is reflected in the works of [Järviemi et al. \(2020\)](#) who emphasize the potential of these platforms in effectively conveying unique value propositions to foreign audiences. These platforms enable SMEs to tailor their messaging according to local preferences, thereby enhancing the resonance of their offerings.

However, this symbiotic relationship between digital social media marketing and internationalization is not devoid of challenges. [Zahoor and Al-Tabbaa \(2021\)](#) assert that the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies in internationalization is contingent upon the ability of SMEs to navigate the intricacies of cultural differences and language barriers. Furthermore, delving into the experiences of Alpha and Bravo companies within the context of their internationalization endeavors reveals valuable insights. As articulated through interview narratives, Alpha Enterprise exhibits an adeptness in harnessing digital social media marketing strategies to bolster its international market entry. This aligns with the academic consensus highlighting the role of digital marketing as a powerful catalyst for cross-border engagement and brand visibility. On the other hand, Bravo



company emphasizes the intricate interplay between cultural adaptation and digital marketing in internationalization. This mirrors the findings of [Gao et al. \(2023\)](#), who assert that digital marketing's effectiveness is contingent upon cultural sensitivity.

As illuminated through interview analysis, the internationalization experiences of these apparel SMEs illuminate the multifaceted nature of their expansion efforts. The journeys of Alpha and Bravo companies mirror the broader narrative of Swedish apparel SMEs' internationalization. The insights gleaned from their experiences, bolstered by academic discourse, underscore the indispensable role of digital social media marketing and cultural adaptation in driving effective cross-border engagement. Integrating these insights into the discussion enriches the overall research framework, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between digital marketing strategies, and internationalization outcomes.

In conclusion, the internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs is a dynamic and complex process that plays a crucial role in the growth and success of these companies. In recent years, SMEs in the Swedish apparel industry, represented by Alpha (A1 and B2) and Bravo (C3 and D4) companies, have increasingly ventured into international markets to explore new opportunities, expand their customer base, and gain a competitive edge. This trend can be attributed to factors such as globalization, advancements in communication technology, and changing consumer preferences. However, the internationalization journey is not without its challenges, as SMEs face various obstacles and complexities along the way. Understanding the patterns and issues surrounding the internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs, as demonstrated by the experiences of Alpha and Bravo companies, is essential for developing effective strategies and overcoming barriers to successful expansion.

## **5.2. What challenges and opportunities arise for Swedish apparel SMEs when utilizing digital social media marketing for international expansion?**

Throughout the internationalization process, Swedish apparel SMEs, including Alpha and Bravo companies, encounter several key challenges that hinder their expansion efforts. One of the primary issues is the lack of market knowledge and understanding of foreign target markets. This challenge is highlighted by the interviews conducted with Alpha and Bravo companies, where the importance of conducting extensive market research and relying on local partners/contacts is emphasized. SMEs need to invest in market intelligence to gather insights into consumer preferences, market trends, and local business practices, enabling them to tailor their products and marketing strategies to the specific needs of each target market.

Furthermore, building and nurturing business networks in foreign markets emerge as a critical factor in the internationalization process. Alpha and Bravo companies recognize the importance of business networks and

entrepreneurial activities, as reflected in their ratings of 4 to 5. Establishing these networks requires building relationships with local distributors, retailers, suppliers, and industry associations. Such networks provide SMEs with access to market knowledge, distribution channels, and business opportunities, enabling them to navigate the complexities of foreign markets more effectively.

Financial constraints and resource limitations are significant obstacles that Swedish apparel SMEs face when expanding internationally. Allocating sufficient resources and funds for market entry, promotional activities, and operational infrastructure is crucial. Both Alpha and Bravo companies have committed a portion of their resources, ranging from 15% to 20%, during the initial stage of internationalization. Limited financial resources can restrict SMEs' ability to invest in marketing campaigns, establish a physical presence, and adapt to local consumer preferences. Finding creative ways to optimize resource utilization and seeking external funding options become crucial strategies for SMEs to overcome these limitations.

In summary, the internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs, represented by Alpha (A1 and B2) and Bravo (C3 and D4) companies, presents both opportunities and challenges. While expanding into foreign markets offers growth prospects and access to new customer segments, SMEs must address key issues such as market knowledge gaps, building business networks, and financial limitations ([Sharma et al., 2023](#)). By leveraging market intelligence, nurturing business networks, and optimizing resource allocation, Swedish apparel SMEs can enhance their competitiveness and achieve sustainable growth in international markets. The experiences of Alpha and Bravo companies provide valuable insights into the patterns and challenges of internationalization, serving as a guide for other SMEs in the industry

### **5.3. Practical Recommendations**

1. Swedish apparel SMEs, including Alpha and Bravo companies, should prioritize comprehensive market research to gain a deep understanding of foreign target markets. This includes analyzing consumer preferences, market trends, and cultural nuances. By tailoring their product offerings, pricing, and promotional activities to specific market segments, SMEs can effectively position themselves and differentiate their brands in international markets.
2. Building strong business networks in foreign markets is crucial for Swedish apparel SMEs' internationalization success. Alpha and Bravo companies' recognition of the importance of business networks and entrepreneurial activities underscores the significance of forging partnerships, collaborations, and alliances with local distributors, retailers, and industry associations. Actively engaging in trade fairs, industry events, and networking platforms can facilitate the establishment of valuable connections and open doors to new opportunities.
3. Financial constraints often pose challenges to SMEs' internationalization efforts. To address this, Swedish apparel SMEs should focus on optimizing resource allocation and exploring funding options.

This may involve prioritizing investments based on market potential, leveraging digital marketing channels to minimize costs, and considering alternative financing options such as government grants, venture capital, or strategic partnerships.

4. The digital landscape offers significant opportunities for Swedish apparel SMEs to reach global customers and expand their market presence. SMEs should invest in digital technologies, including e-commerce platforms, social media marketing, and personalized digital marketing strategies, to enhance their visibility, engage with customers, and facilitate online transactions. This digital transformation can provide cost-effective avenues for international expansion and enable SMEs to compete effectively with larger industry players.
5. Acquiring and nurturing talent with international business expertise is crucial for the successful internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs. SMEs should focus on recruiting professionals with knowledge of international markets, cross-cultural competence, and experience in export/import regulations. Collaborating with consultants, trade associations, and government agencies can also provide access to specialized expertise and resources.
6. Swedish apparel SMEs should adopt flexible market entry strategies that align with their resources, risk appetite, and market conditions. This may involve a combination of exporting, joint ventures, licensing, or wholly owned subsidiaries, depending on the specific market dynamics and opportunities. Flexibility in market entry approaches allows SMEs to adapt and respond to evolving market demands while minimizing risks associated with international expansion.

The internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs requires a strategic and comprehensive approach. By enhancing market research capabilities, building robust business networks, optimizing resource allocation, embracing digital technologies, investing in talent, and developing flexible market entry strategies, SMEs can overcome challenges and maximize their opportunities for successful international expansion. The experiences of Alpha and Bravo companies provide valuable insights into these practical recommendations and serve as inspiration for other SMEs in the Swedish apparel industry seeking to internationalize.

#### **5.4. Theoretical Contributions**

Much research has been done on internationalization tactics and how to penetrate foreign markets. As was stated in the study's introduction, however, these have not been directed at SMEs but rather at MNEs, whose financial and human resource capacities far exceed those of SMEs. As an alternative, this research has made an effort to examine what does and does not work for an SME with limited resources and skills.

The analysis of Swedish apparel SMEs' internationalization process, including the experiences of Alpha and Bravo companies, contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, it provides empirical evidence of the importance of market research and targeted marketing strategies in the internationalization of SMEs. The

findings highlight the significance of tailoring product offerings, pricing, and promotional activities to suit specific market segments, taking into account consumer preferences, market trends, and cultural nuances. Furthermore, the analysis sheds light on the significance of digital technologies and e-commerce in the internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs. The study provides insights into the adoption of personalized digital marketing strategies, highlighting their potential for enhancing customer engagement, brand visibility, and online transactions.

## **5.5. Limitations**

Despite the valuable insights gained from the analysis of Swedish apparel SMEs' internationalization process, certain limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study relied on a limited sample size of two companies, namely Alpha and Bravo. The findings may not reflect the most recent developments or emerging trends in the internationalization of Swedish apparel SMEs. In conclusion, while the analysis provides valuable insights into the internationalization process of Swedish apparel SMEs, it is important to recognize the limitations associated with the sample size, reliance on self-reported data, the focus on company perspectives, and the temporal nature of the study. By acknowledging these limitations, future research can address these gaps and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in their international expansion endeavors.

## **5.6. Future Research**

Building upon the findings of this study, several avenues for future research can contribute to a deeper understanding of the internationalization patterns and strategies of Swedish apparel SMEs. Lastly, given the increasing emphasis on sustainability and responsible business practices, future research could explore how Swedish apparel SMEs can integrate sustainability considerations into their internationalization strategies. Investigating the challenges, opportunities, and best practices in adopting environmentally and socially conscious approaches to international expansion would contribute to both theoretical knowledge and practical guidance for SMEs aiming to align their internationalization efforts with sustainable development goals. In conclusion, future research in the field of Swedish apparel SME internationalization should consider expanding the sample size, adopting a longitudinal approach, exploring the impact of digitalization, analyzing government policies, and examining the integration of sustainability practices. By addressing these areas, researchers can provide valuable insights and practical recommendations to guide the internationalization efforts of SMEs in the apparel industry and contribute to the overall understanding of SME internationalization processes.

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## **Appendix**

### **Appendix A- Interview Guidelines & Interview Questions**

The data collection process for this study involved conducting interviews with carefully selected SMEs. This method was employed to examine the internationalization patterns of the participants and assess how they aligned with established marketing theories. The interviews also aimed to identify significant challenges encountered during this phase. Inquiries regarding the market selection processes of SMEs were guided by the principles of Systematic and Unsystematic International Market Selection (IMS) theories (Andersen & Buvik, 2002; Brouthers & Nakos, 2005; Musso & Francioni, 2014) and Relationship Approach theories (Andersen & Buvik, 2002). Questions about Customer Acquisition were framed based on concepts such as Relational Capital (Mertins et al., 2006), Customer Relationship Management (Payne & Frow, 2006; Hutt & Speh, 2010; Fawcett et al., 2014; Buttle & Maklan, 2015), and Dual Value Creation (Grönroos, 2000; Payne & Frow, 2006).

Questions probing Entry Modes were shaped by theories encompassing Exporting (Brouthers & Nakos, 2004; Zohari, 2008; Hutt & Speh, 2010; Singh et al., 2010; Wild & Wild, 2016; Keegan & Green, 2017), Contracting (Hutt & Speh, 2010; Wild & Wild, 2016; Keegan & Green, 2017), Strategic Alliances (Erakovic et al., 2006; Svetličič et al., 2007; Wild & Wild, 2016), Joint Ventures (Svetličič et al., 2007; Bruns & Volker, 2008; Wild & Wild, 2016; Keegan & Green, 2017), and Foreign Direct Investment (Wild & Wild, 2016; Keegan & Green, 2017).

Interview with internationalized SMEs (Odd Molly & J. Lindberg)

#### **Interview questions in English**

##### **General Information**

- 1) Name of the company
- 2) Country of origin
- 3) Position of the Respondent
- 4) Year of Foundation
- 5) Year of Internationalization
- 6) Number of Employees
- 7) Total annual sales

- 8) Products/Services/Field of business
- 9) Website/email/contact

### **Interview Questions**

1. Can you elaborate on your company's standing in the domestic market just before embarking on international expansion? Was this position of significance in the context of your internationalization efforts?
2. What served as the primary basis or main rationale behind your company's decision to venture into international markets?
3. Provide the names of the countries where your company conducts international activities, listed in chronological order from the earliest to the latest, along with the respective year of internationalization.
4. The proportion of the overall yearly sales generated from international markets.
5. Did the founder/owner or the management team of the firm possess any prior experience in internationalization or engaging in international business activities?  
  1. None 2. Very little 3. Medium 4. High 5. Very high.
6. How would you describe the speed of your firm's internationalization process?  
  1. Slow 2. Medium 3. High 4. Rapid
7. How would you rate the degree of resource commitment during the initial stage of internationalization?  
  1. Very low 2. Low 3. Medium 4. High 5. Very High. **Please state a percentage:**
8. 12. How did the formulation of strategies and methods influence the process of internationalization?  
  1. Unimportant 2. Of little importance 3. Moderately important 4. Very important
9. To what extent did the following factors contribute to your company's internationalization process? Please rank them based on their level of importance..  
  - 1 not important; 2 of little importance; 3 Moderately important 4 Very important
10. Similar market:
11. Growth opportunity:
12. Market Opportunity:
13. Market Knowledge:
14. Age of firm: Size of firm:
15. Similar business culture:
16. Cultural awareness:
17. Creativity/Innovation:
18. Local Network/relationships:

19. Foreign network/relationships:
20. Ability to create business networks:
21. Entrepreneurial activities:
22. Managerial motivation:
23. Management's ability to take risks:
24. Technological advancement:
25. Previous international experience of the management or entrepreneurs:
26. Entrepreneurial activities of individuals or management or the firm:
27. Risk-seeking behavior of entrepreneurs and management internationally:

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10. Which of the following options most aptly characterizes the process of internationalization that your firm has undergone?
- a. Step-by-step, risk-averse, slow, cautious process.
  - b. Entering into foreign markets through networks/contacts/partners.
  - c. Through international entrepreneurial activities of management/individual/firm, rapid internationalization.
  - d. Combination of a, b, and c.
  - e. Combination of a and b.
  - f. Combination of a and c.
  - g. Combination of b and c.
  - h. None of the above
  - i. Other, please specify:
  - j. International from the beginning

11. Which mode of entry most accurately characterizes the process of internationalization undertaken by your firm?

*Exporting Turnkey projects Licensing Franchising Joint Venture Wholly owned subsidiaries None of them  
Other, please specify:*

12. Kindly provide your assessment of the significance of the following factors within your firm.  
*1-not important; 2-of little importance; 3-Moderately important; 4-Important; 5-Very important Business network: Entrepreneurial activity:*

13. What methods did you employ to gather information about the foreign target market before entering that market?

14. Would you consider employing the same strategies and methods for international expansion that you utilized during your initial endeavor? Could you explain the reasons behind your decision to either maintain or revise these approaches?
15. What advice would you offer to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are in the process of preparing to internationalize? This advice could encompass strategies and approaches for the internationalization journey.
16. Further comments:

**Some more questions:**

17. Is the expansion into foreign markets, leading to the internationalization of your company, something you consider crucial for ensuring your company's future success?
18. What are the primary motivations, according to your company, for venturing into international markets and expanding its presence?
19. What challenges or hurdles has your company encountered or addressed while pursuing expansion, including any existing issues that have been dealt with?
20. Considering your viewpoint, what specific knowledge and expertise does your company currently identify as lacking for achieving success, including instances where you have already recruited such knowledge and expertise, like during the internationalization process?
21. What strategies do you intend to employ to acquire the required knowledge and expertise? Will you be seeking to hire new employees or procure these resources through services from external companies or organizations?
22. If this knowledge and expertise are unavailable for any reason, how might your company's future have been impacted?

**Thank you!**