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INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF CROSS- CULTURAL CAPABILITIES FOR INTERNATIONALISATION

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Keywords

Entrepreneurial Cross-Cultural Capabilities; Cultural Intelligence (CQ); Cultural sensitivity, Entrepreneurial International Experience; International Business Operations; Internationalisation

Abstract

In an era of unprecedented interconnectedness, facilitated by globalisation and technological advances that have streamlined international operations and communications, the world finds itself grappling with new complexities. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic has not only disrupted business but also generated new geopolitical tensions, reigniting a rise in nationalism that challenges the objective of maintaining a harmoniously interconnected world. International entrepreneurs navigate within a context that is both enriched and complicated by these shifts. While existing research has addressed the role of cultural intelligence in international business, a significant gap remains in identifying the specific competencies that entrepreneurs need to have or acquire for effective cross-cultural interactions. This study aims to fill this critical gap by introducing and rigorously defining the concept of Entrepreneurial Cross-cultural Capabilities (ECCC), thereby adding depth to the discourse on international entrepreneurship in today's complex global landscape.

Employing a multiple-case analysis methodology, the research features semi-structured interviews with international entrepreneurs from diverse cultural backgrounds. Grounded in cultural intelligence theories, the study provides a specialised ECCC conceptualisation that transcends basic cultural sensitivity and general leadership skills. It also delves into an in-depth analysis of international entrepreneurial experiences, unveiling the subtleties of cross-cultural business interactions.

The primary contribution is identifying and conceptualising entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities, shedding light on the subtle skill set crucial for thriving in multicultural business landscapes. This exploration has exposed common cultural traits that foster ECCC, elucidating the cultural elements that serve as catalysts for effective cross-cultural entrepreneurship. It also identifies the key factors that influence the applicability of ECCC, providing practical insights for entrepreneurs navigating new and diverse markets. Overall, two pivotal findings emerge: first, ECCC is unique across different organisational settings, and second, entrepreneurs can be categorised based on their levels of ECCC during cross-cultural encounters. These insights address a significant academic gap and offer an invaluable, context-specific

understanding of how cultural intelligence can be adapted for entrepreneurial activities in an international setting.

By exploring and rigorously defining the concept of ECCC, the research provides actionable insights and identifies potential areas of learning or improvement for entrepreneurs. This enables them, policymakers, and scholars to skilfully navigate the complex, culturally diverse, and politically charged landscape of international business in today's volatile global scenario.

Paper published

- Pennetta, S., Anglani, F. and Mathews, S. (2023), “Navigating through entrepreneurial skills, competencies and capabilities: a systematic literature review and the development of the entrepreneurial ability model”, *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-09-2022-0257> (**Appendix B**)

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List of abbreviations

Acronyms	Meaning
CCCs	Cross-Cultural Capabilities
CQ	Cultural Intelligence
EAM	Entrepreneurial Abilities Model
ECCCs	Entrepreneurial Cross-Cultural Capabilities
ECs	Entrepreneurial Competencies
IB	International Business
IE	International Entrepreneurship
ESM	Entrepreneurial Skills Model
SMEs	Small and Mid-size Enterprises

Statement of original authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The international entrepreneurship field is rich in new opportunities, and with the liberalisation of trade, domestic firms, regardless of size, find themselves competing in increasingly global markets (Acs et al., 2003; Kahiya, 2020; Rauch, 2020; Schramm, 2004). This evolution has been significantly influenced by globalisation, which has transformed the competitive environment for both large and small organisations (OECD., 2005; Radović-Marković et al., 2019; Storey, 2004).

The central interest in the international entrepreneurship field has thus become the issues surrounding internationalisation (Acs et al., 2003; Batjargal et al., 2023; Sorgner, 2023). Technological advancements have resulted in new opportunities for firms of all sizes to succeed in international markets (Ratten, 2023). Improved technology and communications have facilitated business activities, making geographical location less significant (Hervé et al., 2020). Moreover, reduced language barriers and decreased travel costs have made internationalisation activities more accessible for small and mid-size enterprise (SME) entrepreneurs (Liesch & Knight, 1999).

However, this period of opportunity is also one of significant challenges, with global upheavals and disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic and a resurgence of nationalism impacting the international business landscape (Bieber, 2022). In the wake of the pandemic, the global landscape has transformed into a fragile context, underscoring the critical necessity for entrepreneurs to be equipped with robust cross-cultural capabilities. Entrepreneurial Cross-Cultural Capabilities (ECCCs), introduced in this study, represent a novel framework that enables entrepreneurs to navigate, adapt, and strategize effectively in diverse cultural, business, and industrial environments. ECCCs go beyond existing frameworks like Cultural Intelligence (CQ) by addressing the specific challenges faced by entrepreneurs in managing internationalisation processes amidst global uncertainties.

Practical examples of ECCCs include tailoring communication strategies to align with cultural norms, navigating cross-cultural negotiations, and building culturally diverse teams to drive innovation. This fragility encompasses not just

economic challenges but extends to environmental, political, security, and societal realms, deeply influencing human perspectives on the future of globalisation (Pindado et al., 2023). The vulnerabilities exposed in global systems—ranging from supply chains to international cooperation—highlight the interconnected nature of these challenges and the pivotal role of cultural understanding and adaptability in business. The environmental crisis, intensified by the pandemic, necessitates an entrepreneurial approach that balances economic aspirations with ecological sustainability, requiring a deep understanding of diverse cultural attitudes towards environmental stewardship. Politically, the rise in nationalism and shifting power dynamics have created a landscape fraught with tensions, where entrepreneurs must navigate complex cultural and political sensitivities to maintain global business relationships (Albertoni & Wise, 2021). In this scenario, societal shifts towards resilience and community well-being underscore the importance of entrepreneurs' ability to understand and resonate with diverse societal values and norms. The growing emphasis on ethical business practices and societal impact demands a distinct understanding of different cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the looming spectre of de-globalisation (Antràs, 2020), characterised by protectionist policies and cultural rifts, makes cross-cultural competencies not just beneficial but essential for entrepreneurs. The potential move towards more isolated economic systems calls for a strategic cultural approach to uncover how entrepreneurs operate in international markets. In this evolving environment, the ability to adeptly navigate cultural traits and maintain ethical integrity is vital for sustainable entrepreneurial success. Therefore, in this fragile and uncertain global context, the imperative to equip entrepreneurs with comprehensive cross-cultural capabilities becomes more critical than ever. These capabilities are critical for entrepreneurs to effectively adapt, innovate, and thrive in a global landscape where cultural understanding is as vital as business acumen in shaping the future of international entrepreneurship.

All the above explains that these disruptions extend beyond health crises to include rapid technological advancements that reshaped the way entrepreneurs conduct business (Santos et al., 2023) and shifting stakeholder expectations. In this context, the importance of a cultural strategic cultural approach including cross-cultural communication skills in international business has become more pronounced.

1.1 Aim, objectives, and motivations of the study

Given this landscape, scholarly research has increasingly focused on individual interactions across cultures and how different cultures impact business performance. The shift in workforce demography due to globalisation, with organisations employing individuals from various parts of the world and relocating personnel for business purposes, has underscored this focus (Earley & Ang, 2003). The burgeoning interest in cultural intelligence (CQ) reflects this trend. CQ is posited as an essential intercultural capacity for individuals operating in international markets (Alon & Higgins, 2005). Studies have shown that CQ positively influences intercultural outcomes at individual, team, and organisational levels, affecting intercultural effectiveness, including job performance (Ang et al., 2007; Thomas et al., 2015), cooperation (Mor et al., 2013), creative collaborations (Chua et al., 2012), and reducing anxiety in cross-cultural communications (Bücker et al., 2014). CQ is recognised as crucial for leaders and entrepreneurs (Deng & Gibson, 2009; Kadam et al., 2019; Rockstuhl et al., 2011) to improve and speed up problem-solving and decision-making in ambiguous environments, which in turn results in trust development and negotiations (Abdel-Rahim et al., 2022; Caputo et al., 2019; Groves et al., 2015; Imai & Gelfand, 2010). It also has a positive effect on the overall effectiveness of international business operations (Pidduck et al., 2022).

This research has its foundations in the international entrepreneurship field where entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities support entrepreneurs in managing business activities beyond national borders. Specifically, this study aims to: (i) identify different cross-cultural capabilities, (ii) understand how cross-cultural capabilities impact on the internationalisation process, and (iii) disclose how entrepreneurs perceive their cross-cultural capabilities.

The motivations behind this study dwell on the fact that cross-cultural aspects add challenges and risks for organisations when working in multicultural environments. Cross-cultural interactions can lead to frustration because misunderstandings and misinterpretations can generate conflicts and difficulties in managing relationships (Young, 2013) and increase the occurrence of disagreements. Since multiculturalism is part of international business operations (Kangari & Lucas, 1997), managing different cultures is crucial to firm performance (Grisham & Walker, 2008; Hong, 2010; Huang, 2010; Ochieng & Price, 2010).

This study aims to strengthen both scholarly and practitioner understanding of the role of entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities in the international entrepreneurship field. To guide the reader, the thesis follows a logical progression, starting with the introduction of the research context and objectives (Chapter 1) and advancing through the literature review (Chapter 2), methodology (Chapter 3), data analysis (Chapter 4), and results and discussion (Chapter 5). The study concludes with a synthesis of contributions and practical implications in Chapter 6, which includes a detailed contribution map (Figure 6.1) summarizing the findings and their interconnections.

Chapter 2 offers a literature review on internationalisation from organisational to entrepreneurial levels, ending with a focus on individual cross-cultural capabilities and 3 research questions. Chapter 3 details the research design and methodology, followed by data analysis in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 integrates both the results and discussion, unpacking the findings within the broader context of existing research and engaging with the data collected to draw the research contributions. Chapter 6 is dedicated to outlining the study's main and secondary contributions, as detailed in the contribution map (Figure 6.1). This map not only summarises the contributions but also elucidates the interconnections among them. Within this chapter, each contribution is scrutinised for its practical and theoretical implications. The discussions include how each contribution addresses and fills a research gap. The thesis concludes with an outline of the limitations and suggestions for future studies.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 systematically reviews the literature across various levels, as introduced in section 2.1. The review includes an examination of international entrepreneurship within the broader scope of international business (section 2.2), and an analysis of the characteristics of international entrepreneurs, with a focus on their abilities (section 2.3). Section 2.3 also provides an extensive review of the terminology used in the field, including the terms “skills”, “capabilities”, and “competencies”. It aims to clarify how the terminology is used in this study by identifying the Entrepreneurial Skills Framework and the Entrepreneurial Abilities Model. Additionally, it explores the essential role of CQ capabilities for success in international entrepreneurship (section 2.4), investigating the influence of culture on international entrepreneurial activities and then discussing the impact of CQ on these efforts. The theoretical framework (Figure 2.5) for this investigation is detailed in paragraph 2.5, followed by the the research question in 2.6.

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 presents a synthesis of the literature at 3 levels, as presented in the research funnel in Figure 2.1. The 3 levels include: (i) international entrepreneurship from a broader international business perspective, (ii) international entrepreneurial, characteristics, skills and capabilities, and (iii) CQ capabilities for international entrepreneurial success.

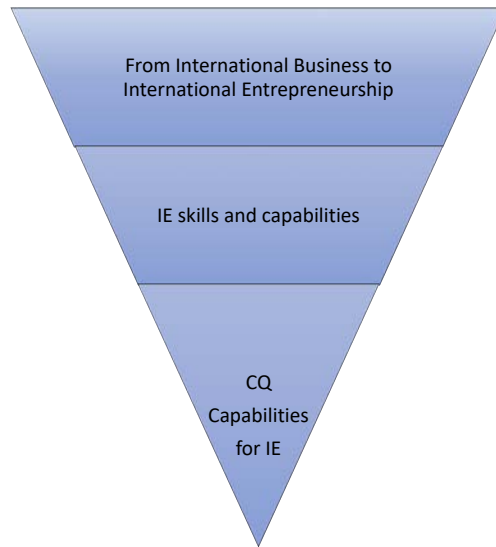


Figure 2.1 Research funnel: The “why” of the field, the “what” of the research and “how” entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities can be identified and strategised to benefit internationalisation

Internationalisation theories have thus far been predominantly located within the international business field and have focused on larger multinational firms. The literature review in this chapter shows that the contemporary focus is now shifting to the individual within the international business environment and how the individual has become the focal driver of internationalisation. The study, therefore, offers a comparison between international business approaches to internationalisation, highlighting a shift in the field where international entrepreneurship has become a significant topic in terms of internationalisation. This section will provide an overview of what drives scholars to focus on SMEs’ performance and, more importantly, the individuals making the decisions within these SMEs. International entrepreneurship, and in particular the international entrepreneurial skill set and competencies when operating in international markets are provided. Further, the emergence of cross-cultural challenges within internationalisation for these international entrepreneurs is highlighted. The literature recognises the need for a cross-cultural mindset for international market expansion, but currently, the literature remains ambiguous about the tangible competencies that entrepreneurs need to acquire, use or develop in order to effectively leverage these 21st century global opportunities (Felicio et al., 2012). The gap in the literature identified resides in a core entrepreneurial competence that impacts international entrepreneurship success. In fact, although cross-cultural

capabilities have been broadly covered in the international business literature, within the international entrepreneurship literature there is no research that identifies which individual cross-cultural capabilities are essential to assist firms in their internationalisation process. Considering that these individuals make the primary international market growth decisions within firms, it is a critical area of interest. This research addresses the gap in knowledge, about how those capabilities can be identified, studied and explored. Through the CQ lens, it will be possible to explain how individuals work and relate across cultures for internationalisation success. Through this perspective, this study will identify, analyse and strategise the entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities that enhance firm internationalisation.

2.2 Internationalisation theories: The transition from the international business to international entrepreneurship field

2.2.1 Internationalisation

The concept of internationalisation and the dynamics associated with it have been researched by many international business scholars for some time (Buckley, 2020; Buckley et al., 2017; Cavusgil, 1980; Gabriel & Rogers, 1962; Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975; Laufs & Schwens, 2014); Roque et al. (2019); (Vernon, 1992). These scholars have provided various perspectives within various contexts. For example, a classic perspective, Penrose (1959) investigated the firm level of growth through the “theory of the growth of firms”, explaining that internationalisation focuses on the firm’s core competencies and opportunities in the foreign environment. Some scholars, such as Welch and Luostarinen (1988), have suggested that internationalisation is more like a process in which firms increase their involvement in international operations. Others, such as Calof and Beamish (1995), have also viewed internationalisation as the process of adapting firms’ operations (e.g. strategy, structure, resource) to international environments. These key works describe internationalisation as a gradual firm-level process in which 3 concepts correlate to the internationalisation phenomenon: opportunity, commitment, and adaptation.

Seminal works by Johanson and Vahlne (1977, 1990) proposed that the internationalisation process is an incremental one, characterised by different stages. This stage model of the international process, originally developed for manufacturing

firms, is known as the Uppsala model (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). The Uppsala model highlights 4 main stages: no exporting, exporting via an agent, sale subsidiary, and wholly-owned subsidiary (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). These stages reflect the incremental process of acquisition, integration and use of knowledge in foreign markets. However, the Uppsala model does not identify the “why” or “how” of the start of the process, nor the mechanism by which knowledge affects commitment, as described in the “state and change aspect” of the model (Andersen, 1993; Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Importantly, there is limited empirical evidence that proves that internationalisation is an incremental process (Sullivan & Bauerschmidt, 1990). Some studies have shown that some firms skip stages and instead internationalise rapidly (Chetty & Campbell-Hunt, 2003; Chetty & Campbell-Hunt, 2003). As Forsgren (2002) found out, traditional internationalisation frameworks can fail to identify the important role played by individuals in understanding how the model is supposed to work.

Instead of an incremental approach, networks theorists have focused on the network as a bridging mechanism that allows more efficient internationalisation (Axelsson & Easton, 2016; Johanson & Mattsson, 1988). In this perspective, firms establish and develop their positions in the market in relation to other actors in a foreign network. For example, following market penetration, firms can gain international integration by using the network and getting involved with other firms in various countries (Johanson & Mattsson, 1988). The emphasis of this model focuses on bringing the involved parties closer by using the information that the firm acquires through establishing close relationships with customers, suppliers, the industry, distributors, regulatory and public agencies, and other market actors.

2.2.2 SME internationalisation

SMEs play an important role in any economy, contributing substantially to gross domestic product, output, social stability, job creation and employment (Hessels & Parker, 2013; Javalgi et al., 2011; Lin & Chaney, 2007). Research highlights that SMEs are also important for maintaining social welfare, directly impacting and, in some cases, alleviating poverty in developing countries (Ahimbisibwe et al., 2016; Kasekende & Opondo, 2003). Thus, the SME sector is vital for the world economy, as these firms improve employment, innovation, economic flexibility and entrepreneurship, which allows them to remain competitive, especially in turbulent

environments (Levy & Powell, 1998). Given that SMEs are often less constrained by a decision-making hierarchy and operate within less formalised work relationships, entrepreneurial managers tend to have a greater degree of flexibility and freedom when it comes to risk-taking (Ghobadian & Gallear, 1996; Hollensen, 2001). Some scholars have proposed that SMEs can generate a higher level of innovation in a way that promotes competition (Ahmed & Nwankwo, 2013; Kasekende & Opondo, 2003). For these reasons, research continues to focus on the impact that SMEs have on the economy, in addition to strategies that may enhance their overall performance (Lussier et al., 2016; Sari et al., 2008). In Australia, companies that have 5 to 9 employees are considered small businesses, those that have 20 to 199 employees are considered medium-sized businesses, and those with 200 or more employees are considered large businesses. For this research, based on the recent definition from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, SME are businesses with up to 199 employees (ABS, 2019). Definitions vary by country; for example, SMEs in the US are firms that have up to 499 employees (Highfill et al., 2020) and SMEs in Europe have no more than 250 employees (European Commission, 2020).

Generally, SMEs tend to internationalise by using their existing contacts to develop business opportunities, expanding geographically or culturally, regardless of which surrounding target markets are interesting strategically or financially (Wolf, 2011). During the pre-internationalisation phase, SMEs normally slowly proceed from the known to the unknown (Blunck & Martin, 2011) reflecting both an incremental and recursive learning curve. SMEs (non-entrepreneurial) typically use less risky strategies and less aggressive market entry mode for cost reasons, and without using any of the entry modes, such as licensing, franchising, strategic alliances, joint ventures, and acquisitions, described in the case of many multinationals (Hollenstein, 2005; Wolf, 2011). Although internationalisation models reflect a quasi-predictable sequence of stages, in reality these notions do not appear to be universally and specifically applicable to SMEs (Chetty & Campbell-Hunt, 2003; Wolff & Pett, 2000). International entrepreneurship is a critically important part of the broader SME research field, highlighting that individual decision-makers have a strategic influence on successfully operating internationally without going through these traditional stages (Ahlert et al., 2007). The next section outlines the processes that international entrepreneurial firms undertake to achieve internationalisation.

2.2.3 International entrepreneurial firms and internationalisation

The field of international entrepreneurship emerged in the late 1980s (Kohn, 1988; McDougall, 1989; Morrow, 1988), and continued through the '90s (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994) but despite this momentum, the field is still in the nascent stages. McDougall and Oviatt (2000) characterised international entrepreneurship as the intersection of entrepreneurship and international business, where the field has been influenced not only by business disciplines such as management and economics but also other disparate fields such as sociology, economic geography, psychology, political science and developmental economics (McDougall–Covin et al., 2014, p. 2).

The most important aspect of the international entrepreneurship field is that it focuses on the role of the individual entrepreneur within the internationalisation process of the firm, highlighting the importance of the “human factor” when creating economic value through cross-border entrepreneurial activities (Banerjee, 2014; Daszkiewicz, 2014, 2019; Duliniec, 2013; Forcadell & Úbeda, 2020; Kraśnicka, 2008; Nandram & Samsom, 2006; Tabares et al., 2021; Zucchella, 2021). Wright and Ricks (1994) reviewed the trends in international business research and described how the international entrepreneurship research domain includes entrepreneurial behaviour across multiple countries and cultures and the study of entrepreneurial firms engaging in business activities across national borders. Based on the observations of Zahra et al. (2000), the characterisation of Wright and Ricks is said to have “set the scene” for research in international entrepreneurship, explaining that in an international global environment, entrepreneurs and their businesses are less limited by the domestic market; in fact, even small businesses can enter the international business arena. Wright and Ricks (1994) also highlighted that entrepreneurial success is represented by an organisation’s ability to be internationally competitive, even if they are locally oriented by nature. Perényi and Losoncz (2018) found that the international entrepreneurship field includes not only entrepreneurial behaviour, capabilities and decision-making but also international entrepreneurial orientation and SME internationalisation through opportunity recognition, highlighting the multidimensionality within the field.

According to Zahra et al. (2000), the term “international entrepreneurship” was initially coined by Morrow (1988), who outlined the key roles of entrepreneurs

exploiting technology and cultural awareness to pave the way to unfamiliar markets for small organisations. Morrow's findings demonstrated that with the increasing global competition and advantages related to technology, entrepreneurs in the US were being forced to become more international. Subsequently, international entrepreneurship was examined by McDougall (1989), laying the foundation for academic studies in the field. McDougall's empirical studies compared local and international new ventures. The findings highlighted the significant differences between domestically and internationally focused strategies due to the diversity in customers and markets. McDougall and Oviatt (2000, p. 903) stated that, "International entrepreneurship is a combination of innovative, proactive, and risk-seeking behaviour that crosses national borders and is intended to create value in organizations".

This definition identifies the act of entrepreneurs who go beyond national borders to seek new opportunities in international markets. This definition also draws on the forces accelerating the internationalisation of entrepreneurial new ventures (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000). Whilst the definition is widely cited across international entrepreneurship studies, the definition was further refined by Oviatt and McDougall (2005, p. 540) with the inclusion of the concept of "across national borders", which highlights the importance of firms or groups of individuals who are able to discover, evaluate and exploit international opportunities. Oviatt and McDougall (2005, p. 540) definition states that the international entrepreneurship field relates to the "the discovery, enactment, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities across national borders to create future goods and services".

This definition reflects the international entrepreneurship description previously formulated by Shane and Venkataraman (2000, p. 218): "The process of discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities". As suggested, international entrepreneurship theory focuses on the individual entrepreneur as one of the main actors able to measure market opportunities with their unique abilities. That is, international entrepreneurs can develop stable relationships with other firms, suppliers, customers, government, and media. Entrepreneurs, equipped with experiential and objective knowledge, have the right skills and enough information to evaluate market opportunities, take risks and gain a competitive advantage when pursuing opportunities internationally (Zahra & Garvis, 2000; Zahra & George, 2017; Zahra et

al., 2000; Zahra et al., 2005). Given that international entrepreneurship implies opportunity identification in international markets, understanding how entrepreneurs make decisions is fundamental for the development of the field (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Zahra, 2021). Examining the entrepreneur may identify unique individuals who possess the right skills and information to manage market entry. From this perspective, the entrepreneur also is an opportunity seeker, sometimes with international experience, who can exploit the opportunities available in the market. Researchers in the field of international entrepreneurship (Baron & Tang, 2011; Busenitz & Barney, 1997; McDougall & Oviatt, 2000) have outlined how individual motivation, attitude, emotion and cultural background play fundamental roles in internationalisation decision-making (Mitchell et al., 2002). Similarly, Ucbasaran et al. (2009) highlighted how the entrepreneurial role accumulates over time, leading to decision-making for organisation growth and business expansion in international markets. The international entrepreneurship research makes an important contribution to the international business field and the theory of internationalisation of the firm. Because of the rich heritage of the international entrepreneurship school, we can consider it is a separate stream that resides within the framework of the theory of internationalisation. This specific value of the individual—the international entrepreneur—extends the field of research related to SME internationalisation.

To summarise, the contemporary international entrepreneurship field focuses on the individual entrepreneur who can enable internationalisation. Within international entrepreneurship, the internationalisation process heavily depends on the entrepreneur's motivation, attitude, emotions, background, vision, decision-making, cross-cultural skill set, and adaptation to different environments (Palmer et al., 2021; Perényi & Losoncz, 2018; Zucchella, 2021; Zucchella & Magnani, 2016). However, internationalisation models (Andersen, 1993; Calof & Beamish, 1995; Chetty & Campbell-Hunt, 2003; Forsgren, 2002; Johanson & Mattsson, 1988; Johanson & Vahlne, 1977; Sullivan & Bauerschmidt, 1990; Welch & Luostarinen, 1988) provide little insight into the know-how and capabilities required by individuals or entrepreneurs to manage and mitigate cultural differences in any of the aforementioned cases. International entrepreneurship has become a necessary field of research because of the complexity of the modern global business environment (Zucchella, 2021). The need to focus on the entrepreneur instead of looking only at business operations has

become crucial when investigating the dynamics required for effective internationalisation.

Most of the international business theories and concepts applied in the past are not always valid or applicable to face the ‘grand challenges’ in the global economic landscape (Buckley et al., 2017). The increasing use of digital technologies has made it easier for businesses to expand beyond local markets with the result of a world that appears much more homogeneous than before because of the decreased psychic distance (Autio, 2018; Ojala & Tyrväinen, 2009). From a practical perspective, there are ever more firms that are willing to enter large markets despite their lack of international experience (Clercq et al., 2005; Ibrahim, 2004). Sophisticated communication technologies also offer new opportunities to connect with other countries and reduce entrepreneurial uncertainty. Those individual motivations for internationalisation break the boundaries regarding theories, methods, or approaches to research.

Several scholars (Buckley, 2002; Dunning, 1989; Eden & Lenway, 2001; Lambell et al., 2008); Petricevic and Teece (2019); (Young, 2001; Zucchella, 2021) have suggested that the field needs reshaping and that more empirical studies within international business are needed because of the challenges raised by the current dynamic global market. The eruption of COVID-19 has also generated additional challenges and changes in the global environment which requires a theoretical restructuring of the internationalisation theories that need to be tested empirically in today’s global economy (Buckley, 2020; Juergensen et al., 2020; Rapaccini et al., 2020; Zahra, 2021).

Understanding how to improve SMEs’ success with internationalisation is imperative. SMEs have not only increased their international activities in recent decades, but different studies have highlighted how those companies perform better and grow faster (European Commission, 2010; Mayer & Ottaviano, 2007; Prashantham, 2005; Siedschlag et al., 2010).

2.3 The nature of entrepreneurial abilities

The argument in the field of international entrepreneurship is whether an individual can be “born” an entrepreneur or if entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and

competence are developed only via training and experience (Cooney, 2012). Entrepreneurial activities are heavily influenced by education and training and Gibb (1987) proposed that the entrepreneurial role can be acquired both culturally and experientially. Drazin (1985) also asserted that, rather than being a “magic” or “mysterious” profession based on inherited skills, entrepreneurship is instead a discipline that can be learnt. Based on these assumptions, it is possible to deduce that entrepreneurship education and training are critical for developing entrepreneurial abilities. Lichtenstein and Lyons (2001) examined entrepreneurs at the individual level and stated that they are heterogeneous and enter the field with varying degrees of expertise and different sets of skills. Thus, entrepreneurs, as described by Lichtenstein and Lyons (2001) are individuals with different personal characteristics, mindsets and level of skills and competencies and behaviours who would benefit from different “plans of action” to improve their abilities. The same authors also claimed that skill growth necessitates changes from the entrepreneurial side which is not always easy to achieve. Therefore, it is also necessary to comprehend that each entrepreneur requires a different “game plan” for developing their abilities, since these are influenced by cultural, social and economic aspects specific to the environment in which they operate (Shabbir et al., 2019). Gompers et al. (2010) looked at serial entrepreneurs’ evidence that they result to be much more effective when compared to others, due to their previous experience. These findings are supported by other studies into serial entrepreneurs (Paik, 2014; Shaw & Sørensen, 2019) which have confirmed that skills can be learnt from within the entrepreneurial environment.

The investigation of entrepreneurial capabilities is a dominant field of study. A recent study (Prüfer & Prüfer, 2020) revealed that entrepreneurial skills have become more significant in the current work market, concluding that future research of entrepreneurial skills is now a very attractive research area. Other studies (Foreby et al., 2016; Mayanja et al., 2021; Yeganegi et al., 2019) have focused on the importance of investigating entrepreneurial roles and abilities in today’s global economy, in which SMEs from all over the world are forced to face new challenges. A competitive environment characterised by uncertainty, complexity, and rapid technological changes means that SME leaders must develop new entrepreneurial skills and abilities to be able to compete. Recent literature suggests that entrepreneurs not only leverage existing competencies but also actively pursue new ones (Mayanja et al., 2021).

2.3.1 Use of terminology in the literature

Within the entrepreneurial field, as reported in Figure 2.2, there are different terms used by scholars to describe entrepreneurial abilities. Those terms include “skills”, “capabilities”, and “competences” or “competencies”.

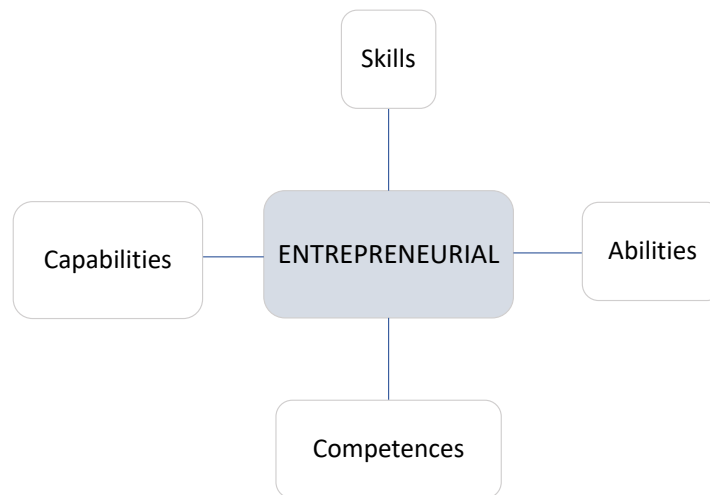


Figure 2.2 Terms used in the international entrepreneurship literature (Source: Author)

Most scholars prefer to use the term “entrepreneurial skills” to describe all the “entrepreneurial abilities” (Al Mamun et al., 2019; Boyles, 2012; Greblikaite et al., 2016; Prüfer & Prüfer, 2020; Ridho & Abdullah, 2020; Shabbir et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2007; Yiqing, 2017), while others refer to entrepreneurial “competencies” or “competences” (Al Mamun et al., 2019; Cortellazzo et al., 2020a, 2020b; Cubico et al., 2018; Kyndt & Baert, 2015; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010a, 2013; Morris et al., 2013; Postuła & Majczyk, 2018; Rezaeizadeh et al., 2017; RezaeiZadeh et al., 2016; Sajilan & Tehseen, 2015; Sudirman et al., 2020; Tehseen & Anderson, 2020; Tittel & Terzidis, 2020; Volery et al., 2015), often using those terms interchangeably. Another group of studies, when referring to entrepreneurial activity, introduced the concept of entrepreneurial “capabilities” (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015; Cui et al., 2016; De Massis et al., 2017; Li et al., 2018; Russell Charles & Newey, 2018; V. J. Thomas et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2019; Xu, 2017; K. Xu et al., 2019) but even in this case, the terms “capabilities” and “competences” are used to describe the same concept (Cubico et al., 2018).

Since there is currently no standardised terminology for entrepreneurial skills in the international entrepreneurship literature (Etemad, 2017), the thesis next outlines how the following terms are defined in this research: a) entrepreneurial skill/skills, b) capability/capabilities, and c) competence/competences/competencies/competency.

2.3.2 Entrepreneurial skills and abilities

The term skill as defined by Fayolle et al. (2006) relates to the concepts of competence, proficiency, characteristics, and the capacity to do something well—all of which are strongly connected to the concepts of knowledge and capability. Matthews et al. (1992) claimed that skills are not the same concept as abilities, suggesting that exercising skills produces proficiency in delivering specific tasks while abilities are considered more general traits. In contrast to this definition, Mischel (1973) argued that skills and abilities are similar constructs that fall under the general umbrella of “competences”, referring to an ability to do something well. Hayton (2015) provided a more specific definition, labelling “entrepreneurial skill” as the ability to identify consumers’ needs to pursue technical or market opportunities.

There are not only different definitions of entrepreneurial skills within the field, but also different views among scholars. According to Brush (2008), for example, entrepreneurial skills consist of a mix of social abilities, bootstrapping and envisioning, while Chell (2013) suggested a framework for identifying entrepreneurial skills that encompasses a wide range of entrepreneurial abilities and behaviours. Other academics have researched entrepreneurial skills specific to growth-oriented organisations in the entrepreneurship domain (Cooney, 2012; Kutzhanova et al., 2009; O'Hara, 2011). One of them is Cooney (2012), who identified 3 groups of entrepreneurial skill sets, described as entrepreneurial, technical, and managerial skills. The first group includes inner discipline, and the ability to take risks and be innovative, change-oriented, and persistent. Industry-specific operations, communications, design, R&D, and environmental observation were classified under the umbrella of “entrepreneurial technical skills” while planning, decision-making, motivating, marketing, finance, and selling constitute the Cooney (2012) contribution also highlighted that the level of education and training required to develop each of those skills depends upon the individual level of the entrepreneur, since each requires some level of transformation. Kutzhanova et al. (2009) also contributed to the

identification of entrepreneurial skills for growth-oriented organisations. They identified 4 groups of skills: 1) technical skills, necessary to generate business products or services, 2) managerial skills, essential to manage and administrate business activities, 3) entrepreneurial skills, useful for identifying new business opportunities, and 4) personal maturity skills, which include self-awareness, accountability, emotional skills, and creative skills. O'Hara (2011) instead identified 4 main elements within the context of growth-oriented organisations: the ability to discover and exploit a commercial opportunity, human creative endeavour, risk-taking, and organisational skills.

Within the entrepreneurship literature, personality traits are also described by different scholars as types of entrepreneurial skills, as discussed by as Kerr et al. (2017). Prüfer and Prüfer (2020) identified 11 categories of entrepreneurial skills ranked by importance as follows: 1) communication, 2) self-starter, 3) planning and organising, 4) flexibility, 5) collaboration, 6) creativity, 7) computational thinking, 8) problem-solving, 9) leadership, 10) active learning and 11) critical thinking. In this list, communication skills are ranked at the top and include oral communication but also writing, reporting and reading comprehension, knowledge of more than one language, and presentation skills. Drilling down further, Prüfer and Prüfer (2020) identified sub-dimensions of self-starter skills that included self-motivation, enthusiasm, independence, and spirit of initiative and inquisitive. What emerged from these findings is that creativity and flexibility are less in demand within the entrepreneurial context than before. Most studies on entrepreneurship agree that the core of entrepreneurial skills resides in the ability to create and recognise business opportunities. Another strand of the literature demonstrated that a successful entrepreneur needs to have a balanced set of skills rather than be good at one particular skill (Bublitz & Noseleit, 2014; Hartog et al., 2010; Lazear, 2004; Stuetzer, Obschonka, Davidsson, et al., 2013; Stuetzer, Obschonka, & Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013).

A recent investigation on entrepreneurial skills (Shabbir et al., 2019) aimed to identify the specific entrepreneurial characteristics that allow them to be classified with a set of distinct abilities that distinguishes them from other types of leadership or management skills. Based on this literature review, the risk-taking inclination is the

characteristic that most distinguishes entrepreneurs from other management or leadership roles.

2.3.3 Entrepreneurial capabilities

Although the concept of capabilities has started to be incorporated in the entrepreneurial field, it doesn't yet appear in many publications when compared to the concept of skills or competence. Based on studies conducted by Karra et al. (2008), the term “entrepreneurial capabilities” has been introduced in the entrepreneurship literature to explain new firms creation from a resource-based perspective. From this perspective, capability refers to the entrepreneurial ability to identify and acquire the necessary resources to act upon opportunities identified in the market, or to create new market opportunities. What emerges from this literature is that although entrepreneurial capabilities are crucial for success at the inception of the venture, they are less relevant when the venture matures. Entrepreneurial capabilities have been also identified by Cui et al. (2016), who categorised them into 4 factors—autonomy, innovation, risk-taking, and proactiveness—that are essential for the success of any entrepreneurial activity. De Massis et al. (2017) investigated the sector-based entrepreneurial capabilities, describing them as the capacities (i.e. processes and routines) of an entrepreneurial actor (entrepreneurs, entrepreneurial teams, and enterprises) to prospect, develop, and exploit opportunities by reconfiguring human, social, and financial resources within and across industry sectors.

International entrepreneurial capability has been defined by Zhang et al. (2009) as a combination of international learning capability, innovative and risk-taking capability, international marketing capability, international experience, and international networking capability to leverage resources by exploring and exploiting international opportunities. These capabilities are critical for exploring and exploiting appropriate international opportunities and can also be considered “dynamic capabilities” to address the volatile business environment and achieve firm performance. Xu et al. (2019) conducted a study on immigrant entrepreneurs, researching entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities. Those capabilities were recognised as a mixed set of capabilities which include the capability to psychologically adapt (emotion management and positive mindset) and socioculturally adapt (cultural learning, language skills, and bicultural flexibility).

Another recent study that considers the case of scientist-entrepreneurs claims that entrepreneurial capabilities can be learned through university studies (V. Thomas et al., 2020).

2.3.4 Entrepreneurial competency

“Entrepreneurial competency” is another term often used in the literature (Kaur & Bains, 2013), although there are numerous definitions and descriptions. McClelland (1987) recognised 3 critical competencies distinctive to successful entrepreneurs in the early 1980s: proactiveness, motivation for achievement, and commitment to others. In McClelland’s (1987) study, these competences are characterised by a mix of abilities to see and act on opportunities, interpersonal skills and personal attributes such as being proactive, assertiveness and the ability to take the initiative. Seven other competencies were discovered by Mugione (2013): 1) efficiency and quality, 2) goal setting, 3) calculated risk-taking, 4) persuasion and networking, 5) systematic planning and monitoring, 6) information seeking, and 7) self-confidence and freedom. Priyanto and Sandjojo (2005) grouped entrepreneurial competencies in management, industry, opportunity and technical skills, while Kyndt and Baert (2015) identified behavioural indicators as a proximal outcome of 12 entrepreneurial competencies, from perseverance to social and environmental conscious constructs. Morris et al. (2013, p. 358), identified 13 entrepreneurial competencies using a Delphi methodology in a sample of students, including opportunity recognition, opportunity assessment, risk assessment and mitigation, conveying a compelling vision, tenacity and perseverance, creative problem-solving/imaginativeness, resource leveraging, guerrilla skills, value creation, maintaining focus yet adapting, resilience, self-efficacy, and building and using networks.

According to those definitions, the concept of entrepreneurial competency extends beyond the mere possession of certain skills but also includes the capacity to apply them in a given environment. Rowe (1995) also separated the concept of competence as skills or standard performance from the concept of competency as a specific behaviour. Hoffmann (1999) suggested 3 different ways to define competencies: (i) the standard of a person’s performance, result or output, (ii) observable output or performance, and (iii) knowledge, skills and abilities that present the underlying attributes of a person. Other research (Baum & Locke, 2004; Baum et al., 2001; Brophy & Kiely, 2002; Brownell, 2008; Woodruffe, 1993) identified

competences as a set of individual abilities, behaviours, attitudes, and knowledge that enable entrepreneurs to perform well. Other studies on entrepreneurial competencies have attempted to organise them in different sub-constructs (Cubico et al., 2018). For example, Man et al. (2002) identified 6 groups, including opportunity, organising, strategic, commitment, relationship, and conceptual.

Tittel and Terzidis (2020) identified entrepreneurial competencies through a systematic literature review, starting with Mitchelmore and Rowley (2010a) who generally described entrepreneurial competence as “a specific group of competencies relevant to the exercise of successful entrepreneurship” (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010a, p. 93). Tittel and Terzidis (2020) questioned the meaning of “specific group” mentioned by Mitchelmore and Rowley (2010a) to synthesise the state of the art through an entrepreneurial competence framework identifying 57 types of entrepreneurial competencies. Table 2.1 presents the most cited definitions of entrepreneurial competencies (ECs), adapted from Tittel and Terzidis (2020), and the related components.

Table 2.1 Most cited definitions of entrepreneurial competences, adapted from Tittler and Terzidis (2020)

Author	Definition	EC components
Bird (2019, p. 51)	“Entrepreneurial competencies are defined as underlying characteristics such as generic and specific knowledge, motive, traits, self-image, social roles and skills which result in venture birth, survival and/or growth.”	Knowledge Motives Personality traits Self-image Social roles Skills
Man et al. (2002, p. 124)	“Entrepreneurial competencies are considered a higher-level characteristic encompassing personality traits, skills and knowledge, and therefore can be seen as a total of the ability of the entrepreneur to perform a job role successfully.”	Knowledge Skills Personality traits
Mitchelmore and Rowley (2010a, p. 93)	“Entrepreneurial competencies have been identified as a specific group of competencies relevant to the exercise of successful entrepreneurship.”	A specific group of competencies

From these most cited definitions (Tittel and Terzidis (2020) it is possible to identify that the EC components in common are constituted by the concept of “skills”, “knowledge” and “personality traits”.

For the following study it has been possible to define those terms as follows:

- The term “skill” indicates a form of ability that can encompass genetics, but also includes abilities related to personality traits such as innovativeness, empathy, risk-taking, perseverance, performance orientation, emotional skills, or other forms of abilities that can be learned through educational programs and direct or indirect experiences. These types of skills include abilities that most education programs and universities aim to develop, including communication, leadership, planning and organising, decision-making, time management, problem-solving and collaboration (Bejinaru, 2018; Leon, 2017; Prufer & Prufer, 2020).
- The term “capabilities” reflects a level of ability that is contextualised and applied to specific contexts such as the case of cross-cultural capabilities for immigrant entrepreneurs investigated by K. Xu et al. (2019), the sector-based capabilities described by De Massis et al. (2017), those described by Mostafiz et al. (2021) for international entrepreneurs or even the concept of dynamic entrepreneurial capabilities defined by Lanza and Passarelli (2014).
- The concept of “competence” refers to the highest level of abilities, as per Kaur and Bains (2013) and Tittel and Terzidis (2020) conceptual papers. A similar approach was presented by Gonzalez-Lopez et al. (2021) who identified 6 areas of competencies based on the definitions of Man et al. (2002); Man (2001).

The review of these definitions has led to the Entrepreneurial Skills Framework (see Figure 2.3) and the Entrepreneurial Abilities Model (see Figure 2.4).

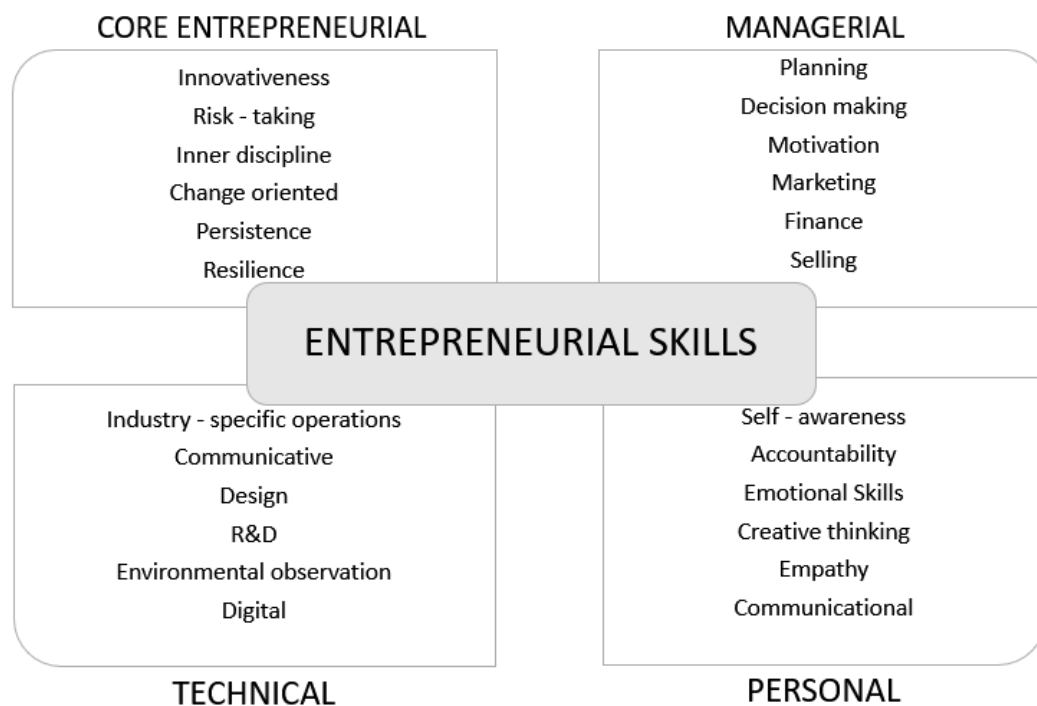


Figure 2.3 Entrepreneurial Skills Framework (Source: Author)

The proposed Entrepreneurial Skills Framework identifies the main areas of skills required for entrepreneurs, grouped into 4 macro categories:

- Core entrepreneurial skills include those skills that distinguish entrepreneurial skills from those related to any other managerial position. These skills are unique because they allow individuals to recognise market opportunities and act on them through innovativeness, risk-taking, inner discipline, change-oriented mindset, persistence, and resilience. Entrepreneurial resilience (Ahmed et al., 2021; Korber & McNaughton, 2018), although not a new type of skill, represents a critical skill for entrepreneurs to navigate challenges that have emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Björklund et al., 2020; Castro & Zermeño, 2020; Maritz et al., 2020).
- Managerial skills are those groups of abilities that allow individuals to conduct everyday business, in terms of management and administration of a company. They include activities planning, decision-making, motivation, marketing, finance and selling abilities.

- c) Technical skills are a set of abilities specific to a particular industry or field and are essential to deliver a product or a service. This group of skills includes knowledge about industry-specific operations, technical communicative skills, design, research and development, and environmental observation. Digital literacy or digital skills are essential to conduct business in the 21st century (Grundke et al., 2018; Hudek et al., 2019; OECD, 2019a; Santoalha et al., 2021; Van Laar et al., 2017, 2020). Entrepreneurs have had to quickly adapt and shift business activities to a new workplace characterised by high levels of digitalisation. They require specific skills to respond to the Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) environment (Rings & Rasinger, 2020).
- d) Personal skills impact the individual level and allow entrepreneurs to be sensitive to the environment in which the company operates. These skills include self-awareness, accountability, emotional skills, creative thinking, empathy, and communication. In the case of international business, individuals also need cross-cultural awareness.

The Entrepreneurial Ability Model (see Figure 2.4) allows us to classify the full range of entrepreneurial abilities and understand the connection or links between terms. The Entrepreneurial Ability Model can be used as a theoretical tool to link the concept of entrepreneurial skills and the highest level of entrepreneurial abilities, which corresponds to entrepreneurial capabilities and competencies, supporting the existing literature. This term aims to conceptualise the process that elevates skills to capabilities and capabilities to competencies, through to the level of use of specific skills in specific contexts.

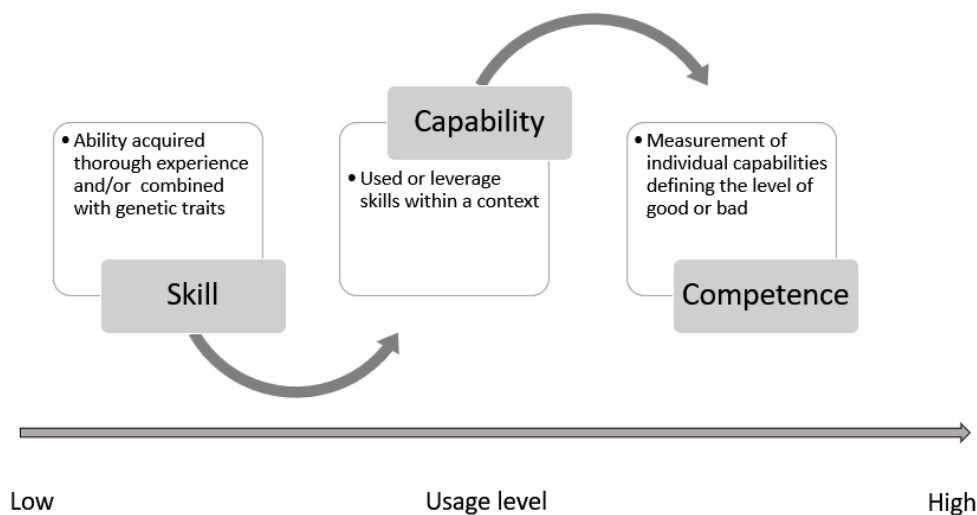


Figure 2.4 Entrepreneurial Abilities Model (Source: Author).

Based on the developed model (see Figure 2.4) it is also possible to suggest that if an ability comes from training or represents an entrepreneurial trait, it should be labelled as a skill. When a skill is applied to a specific work context, the experience of doing that generates a capability. It is not the case, for example, that dynamic capabilities (Lanza & Passarelli, 2014) have been coined as such and not as a skill because comes from the simple application of soft skills within a specific industry sector. Moreover, how well individuals can master a capability can represent a competence. In fact, competence can be seen as a higher level of use of a capability within a specific industry context. Another example is the digital skills that can be acquired through learning or experience. When these skills are applied within a specific industry sector or context (i.e. education, manufacturing, robotics, information technology and so forth), it becomes a capability. Based on how well this capability can be measured, a different level (i.e. high or low) of competence is generated.

2.4 The role of culture in the international entrepreneurship domain

We often take culture for granted until we encounter a different culture that highlights contrasts. For entrepreneurs operating domestically, the exposure to a different culture occurs when they hire people from other countries with different backgrounds or languages but, more consistently, during international operations impacting directly on everyday individuals' interactions with effect on business performance. Although for the last 70 years there have been ongoing conceptual

arguments about the relationship between national culture and entrepreneurship (Schumpeter, 1934) (Weber, 1930), specific empirical studies have been conducted in recent years. The awareness about connecting cultural aspects to entrepreneurial activities, especially when operating internationally across cultures, has increased inconsistently within the field of international entrepreneurship. Morris and Jones (1993), for example, within the context of corporate entrepreneurship, studied the relationship between individualistic characteristics, as described by Hofstede (1984) cultural dimensions, and entrepreneurship within organisations. In their empirical studies they found that individuals with extreme collectivistic or individualistic characteristics are associated with a low level of entrepreneurship, while entrepreneurs with moderate levels of individualism showed a high level of corporate entrepreneurship.

There is evidence that there are cross-national differences in entrepreneurial activities (Dheer, 2018) and some scholars have focused on interpreting differences in entrepreneurial activities between countries, analysing datasets from the GLOBE project (Castillo-Palacio et al., 2017; House et al., 2004) and Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (Reynolds et al., 1999) and comparing entrepreneurial activities across the globe (Bosma, 2013; Tan, 2002; Zhao et al., 2012). Other researchers have focused on entrepreneurship and its dynamic capabilities with specific emphasis on organisational capabilities, firms' capabilities or skills (Pennetta et al., 2024; Zahra et al., 1999; Zahra et al., 2006). The role of culture and how it shapes entrepreneurial perceptions and intentions has also been investigated (Shinnar et al., 2012). What emerges from other studies on cross-cultural entrepreneurship is that entrepreneurs share their beliefs across cultures (McGrath & MacMillan, 1992) and it is important to understand how those values transform behaviours across cultures. Another study conducted by Engelen et al. (2009) demonstrated the need to link cultural common values to behavioural outcomes across cultures. The cross-cultural psychology field offers studies on how values shape behaviour (Schwartz, 1994) and those studies can also be considered the foundation for cross-cultural entrepreneurship research.

Culture is a general term that can refer to the style or ethos of an organisation, national customs, food traditions, fashion, and a lot more. At the individual level, different definitions of culture have been developed over the years, starting with Hall (1976, p. 16), who described culture as characterised by ideas, values, attitudes and

patterns of behaviour. An important contribution has been made by Hofstede (2001, p. 21), who defined cultures as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another.” Hofstede developed 6 dimensions of culture into which individuals could be clustered: power distance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long vs short-term orientation, indulgence vs restraint. Hofstede’s perspective indicates that culture is acquired through generations and has a tendency to change with exposure to a different environment, external influences, or external changes. Fischer et al. (2009, p. 189) work supports Hofstede’s view, explaining that culture is shared between members of society and exists through interactions amongst individuals, so it cannot be considered simply genetic.

Aside from Hofstede’s 6 cultural dimensions, there are other factors on which culture can be analysed. In the intercultural space, both Hofstede (2001), the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) centre (Hammer et al., 2012), Hampden-Turner et al. (2020) with the Trompenaars’ model of national culture differences (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2009) and the Globe study (House et al., 2004) did a thorough investigation to measure people attitudes or preferences. Culture guides the way we do things, reflecting thoughts and behaviours. Livermore (2011) expanded and elevated Hofstede’s concept of culture, mapping 10 cultural values and providing further dimensions to identify individual orientations. Livermore (2011) identified individual challenges and opportunities to develop strategies and plans to communicate through diversity, despite any national model. Livermore included theories of cultural differences and behavioural sciences, including aspects of personality. In doing so, Livermore transcended Hofstede’s definition of culture based on the 6 dimensions of national cultures. Livermore and Soon (2015) suggested that generating stereotypes of groups based on nationality can generate bias and, therefore, it is best to assess cultural components at the individual level which can be influenced by personal traits, experiences, and exposure to other cultures.

2.4.1 Cultural intelligence and its impact on international entrepreneurs’ activities

The concept of CQ is based on the contemporary theories of intelligence. Two decades ago, Schmidt and Hunter (2000, p. 3) provided the following definition of

intelligence: “The ability to grasp and reason correctly with abstractions (concepts) and solve problems”. A few years later, Ang et al. (2007, p. 335) explained that the CQ concept was specifically defined to address the modern phenomena of globalisation, focusing on the intercultural environment, where it is essential to have the ability to adequately comprehend, interpret and behave across a multicultural setting. Specifically, researchers clarified how CQ theories can enable individuals to comprehend, interpret and behave adequately in multicultural context, described as follows: “a capability of an individual to function effectively in a situation characterised by cultural diversity”.

In other words, CQ represents a capability that is critical for navigating today’s increasingly global and diverse environment, allowing individuals to improve cooperation, communication, teamwork and performance (Livermore, 2009). According to Livermore (2009, p. 19), CQ is a multidimensional concept related to 4 different dimensions from motivational, cognitive, metacognitive and behavioural studies. This concept of CQ is different from other theories because it focuses on behaviours that can be learned through training and experience and are based at the individual level with respect to their differences during interactions. In other words, based on Livermore’s studies, CQ allows individuals to adapt to diverse situations despite their personal preferences while staying true to themselves. Livermore’s theory recognises how individual interests influence the effectiveness of cross-cultural interactions and the importance of possessing general knowledge about the potential diversity that could exist between 2 people or a group of people. CQ allows an individual to establish possible strategies to better or more effectively adapt to different communication styles and develop a suitable action plan for cross-cultural interactions (Ang et al., 2020; Ang & Van Dyne, 2015; Livermore & Ang, 2016; Livermore & Soon, 2015; Ott & Michailova, 2018; Rezaeizadeh et al., 2017; Rosenauer et al., 2016).

Table 2.2 synthesises a list of authors who have attempted to define cross-cultural capabilities) in different fields and contexts using similar terminologies.

Table 2.2 Studies focusing on cross-cultural capabilities

Author	Field	Terminology	Type of Study	Findings	Limitations
Adler and Bartholomew (1992)	International business	Global or transnational competence	Empirical, survey	Defined as specific knowledge, skills, and abilities	Considers only a management perspective
Gertsen (1990)	International business	Intercultural competences	Empirical, multiple case study	Defined as “The ability to function effectively in another culture constituted by 3 dimensions: as an affective dimension (based on personality traits and attitudes), a cognitive dimension (based on how individuals acquire and categorise cultural knowledge), and a communicative and behavioural dimension.	Focuses on personnel managers and returned expatriates
Holmes-Eber et al. (2016)	Military operations	Cross-cultural capabilities and cross-cultural competencies are used as two interchangeable terms	Empirical, survey	Constituted by soft skills (such as communication, negotiation, and language proficiency) including changing people’s attitudes plus further sociodemographic and experiential factors which affect cross-cultural capabilities.	Focus on US marine military operations

Leiba-O'Sullivan (1999)	International business	Cross-cultural competency	Conceptual	Defined as a mix of knowledge, skills, abilities, "other" attributes divided by stable and dynamics, based on Black and Mendenhall's (1990) three-dimensional taxonomy of cross-cultural competencies: self-Maintenance dimension, relationship dimension, and perceptual dimension.	Categories competencies as stable or dynamic. Addressing this distinction authors suggest approaches to measure each of these competencies.
Laughton & Ottewill (2000)	International Business	Cross-cultural capabilities	Conceptual	Constituted by cross-cultural sensitivity (as personal belief); cross-cultural business skills (referring to skills that can be learned or developed); international management competence (relates to some deep-rooted competencies)	Overlapping concepts: cross-cultural business skills overlap with international management competence and cross-cultural sensitivity overlaps with cross-cultural intelligence.
Johnson et al (2006)	International business	Cross-cultural competence	Conceptual	Developed a model to understand how those competencies can be fostered "...is an individual's effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad"	Applied in the international business field

Xu et al. (2019)	International Entrepreneurship	Empirical, qualitative Semi-structured interviews	Psychological adaptation capability, constituted by emotion management and positive mindset) and sociocultural adaptation (skills constituted by bicultural flexibility, languages, cultural learning).	Focus on Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in Australia
	Cross-cultural capabilities			

In the international business field, authors have used terms such as “intercultural competencies” (Gertsen, 1990), “global or transnational competence” (Adler & Bartholomew, 1992), “cross-cultural competency” (Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1999) and ‘cross-cultural capabilities (Laughton & Ottewill, 2000). These studies have provided generic descriptions of the organisational and managerial skill set that applies across industry sectors. Only Xu et al. (2019) defined cross-cultural capabilities in the international entrepreneurship field but their study was limited to immigrant entrepreneurs. Holmes-Eber et al. (2016) provided another definition of cross-cultural skills useful in the context of US marine military operations. What emerges from the literature, entrepreneurial skills, abilities, and capabilities are discussed in entrepreneurship literature with an interchangeable use of the words. The concept of cross-cultural capabilities has not been applied in a systematic way to a cross-cultural context.

The existence of a new era for global business and an environment in which diversity and multiculturalism merge, and the importance of cultural awareness to effectively conduct a business across borders, have strong impacts on the international entrepreneurship field. The COVID pandemic has accelerated the need for firms to be more effective in multicultural communication, where most business operations are online and technology may represent a further obstacle for effective communication. The need to develop specific entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities to overcome intercultural challenges and enhance firm internationalisation may be enabled through a better understanding and application of CQ.

2.4.2 Impact of cultural difference on entrepreneurial abilities

Cultural differences play a crucial role within the international entrepreneurship field because they can shape the way people prefer to communicate, plan, and execute tasks, impacting directly on the success or failure of international business operations (Akhter & Sumi, 2014; Al-Jubari et al., 2019). For example, social skills learned in one country may be ineffective or even offensive in another culture where different rules for social interaction exist (Ruzgis & Grigorenko, 1994). Those cultural differences directly impact the activities that international entrepreneurs carry out daily and enhance potential psychological challenges due to these diverse environmental characterised (Sam & Berry, 1995; Searle & Ward, 1990). International competition adds another level of stress that international entrepreneurs face when internationalising (Baron, 2008; Stephan, 2018).

Entrepreneurial factors such as individual motivation, education, unemployment, management experience, age, gender, prior experience, and family history distinguish one entrepreneur from another, impacting the growth of small firms (Storey, 2016). Firm factors include the specific sector in which the business operates, location, company size, ownership, and legal form. Strategy factors include the level of workforce and management training, use of technology, customer concentration, competition, state support, planning, adequate management recruitment, market positioning and adjustments. These factors are drawn from the literature that considers the reasons for firm failure and the barriers to expansion in the case of high-growth firms (Storey, 2016). What has emerged from this review is that the literature on entrepreneurial skills involves not only the ability to start a business but also includes the ability to grow a business through developing new skills, together with personal competencies that allow a business to grow (Storey, 2016).

Although competencies are individual qualities, a new study (Tehseen & Anderson, 2020) suggested it is important to investigate the link between cultural aspects and entrepreneurial competences from a sociological view. Cultures shape what is valued and how each entrepreneurial activity is conducted (Anderson & Obeng, 2017; Barringer & Ireland, 2019; Cunningham & Anderson, 2018). What has emerged so far is that, while numerous studies have been undertaken to uncover entrepreneurial abilities and reasons for success in the international entrepreneurship

area, few studies have identified entrepreneurial cross-cultural challenges and skill sets required to run businesses that transcend national borders.

2.4.3 Importance of entrepreneurial abilities in today multicultural and globalised markets

To develop or maintain business across borders, entrepreneurs need to develop essential cross-cultural capabilities which will allow them to successfully lead their business activities. Managing the operational side of the business is essential but today's globalised world requires entrepreneurs to effectively develop cultural competencies which allow them to continue generating revenues from their business. Knowledge about cultural diversity is important within a cross-cultural environment because it impacts the ability to minimise misunderstanding with someone from another culture (Wiseman et al., 1989). Cultural diversity, represented by multiculturalism, has been typically associated with the concept of internationalisation because it emerges when organisations operate beyond national borders (Konanahalli, Oyedele, Spillane, Coates, et al., 2014; Konanahalli, Oyedele, Spillane, & Marinelli, 2014) and people interact with other stakeholders with different nationalities. Cultural diversity also emerges when firms expatriate professionals or hire a local workforce in the host country (Bell & Young, 1998; Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). Diversity can also occur within domestic settings, when the population has different ages, backgrounds or races (Bennett & Bennett, 2004), so multicultural contexts become challenging with members with sociocultural differences (Black, 1999). Those differences influence communication and people's behaviours and generate a loss of time and resources in business operations (Kiznyte et al., 2015).

The recent COVID pandemic, for example, has increased the importance of better handling interactions across cultures, adding a further challenge in the whole global business environment (Zahra, 2021) that impacts not only people's emotions, routines, and business operations but has generated a stronger sense of nationalism across cultures. An important aspect of today's global world is the use of digital technologies for personal and business reasons. The disruption of networks based on personal, professional and business relationships has created negative effects on companies operating internationally (Zahra, 2021), especially for international ventures. The restrictions due to the pandemic have been translated into a need to find

different ways to connect, innovate and conduct business across borders. The importance of building better connections with people, despite their individual differences in religion, language, costume, political system, or communication style, becomes crucial for leveraging diversity and effectively navigating through global economic challenges.

2.5 Theoretical framework

In this research, the theoretical framework in Figure 2.5 integrates international business (IB), international entrepreneurship (IE), and cultural intelligence (CQ) to examine entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities for entrepreneurs.

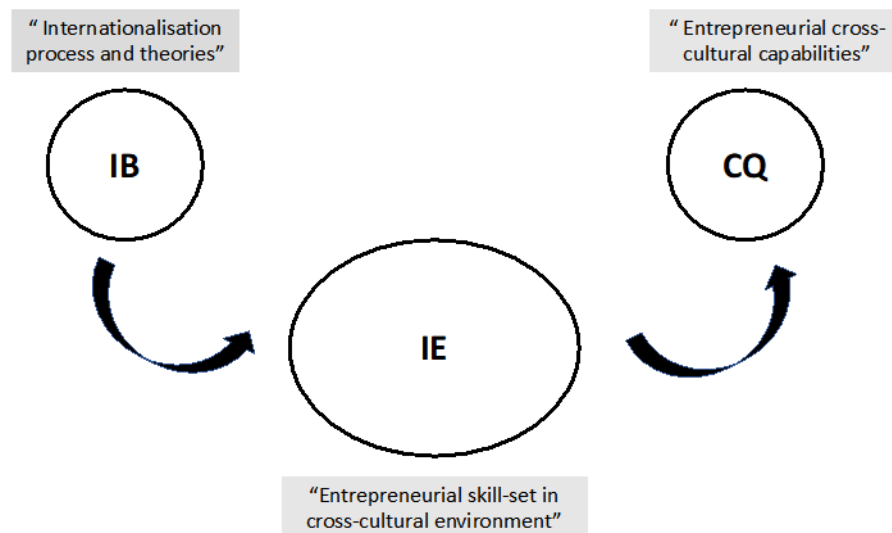


Figure 2.5 Theoretical framework (Source: Author)

To do so, the investigation of internationalisation theories within the international business field has been conducted to identify possible factors which might be relevant to consider for this study and applicable to the context of SME internationalisation. This preliminary review has identified the internationalisation processes and related theories which have been developed over time and were originally developed for the context of multinationals in the manufacturing sector. After critically comparing the different internationalisation theories developed over the years, it is clear that a shift in focus has emerged, from the firm to the entrepreneurial (individual) level. Other differences in the steps to consider when

undertaking internationalisation emerged when those theories originally developed for manufacturing firms were applied to service-oriented firms and when some of those steps resulted inappropriate in this field.

In summary, to investigate SMEs' internationalisation processes, a shift of focus of analysis from company to entrepreneurial level was essential because most of the previous theories generated from studies on multinationals generated were not so applicable to SMEs. There has been a transition from classic approaches to internationalisation provided by international business scholars to international entrepreneurship theories which focus on entrepreneurial behaviours and characteristics, in terms of capabilities, decision-making style and entrepreneurial orientation and approaches to internationalisation. In this context, entrepreneurial skills and experience in creating new opportunities and effectively managing international relationships become relevant. Since the emergence of cross-cultural challenges it has become essential to reconsider the role of culture during entrepreneurial international interactions. In this scenario, CQ is related to but goes beyond cross-cultural competencies (Johnson et al., 2006) because it considers intercultural capabilities as a form of intelligence that can be developed and measured. CQ includes "behavioural learning", essential for leveraging the opportunities of the 21st century world (Livermore, 2011).

This review has identified that the international entrepreneurship literature lacks a broadly accepted definition of cross-cultural capabilities. Since global competition requires a clear understanding of entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities to enhance international business activities, identifying the distinctive cross-cultural capabilities that entrepreneurs need to enhance the internationalisation process urgently requires further research. This research project aims to address these gaps, addressing the research questions presented next.

2.6 Summary of the research questions

Defining international entrepreneurs' cross-cultural capabilities fills the gap identified in the field of international entrepreneurship. This research aims to design a framework for assessing the cross-cultural capabilities of international entrepreneurs. These capabilities are expected to be influenced by international entrepreneurs to improve business performance in the international context. The specific focus of this

study will be SME entrepreneurs who internationalise and are exposed to a range of different cultures that require psychological and sociological adaptation. Previous studies on cross-cultural adjustment in psychology (Searle & Ward, 1990), cross-cultural adaptability (Kelley & Meyers, 1995) and cross-cultural competence, discussed within the international business field (Johnson et al., 2006), are limited to international students or expatriate employees.

From an entrepreneurial perspective, there is limited knowledge on the cross-cultural capabilities useful when operating in international environments and interacting with unfamiliar cultures. While existing research on Cultural Intelligence (CQ) provides valuable insights into cross-cultural competence, its focus has largely been on expatriates, students, or corporate employees, often overlooking the unique demands faced by entrepreneurs. For instance, a furniture manufacturer entering international markets must navigate supplier relationships across varying cultural norms in the production field, while a tech-driven service provider must adapt to differing expectations for customer support in diverse regions. These examples highlight how cross-cultural challenges can differ significantly by sector. Entrepreneurs operate in contexts characterized by higher uncertainty, rapid decision-making, and sector-specific dynamics, which CQ studies have not sufficiently addressed. Addressing these limitations through the lens of international entrepreneurship is critical for advancing the understanding of cross-cultural capabilities. Based on the current literature review and the identified gaps, the following research questions are examined:

- RQ1: How do international entrepreneurs perceive their level of cross-cultural capabilities?
- RQ2: Why are cross-cultural capabilities important to their business?
- RQ3: How can entrepreneurs be clustered, based on their cross-cultural capabilities?

Chapter 3: Research design

This chapter delves into the methodology adopted to research and explore cross-cultural capabilities in the context of international entrepreneurship. Employing a realism paradigm, the study took a qualitative, exploratory approach, using a multiple-case study design, executed in parallel to maintain independence across cases. The research examined historical data and includes a detailed interview protocol, alongside discussions on data collection, analysis methods, and the measures taken to ensure the study's validity and reliability. The structure of this chapter is organised as follows: In section 3.1, the research method and design are presented and the overall approach and rationale for the chosen research design is outlined. In section 3.2, the selection criteria and data collection methods are presented. This section details the criteria for the case selection and the procedures for data gathering. The methodology and analysis procedures are further elaborated in section 3.3. This section explains how the data was processed and interpreted. The reasoning behind adopting a realism paradigm is justified in section 3.4. Finally, section 3.5 discusses the strategies employed to ensure the study's validity and reliability, including the development and application of the interview protocol.

3.1 Research method and design

To identify entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities in internationalisation, a qualitative approach was used (Eisenhardt, 1989) and a multiple case study design was adopted for this exploratory research. This is a broadly accepted and widely used research method (Yin, 2011) that can help with developing a much deeper comprehension of a phenomenon than a single case can provide (Chetty, 1996; Marschan-Piekkari & Welch, 2011). Yin's method, while empirical in nature, acknowledges the limitations inherent in any research methods but aims for a comprehensive and systematic understanding of complex issues in their real-life contexts, in line with post-positivist epistemology. In the international business field, the multiple case study method is the most used method (Welch et al., 2011). The procedure adopted in this study is the parallel design (Mills et al., 2010) where all the case studies are selected in advance and conducted concurrently, so that outcomes from one study do not influence the outcomes of the other case studies. These cases

often incorporate the dimension of time, with a retrospective approach looking at the case's historical information. However, changes over time are not considered in this study because it has been considered to be irrelevant for the research objectives.

Data collection was planned in 2 stages. Primary data were collected via semi-structured interviews, face-to-face and through online platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. The critical incident technique was used as an established analytical method that incorporates a set of procedures that go from data collection to data analysis and evaluations to interpret human experiences, behaviours, skills, and cross-cultural competencies—all traits applicable to the focus of this research (Chell, 2015). Participants were asked to provide evidence of their experiences most relevant to the phenomena under investigation. An incident described by an entrepreneur was named as a “critical incident”, referring to an event which made a significant impact on the process of internationalisation (Bianchi & Drennan, 2012). Secondary sources of data were considered, such as artefacts, field notes and company website content. Secondary data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Boyatzis, 1998). Multiple case studies allow for an in-depth analysis of the research topic within its contextual setting (Ghauri et al., 2020).

Although the analysis was conducted at the firm level, the unit of data collection was at the entrepreneur/owner level. This choice was justified by previous research on internationalisation which has suggested that the company's owner or founder can be identified as the single representation of the firm, particularly when it refers to the decision-making process (Jantunen et al., 2005; Mostafa et al., 2005; Reuber & Fischer, 2011). This choice is especially true in the case of SMEs, where decision-making power is generally concentrated in one or two individuals (Chetty & Hamilton, 1993). The Research Design Flowchart (see Figure 3.1) visualises the main stages of the research process, starting with the research design, data collection and data analysis. In this exploratory study, using Yin's multiple case study methodology, both Thematic Analysis and the Critical Incident Technique (CIT) were employed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. CIT allowed the researcher to conduct an in-depth exploration of specific, pivotal events that significantly impact entrepreneurial decision-making, providing detailed insights into the key motivations, challenges and strategies adopted during an internationalisation process. Thematic Analysis was used to identify broader patterns and recurring themes

across multiple cases, enabling the discovery of common factors influencing entrepreneurial behaviour. By combining both methods, the researcher effectively captured critical incidents that shaped outcomes but also contextualised these events within larger thematic patterns, thereby enhancing the richness and depth of the findings.

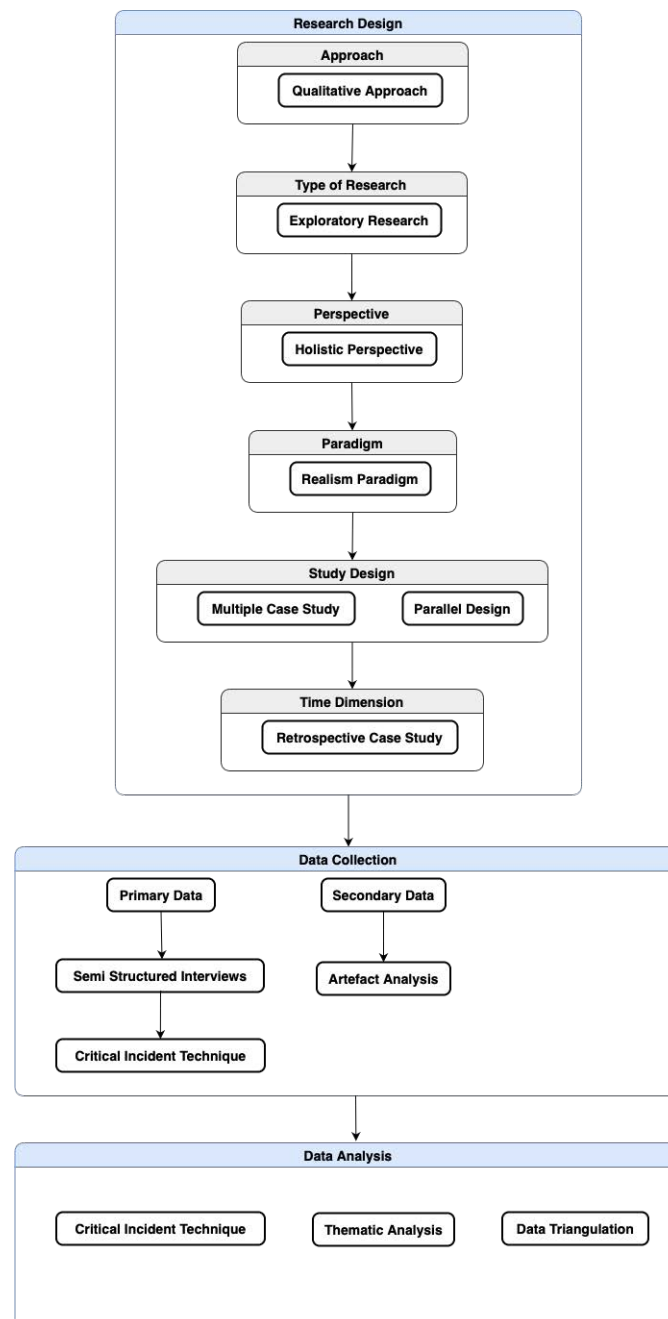


Figure 3.1 Research design flowchart

3.2 Selection criteria

To conduct this exploratory research, a multiple case study method (Yin, 1994) was adopted, using a holistic perspective to address the research problem (Gummesson, 2000). This research aimed to generate a theory underpinned by replication logic within the multiple case study methodology (Eisenhardt, 1989). Yin (1994) suggested that multiple cases should be regarded as “multiple experiments” and not as “multiple respondents in a survey”. Although representativeness was not the criteria for case selection (Stake, 1994), data-rich cases were carefully chosen to reflect literal and theoretical replication. Literal replication makes it possible to predict similar results for predictable reasons, while theoretical replication is useful for producing contrasting results (Yin, 1994).

The case selection process incorporated 2 steps. The first step involved selecting appropriate, qualified candidates for data collection. This screening phase involved selecting cases that met the following criteria: (i) an SME, (ii) already an internationalised company with at least 10% of the firm’s sales derived from international markets (Perks & Hughes, 2008), (iii) privately-owned firm, and (iv) a firm oriented toward services or goods. The second phase involved decreasing the quantity of these cases (Yin, 2003).

There are different opinions in the literature about how many cases are needed to produce valid and substantial data. There is no precise guide to the exact number of cases to be included in this type of research; therefore, the final decision was left to the researcher, who adopted the method of saturation by quantity and quality of information (Romano, 1989). Patton (1990) listed 15 strategies for purposeful sampling which can be used in contrast to the random sampling strategy. In this research study “maximum variation” sampling was the most appropriate for analytical and general purposes because it can include extreme cases. The choice of firms from both goods-oriented and services-oriented industries reflects the intention to capture variation in entrepreneurial contexts, ensuring the findings apply across diverse business models and market dynamics. This dual focus provides a richer understanding of how cross-cultural capabilities manifest across different operational environments. In each of those 15 strategies for selecting cases (Patton (1990)), the underlying principle in common is selecting information-rich cases worthy of in-depth study. This

is what the researcher intended to achieve in terms of selecting information-rich cases for this research. Eisenhardt (1989) recommended that cases should be added until reaching the “theoretical saturation”. Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended sampling selection to the point of redundancy, which was the method that was considered for this work. Patton (1990) noted that “there are no rules” for sampling size in qualitative research.

Eisenhardt (1989) suggested that for case studies, a range between 4 and 10 cases should provide sufficient data for analysis. Less than 4 cases would not generate theory and, from an empirical perspective, would not be sufficient. Hedges suggested a range between 4 and 6 (Hedges, 1985) as a reasonable number, and up to a limit of 12 cases to ensure that the qualitative data could be effectively integrated. A similar view was presented by Miles and Huberman (1994) who considered more than 15 cases as “unwieldy”.

In general, the accepted ranges fell between a minimum of 10 to a maximum of 15 cases. For doctoral studies, a range of 12 to 15 cases are considered enough for saturation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Perry, 1998). For this study, the target was 12 cases for goods-oriented firms and 12 cases for services-oriented firms. The decision to include 24 cases, equally divided between the two industry types, was driven by the need to ensure theoretical replication across contrasting industries while achieving sufficient depth and variation to validate findings through literal replication. This balance was critical for addressing the research objectives and providing actionable insights. These cases were organised in a pattern, based on theoretical replication, as presented in Table 3.1, where the research is presented based on 2 dimensions: theoretical and literal replication for the total 24 cases.

The 2 dimensions considered for this research are firm industry (physical goods-oriented and services-oriented products) and level of entrepreneurial experience (high and low).

Table 3.1 Two dimensions of theoretical and literal replication

				Dimension 1 - Industry	
				Goods-Oriented	Services-Oriented
Dimension 2 - International Experience	High			Six cases	Six cases

	Low	Six cases	Six cases
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3.3 Data collection method

It was considered essential to adopt a multiple case study design for this exploratory research into entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities across industries and international contexts. This approach provides a robust framework for examining how entrepreneurs adapt and apply these capabilities in diverse markets, identifying patterns and differences across cases (Batista et al., 2019; Wohlrab et al., 2018). Multiple case studies are particularly valuable in answering complex “how” and “why” questions, deepening our understanding of entrepreneurial decision-making and adaptation in different cultural settings (Chu & Zhu, 2023; Thorne & O’Reilly, 2021). This method enhances the validity of findings through data triangulation, drawing on evidence from multiple sources, which is crucial when examining dynamic, context-dependent cross-cultural capabilities (Cinthya Mônica da Silva, 2023; Esposito et al., 2021; Ponelis, 2015).

The flexibility of this design allowed the research to evolve as new insights emerged, ensuring contextual relevance across industries and countries (Franco et al., 2020; Hart et al., 2021). Multiple cases offered a more comprehensive view of how cross-cultural capabilities influence internationalisation strategies (Colombo et al., 2014; Urbinati et al., 2018), aligning with the exploratory nature of this study.

Twenty-four cases, 12 in each cluster (goods- and service-oriented firms), were completed after interviews with entrepreneurs and someone else who works closely with the entrepreneurs were conducted. This approach was adopted to guarantee data triangulation, with each interview lasting up to 60 minutes. All cases were drawn from contacts, including government organisations and international business associations, to achieve a range of different cases reflecting different cultural perspectives. Other sources were the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Eurochambres).

3.4 Literal and theoretical replication: A theoretical justification

Since entrepreneurship is a complex and multifaceted process that requires a wide range of skills and capabilities to succeed in a specific industry while

simultaneously adapting to the evolving and unpredictable demands of the business landscape, 2 dimensions were considered for literal and theoretical replication to validate this study. Those dimensions are i) the level of international entrepreneurial experience (High or Low) and ii) the type of organisations—that is, whether it is a goods or service-oriented SME.

The literature shows that the level of entrepreneurial experience impacts the success of international business operations (Arte, 2017; Lafuente et al., 2019). Serial entrepreneurs who continue to succeed in different businesses confirm that the more experience that is gained by an entrepreneur, the more success they're likely to encounter as they transfer across businesses (Dabić et al., 2021; Lafontaine & Shaw, 2016; Rocha et al., 2015). Although entrepreneurial experience is important for each phase of the business life, international entrepreneurial experience is particularly crucial for international operations (Al-Aali & Teece, 2014; Bose, 2016; Roudini & Osman, 2012; Urban & Sefalafala, 2015) where a complex mix of competences are required by entrepreneurs which may also vary depending on the type of industry or specific market in which the organisation operates (Mostafiz et al., 2022; Mostafiz et al., 2021; Obrecht, 2004). In addition, the role of entrepreneurial experience may differ in the context of goods versus service-oriented organisations during the internalisation process. For instance, international entrepreneurial experience in goods-oriented organisations may be relatively less significant than in service-oriented organisations, where greater challenges arise due to the high level of interactions required with customers and suppliers in providing. (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2010b; Nilsson et al., 2001).

For the purpose of identifying entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities, the industry type is also crucial. The main difference between service- and goods-oriented organisations is their different focus—one produces and sells physical products, while the other provides intangible services. This distinction is crucial from an entrepreneurial perspective because each has an affect on the nature of international operations (Al-Aali & Teece, 2014; Škrinjarić, 2022) and the different internalisation paths that could be chosen (Chidlow et al., 2019; Luiz Corrêa et al., 2007; Ojala et al., 2019). For example, managing logistics and supply chain management are activities specific to goods-oriented organisations, whereas managing customer satisfaction is critical for companies delivering services, particularly globally, where there are a

variety of preferences, differences in rules or standards, and perceptions of quality. Entrepreneurs of service firms face different challenges due to the nature of the intangible product they are internationalising. The literature supports this statement, with several scholars noting that internationalising a service is very different to internationalising a good (Buckley et al., 1992; Hong & Roh, 2009). The entrepreneurship literature highlights the importance of considering the unique challenges and opportunities faced by entrepreneurs in service- versus goods-oriented SMEs when internationalising (Kunday & Şengüler, 2015; Kunttu & Torkkeli, 2015; Steinhäuser et al., 2021).

3.5 Data analysis

Data generated by the data-rich cases formed the foundation of the constructed theory, where data reliability reflected the credibility of the theory constructed (Amaratunga & Baldry, 2001; Eisenhardt, 1989). The within-case and cross-case analysis technique was guided by Yin's (2009) established processes, where the within-case study aimed to become familiar with each individual case through a detailed write-up report (Amaratunga & Baldry, 2001; Eisenhardt, 1989; Perry, 1998). Cross-case analysis instead helped with the evaluation of each independent source of information through a descriptive analysis (Perry, 1998), providing a more analytically sophisticated analysis that going beyond initial findings (Amaratunga & Baldry, 2001; Eisenhardt, 1989; Perry, 1998). The within-case analysis allows for a thorough examination of each case, uncovering the unique characteristics and context of each and ensuring a deep understanding of individual case dynamics. This detailed exploration forms the basis for cross-case analysis, where comparisons are made to identify broader patterns, themes, and differences across cases. The combination of these 2 steps strengthens the research findings by ensuring that both the distinct elements of each case and the larger trends that emerge from multiple cases are taken into account, contributing to a more comprehensive and robust final analysis (Yin, 2009). A graphic representation of the thematic analysis flowchart used for this study is presented in Figure 3.2 (Wæraas, 2022).

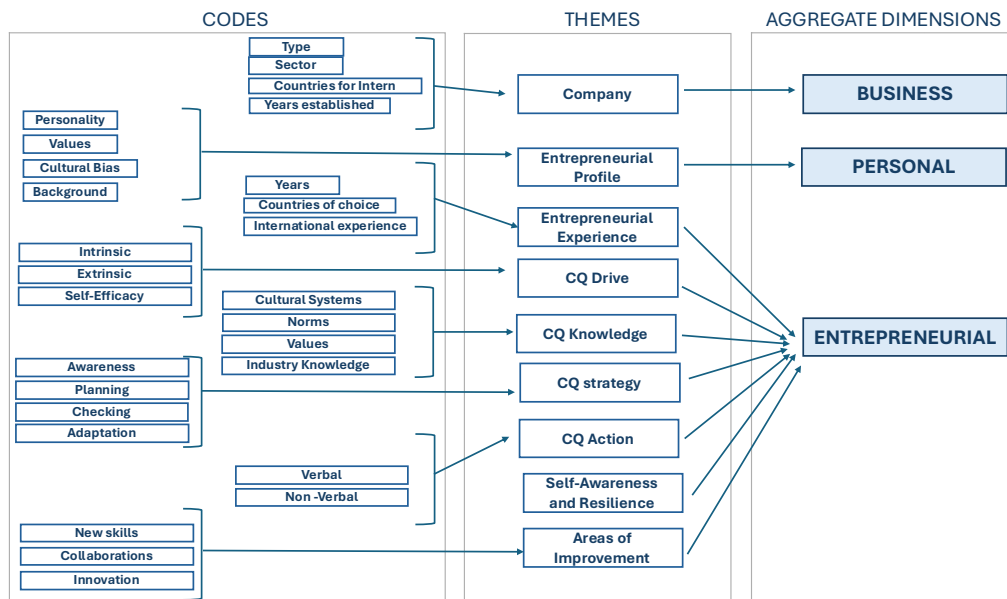


Figure 3.2 Evidence of the thematic analysis used for the study (Source: Author)

3.6 Paradigm justification

The realism paradigm was deemed the most appropriate for this research since the study aimed to explore and explain the distinctive entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities useful for the internationalisation process (Healy & Perry, 2000). This study adopts a realism paradigm, which asserts that reality exists independently of human cognition but can only be partially apprehended through socially constructed frameworks (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 2013). Ontologically, realism recognises the existence of both objective structures and subjective meanings. In the context of entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities (ECCCs), this means acknowledging the interplay between tangible factors (e.g., business environments and cultural norms) and entrepreneurs' subjective interpretations of these factors. Epistemologically, realism emphasises that knowledge is mediated by human perspectives and historical contexts, requiring interpretive methodologies to uncover deeper insights (Merriam (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). By adopting a realist lens, this study bridges the gap between positivist objectivity and constructivist subjectivity, employing Yin (2009) case study methodology to capture the complexity of ECCCs. This approach ensures that both structural influences and individual agency are examined, providing a comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural entrepreneurial dynamics. The realism paradigm is predominantly inductive in nature and so was considered appropriate for

this study that sought to reveal new research areas (Perry et al., 1999; Tsoukas, 1989). In-depth interviews provided internal viewpoints (Guba & Lincoln, 2004) and multiple case study interviews with data-rich sources provided a window into a reality that was triangulated with other expert perceptions (Perry et al., 1999).

3.7 Validity and reliability justification

Qualitative research requires a significant level of internal and external validity and reliability testing to be regarded as credible. In this study, the researcher incorporated several design checks and adhered to good practices related to qualitative academic research (Amaratunga & Baldry, 2001). Validity and reliability were evaluated in accordance with Yin (1994) suggested process. To assess construct validity, the case study tactics involved the use of multiple sources of evidence which were then triangulated and developed into a case study report. Key informants were then asked to review the draft. Those tactics were useful for data collection and composition. Internal validity was assessed by performing a within-case study analysis and then pattern matching, searching for the “why” behind relationships. Those tactics contributed to the data analysis. External validity was assessed using replication logic instead of sampling which makes more sense for a multiple case study research design. Reliability was assessed by developing a case study database and using case study protocol for data collection purposes (Parkhe, 1993; Yin, 1994).

Scholars contributing to the international entrepreneurship field (Andersson & Evers, 2015; Lu & Beamish, 2001) have demonstrated how entrepreneurs play an important role in firms’ internationalisation. As outlined in Chapter 2, according to the international entrepreneurship theory, entrepreneurs are the main actors who evaluate international business opportunities and set international strategies (McDougall, 1989). They are also generally the only individuals with decision-making power (Chetty & Hamilton, 1993). From the analysis of the most recent international entrepreneurship literature, it’s clear that more light needs to be shed on the concept of cross-cultural capabilities in the case of international entrepreneurs, where only some knowledge has been developed, specific to cases of immigrant entrepreneurs (Xu et al., 2019).

To recap, this study seeks to: (i) identify and explain international entrepreneurs’ cross-cultural capabilities, (ii) explain how entrepreneurs use those capabilities in their

internationalisation process, (iii) determine how entrepreneurs can be clustered based on their different cross-cultural capabilities.

This study intended to explore the interrelationships between individual and group level processes, such as adaptation to a new cultural environment within the process of firm internationalisation, contributing to an understanding of the multilevel dynamics underpinning firms' performance in an international context.

3.8 Interview protocol

The interview protocol was used to structure the interview process and ensure that each relevant aspect related to the research questions was adequately covered (Gummesson, 2000). The structure of each research question reflects the gaps found in the literature review. The interview protocol was divided into 7 groups (Appendix A). The first group consisted of warm-up questions to establish a connection between the interviewer and participant. These questions allowed the entrepreneurs to talk more about themselves and their business context before addressing more specific queries. The central part of the interview protocol contained specific questions about previous internationalisation experience and asked participants to provide anecdotes of failure or success in addressing cross-cultural issues. These questions helped to identify distinctive skills, and competencies achieved or those to be acquired for firm internationalisation. This central part was enriched by the inclusion of Livermore's CQ model (discussed in Chapter 2), which bridges the practical interview process with the theoretical underpinnings of CQ. This integration ensured a focused examination of how CQ's motivational, cognitive, metacognitive, and behavioural dimensions manifest within the entrepreneurial experience. The protocol, which was closely aligned to Livermore's theoretical framework, ensured that the researcher captured all the key competencies necessary for international business transactions, providing a robust foundation for assessing CQ in the context of firm internationalisation. The last section of questions focused more on how the entrepreneur overcame cultural barriers or knowledge gaps. Probes and prompts were used on different occasions to capture the interviewee's perceptions, as well as summative and illustrative questions to validate or confirm answers. Within the realism paradigm for a case study research, the interviewee's perceptions were of particular interest because they provided

triangulation data about the real world outside the interviewee and the interviewer (Perry, 1998).

Generally, probing questions started with “How...?” so it was not possible to reply with yes or no to those questions. Following Yin’s (1994) approach, probing questions formed the major part of the prepared interview protocol, which was necessary to generate a reliable framework for cross-case analysis. Some direct questions were used in certain circumstances to ensure that correct data acquisition. Moreover, although the prescribed interview questions directly sought to address the research objectives, in some cases more questions were asked to address the research goal and ensure correct data acquisition (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). To ensure triangulation, a second person who worked closely with the entrepreneur was interviewed on another day (Patton, 1990). For the second participant (a manager and co-founder), only the central portion of the interview protocol was applied. This included questions from groups 2 and 3 because the study’s focus on entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities made it irrelevant to explore their background knowledge, attitudes, or motivations from a purely managerial perspective.

Chapter 4: Data analysis

Chapter 4 offers a comprehensive data overview of the companies in section 4.3, including location, industry field, internationalisation areas, and the entrepreneurial profile. It then presents within-case analyses in section 4.4 that highlight entrepreneurial experiences, focusing on business capabilities, challenges that have arisen, and strategies used for international success in business operations. Most cases incorporated data obtained from interviews with managers about specific challenges, the capabilities needed to do overseas business, and successful strategies. The chapter also includes a cross-case analysis in section 4.5, where patterns have been identified across the cases. For the purposes of data triangulation, the last section discusses the managers' perspectives on the challenges and strategies related to the specific field of operation or countries for internationalisation.

4.1 Introduction

This study aims to identify key capabilities that entrepreneurs require when operating internationally, particularly in a cross-cultural context. Drawing on insights from CQ theories, entrepreneurship, and international business, this investigation aims to detect how these fields intersect in the modern, globalised, and multicultural market. The objective is to explore ECCC in action during international operations and to understand their relationship to the entrepreneur's personal traits and professional experiences, and their applicability to either service- or product-oriented SMEs. Given the increasing global interconnectedness and cultural diversity in today's business world, understanding these capabilities holds significant value for entrepreneurs who aim to thrive in a cross-cultural setting. This research, therefore, seeks to shed light on the function and impact of these capabilities in shaping a successful international business strategy.

4.2 Data overview

The data comprised of 17 rich cases for analysis with information about 17 companies operating in a variety of industries. As shown in Table 4.1, these companies are in the medical, ecological, food, software production, education, mining, and strategic consulting sectors. There are 2 types of companies in the dataset: those that produce tangible products (goods oriented) such as medical equipment, ecological products, and food, and those that provide intangible services (services oriented) such as education and strategic consulting. In addition to the types of companies in the dataset, the primary company location and internalisation countries are also considered. This data is presented in 2 distinct figures: Figure 4.1 depicts the locations of the companies, while Figure 4.2 depicts the countries in which the selected companies expanded internationally. The combination of data pertaining to company types, locations, and internalisation countries serve as a starting point for understanding the business landscape and how entrepreneurs make strategic decisions.

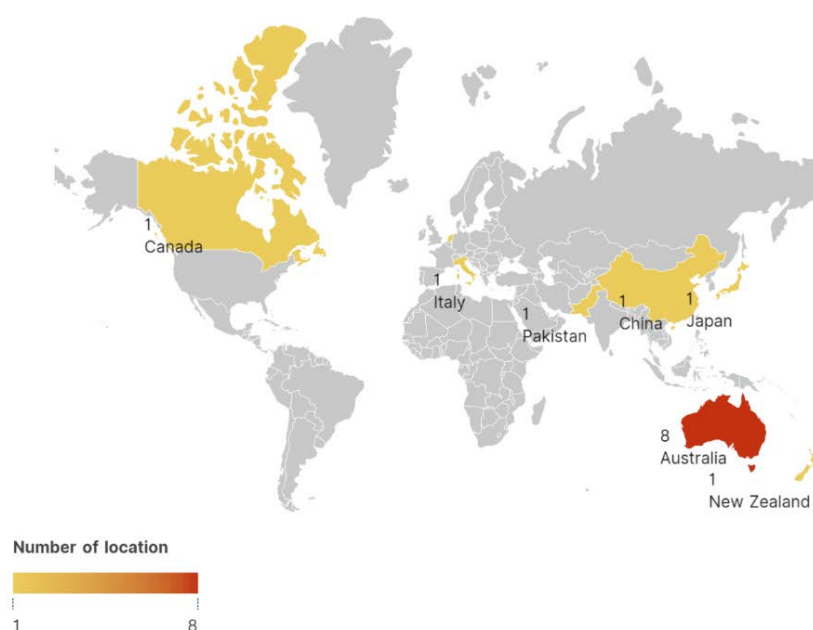


Figure 4.1 Company location density map (Source: Author)

The dataset under consideration includes companies operating in 11 distinct locations (Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Canada, Germany, China, Japan, South Africa, the Netherlands, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) that have expanded their operations into 35 countries. The countries of internationalisation are presented in Figure 4.2.

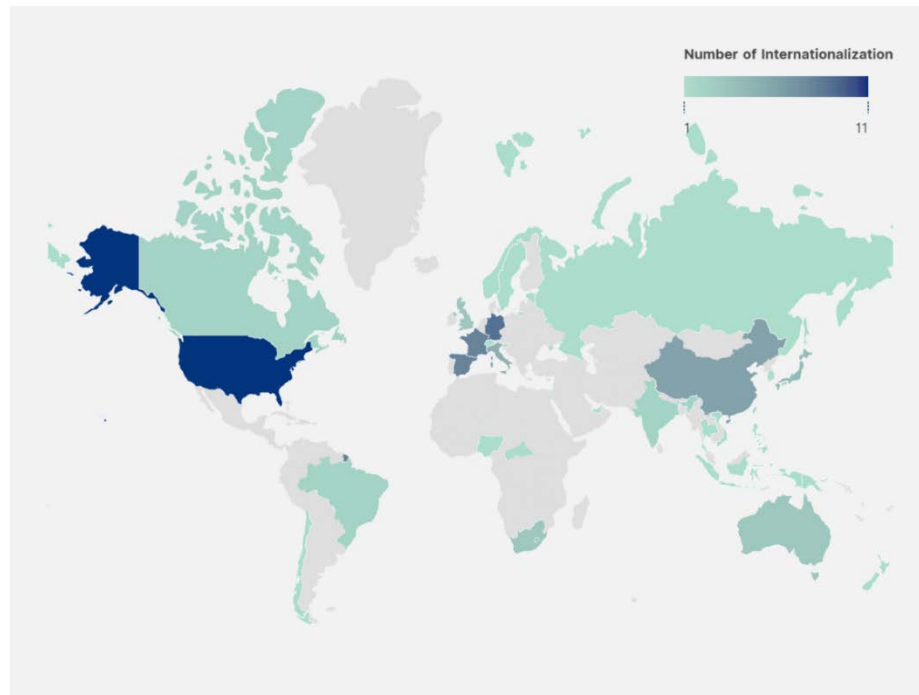


Figure 4.2 Countries of internationalisation (Source: Author)

Table 4.1 presents the 17 de-identified companies and offers a snapshot of the various SMEs considered across different industry sectors with the goal of grasping the largest variance possible in the generation of data and results. Table 4.1 classifies each company according to whether they primarily offer goods (G) or services (S). There was also consideration for (G+S) companies that provide primarily goods and occasionally some services (with a percentage of the overall revenues less than 10%) to support the commercialisation of their products. Table 4.1 also showcases the diversity of SMEs, in terms of the types of products or services they offer and their industry sectors. The choice to maximise variance when selecting these companies was intentional, to allow for a comprehensive understanding of how ECCCs manifest across various industry sectors, company types, and international markets. By employing this approach, the study aimed to ensure that the resulting data would provide a robust representation of entrepreneurial adaptability across different contexts and environments, thereby supporting more generalisable findings.

Table 4.1 Overview of SMEs

Company	Type G = goods; S=Service	Industry Sector	Years Established
A	G	Sustainability	5
B	G (+S)	Mining	30

C	G	Medical	4
D	S	Strategic Consulting/Education	5
E	S	Ecological Engineering	15
F	G (+S)	Medical	6
G	G	Food industry	8
H	G	Fashion	10
I	G (+S)	Toys	13
L	S	Strategic consulting	9
M	S	Strategic consulting	24
N	G	Food industry	37
O	G	Software production	18
P	S	Strategic consulting	16
Q	S	Strategic consulting	13
R	S	Education	19
S	G (+S)	Digital Marketing/Software IT	9

From Table 4.1, several trends can be identified.

- Strategic Consulting is the most prevalent industry sector among service-based SMEs, with 5 companies (D, L, M, P, Q) in this category.
- Food Industry and Medical sectors are popular among goods-based SMEs, with 2 companies in each sector (Food: G, N and Medical: C, F).
- Some companies offer both goods and services, indicating a diversified business model but also the need to provide a service to better commercialise their product for global competitiveness. Companies in this third category are those operating in the Mining, Medical, Toys, and Digital Marketing/Software IT sectors (B, F, I, S, respectively)
- A variety of industry sectors are represented, highlighting the diverse nature of SMEs and their potential to generate different and opposite types of results.

As previously outlined, the entrepreneur is the study's unit of analysis. For data generation, the aim is to explore and consider the overall international entrepreneurial experience from multiple perspectives, starting with the individual, which includes their diverse backgrounds and cumulative knowledge attained over time. The examination then shifts to an entrepreneurial standpoint, emphasising traits of

international entrepreneurial experiences. Subsequently, the inquiry delves into potential variations stemming from the particulars of international operations, considering elements such as the organisation's orientation (goods- or service-based), the type of products or services offered, and the destination countries for international expansion.

Table 4.2 presents an overview of the entrepreneurs involved in the case studies, providing a snapshot of their backgrounds, the types of organisations they operate (goods, services, or both), and the countries into which they have expanded. The table includes the following details for each entrepreneur: type (G = goods; S = service), nationality, gender, age, company location, and countries of internationalisation. Table 4.2 presents a comprehensive overview of the entrepreneurs under research, emphasising the diversity of backgrounds, company types, and internationalisation efforts. The following trends can be identified:

- a. The entrepreneurs represent a diverse range of nationalities, indicating a global perspective in the study. There are 14 different nationalities (Italian, Australian, Croatian, Canadian, German, British, Taiwanese, South African, Dutch, New Zealander, Pakistani, Chinese, American, South African) with 9 entrepreneurs holding double or triple citizenship (A, E, F G, L, M, O, P, Q).
- b. The entrepreneurs' ages range from 36 to 68, reflecting a wide range of experience levels and generational perspectives.
- c. Both genders are represented in the sample, with male entrepreneurs comprising the majority. However, there is still a considerable number of female entrepreneurs featured in the case studies.
- d. Company locations are spread across multiple countries, such as Australia, the Netherlands, Italy, China, Canada, Japan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, New Zealand, and Pakistan.
- e. The countries of internationalisation are diverse, encompassing North America, Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, and Oceania. Some entrepreneurs have expanded their operations to numerous countries, while others have a more focused international presence.

In considering Table 4.2, it is worth noting that 8 of the 17 entrepreneurs chose Australia as their company location, despite having origins in other countries. This

suggests that entrepreneurs' nationalities are not strongly correlated with the country in which they choose to operate, with the exception of Case B, where the entrepreneur's nationality aligns with the company location. For the remaining cases, entrepreneurs established their companies in Australia because, for the purpose of the exploratory study, Australia represents an already multicultural environment. This rich representation allowed the researcher to develop a robust source of different entrepreneurial experiences and international business expansion strategies across various contexts.

Table 4.2 Overview of entrepreneurs

Case Study	Type G = goods; S = Service	Entrepreneur Nationality	Gender	Age	Company Location	Country of Internationalisation
A	G	Italian/Australian	M	38	Australia	US, Spain, Singapore
B	G (+S)	Australian	M	46	Australia	US, South Africa, Indonesia, Chile, China, Brazil, North America, Africa, South Asia, Europe, Russia, Sweden, Norway.
C	G	Italian	M	39	Netherlands	Switzerland, South Korea, US, EU
D	S	Croatian	F	36	Italy	Singapore, EU
E	S	American/Australian	M	62	Australia	South Africa, US, Tasmania, South America.
F	G (+S)	Italian/Australian	F	56	Australia	Europe, Barbados, US, Israel
G	G	Chinese/Australian	M	37	China	China, Papa New Guinea, Taiwan, Germany, Korea
H	G	Canadian	M	36	Canada	Europe, US, UK
I	G (+S)	German	M	57	Australia	Germany, US, Japan, AU, China, Slovenia
L	S	Australian/New Zealand	F	47	Australia	New Zealand, China, US, Japan, UK
M	S	British/Australian	M	57	Australia	Philippines, Southeast Asia, Japan, India, Thailand, Nigeria, Estonia, Taiwan
N	G	Australian	F	53	Australia	China, Vietnam, Singapore

O	G	Taiwan/US/Italian	F	45	Japan	US, China, Japan
P	S	South African/Australian	M	68	South Africa	AU
Q	S	Dutch/ Sri Lankan/Australian	M	36	Sri Lanka	Europe, AU
R	S	New Zealand	M	49	New Zealand	Europe, Emirates, Singapore, Australia, US, India, Brazil, South Africa
S	G (+S)	Pakistani	M	38	Pakistan	UK, AU, Canada, France

For data triangulation, a second interviewee was sought, whenever possible. This person was ideally a manager or co-founder close to the entrepreneur. Table 4.3 provides a detailed summary of these managers, highlighting their varied backgrounds, company types, and internationalisation activities.

Table 4.3 Overview of managers

Case Study	Type (G =goods; S= Service)	Manager Nationality	Gen der	Age	Company Location	Country of Internationalisation
A	G	India	F	28	Australia	US, Spain, Singapore
B	G (+S)	US, South African/ AU	M	57	Australia	US, South Africa, Indonesia, Chile, China, Brazil, North America, Africa, South Asia, Europe, Russia, Sweden, Norway.
C	G	Italian	F	39	Netherlands	Switzerland, South Korea, US, EU
D	S	Italian	M	44	Italy	Singapore, EU
E	S	Australian/US	F	42	Australia	South Africa, US, Tasmania, South America.
F	G (+S)	/	/	/	Australia	Europe, Barbados, US, Israel
G	G	/	/	/	China	China, Papa New Guinea, Taiwan, Germany, Korea
H	G	/	/	/	Canada	Europe, US, UK
I	G (+S)	German	F	44	Australia	Germany, US, Japan, AU, China, Slovenia
L	S	/	/	/	Australia	New Zealand, China, US, Japan, UK
M	S	UK/AU	F	50	Australia	Philippines, Southeast Asia, Japan, India, Thailand, Nigeria, Estonia, Taiwan

Case Study	Type (G =goods; S= Service)	Manager Nationality	Gen der	Age	Company Location	Country of Internationalisation
N	G	Australia	F	27	Australia	China, Vietnam, Singapore
O	G	/	/	/	Japan	US, China, Japan
P	S	/	/	/	South Africa	AU
Q	S	/	/	/	Sri Lanka	Europe, AU
R	S	Italian/Australian	M	39	New Zealand	Europe, Emirates, Singapore, Australia, US, India, Brazil, South Africa
S	G (+S)	/	/	/	Pakistan	UK, AU, Canada, France

What is possible to observe from Table 4.3 is as follows:

- Managers also represent a diverse range of nationalities, including Indian, Italian, Australian, American, South African, British, and German and this diversity may contribute to a global perspective in the study.
- Both genders are represented in the sample.
- The ages of the managers range from 27 to 57, reflecting a variety of experience levels and generational perspectives within the sample.
- Countries of internationalisation were confirmed, as noted by the entrepreneurs with some occasional increments for a few companies.

In 8 instances, it was not possible to conduct a second interview.

4.3 Within-cases analysis

Each case is analysed in relation to the international experience, starting at the individual and moving on to the entrepreneurial level. The specific business-related capabilities that entrepreneurs require to manage international business operations are also examined, including possible challenges, opportunities, and strategies adopted. For data triangulation, as discussed earlier, data was also collected from another person (a manager or co-founder) who worked closely with the entrepreneur. In this case, data related to the international experience were collected as well as key capabilities required to conduct businesses operations overseas.

4.3.1 Entrepreneur A

Entrepreneur A, a male founder, established a sustainable goods-oriented organisation specialising in biodegradable alternatives to plastics. Hailing from an Italian entrepreneurial family, he developed aspirations of starting his own business from a young age. After gaining exposure to and learning from multiple countries, he decided to launch his company in a foreign nation. Entrepreneur A's extensive international experience includes living, working, and studying in various countries such as China, France, Spain, the UK, and Australia, reflecting a persistent interest in understanding diverse cultures. Although he has previously worked independently, this 5-year-old venture is his first experience as an entrepreneur working internationally.

His prior experiences in different countries have laid the groundwork for the knowledge he engages as an entrepreneur in his present company. Emphasising the importance of communication for successful international operations, Entrepreneur A has dedicated himself to learning multiple languages over the years, aspiring to master the traits and distinct communication styles of various cultures. He concentrates on effectively engaging with key stakeholders to procure manufacturing services and access raw materials, predominantly located outside Australia, to optimise profits. Currently, in addition to Australia, his company has expanded into Spain and the US. Table 4.4 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur A's background, experiences, capabilities, challenges, and strategies for success, offering insights into the founder's entrepreneurial journey and the factors contributing to the organisation's growth and development.

Table 4.4 Case 1: Entrepreneur A

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Worked and studied in various countries (China, France, Spain, UK, Australia), family background in entrepreneurship.
Entrepreneurial Experience	First experience as an entrepreneur with a sustainable goods-oriented organisation producing biodegradable replacements for plastics.
Business Capabilities	International business, cultural understanding, communication, stakeholder engagement.
Challenges	Engaging with key stakeholders, accessing raw materials, international operations.
Strategies for Success	Focusing on communication, targeting Spain and the US for internationalisation.

4.3.2 Manager A

Manager A, a co-founder with an extensive scientific background, acquired her education and experience from various countries, including India and Australia. Her academic journey, spanning from a bachelor's degree to post-doctorate research, culminated in her becoming a successful business owner through diligent work and research. While there is no indication of explicit strategies for adapting to diverse business environments, Manager A upholds transparency and naturalness as integral elements of her business approach. Her Indian heritage has played a significant role in cultivating her multicultural experience and understanding.

Singapore has emerged as a novel country for her internationalisation, presenting both challenges and opportunities for her enterprise. Despite potential language barriers during international operations, Manager A perceives no substantial hurdles from a managerial standpoint and contends that rudimentary or broken English can suffice for effective business communication. The fusion of Manager A's education, multicultural experience, and strategic acumen equips her to oversee international business operations and navigate the complexities and opportunities that arise.

4.3.3 Entrepreneur B

Entrepreneur B, an Australian male with an engineering background and a PhD, possesses 20 years of experience as the founder of a laser technology company. This enterprise offers solutions for military and civil applications in 35 countries. His international studies and post-doctorate experiences in Japan and South Africa have significantly contributed to the development of his global business strategies. Entrepreneur B emphasises the significance of fostering relationships, connecting with customers, and comprehending issues to secure commercial contracts that may take 3 to 6 months to fully understand. He asserts that language proficiency and employing local staff are crucial for navigating international transactions and minimising misunderstandings. Additionally, he underscores the importance of adhering to standards for entering various markets, such as the US.

Challenges encountered in international business comprise language barriers and divergent business practices. Entrepreneur B adopts a strategy that involves identifying common ground and capitalising on differences, as well as proactively responding to changing circumstances, such as during the COVID pandemic. By incorporating these

approaches, he is better equipped to manage the complexities of international business and foster growth for his laser technology company. Table 4.5 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur B's background, experiences, capabilities, challenges, and strategies for success.

Table 4.5 Case 2: Entrepreneur B

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Australian, engineering background, PhD, international studies and post-doctorate experience in Japan and South Africa.
Entrepreneurial Experience	20 years as a founder of a laser technology company providing solutions for military and civil applications in 35 countries.
Business Capabilities	Building relationships, connecting with customers, understanding problems, securing commercial contracts, meeting international standards.
Challenges	Language barriers, differences in business practices, market disruptions.
Strategies for Success	Identifying common ground, leveraging differences, being proactive in responding to changing circumstances (e.g. COVID).

4.3.4 Manager B

Manager B grew up in South Africa with a mix of European heritage, studying and working in various countries. He holds multiple passports. With an engineering background and a master's degree in a related discipline, Manager B gained experience in entrepreneurship for several years. He believes that coming from a country like South Africa, it is important to quickly develop an open mindset and a creative approach to generating business opportunities. Manager B speaks 5 languages fluently and believes that even speaking at a low level in the business environment is important to show effort and engage effectively. Manager B has learned to be sensitive to the environment and adaptable to allow flexibility. One of the essential skills he has developed is not forcing situations and learning to understand the way customers and stakeholders prefer to operate.

From a business perspective, Manager B's company predominantly caters to the mining sector, which makes it easier to work with other countries due to Australia's reputation in the field. Manager B states that Australians are generally trusted in this sector and that keeping values and understanding customers' priorities are crucial for success in business operations. Manager B attributes the success of the company where he works to good timing and the quality of the products offered. He also explains that despite the cyclic nature of the mining sector, safety products—the main purpose of the product they offer—are always crucial. He believes that success lies in not forcing

a specific way of doing things but in being open to understanding and respecting the stakeholders' perspectives. Manager B's multicultural background, language skills, and adaptability make him a capable entrepreneur for managing international business operations, tackling the challenges, and leveraging opportunities that arise.

4.3.5 Entrepreneur C

Entrepreneur C holds some international experience, having studied and lived in China and the Netherlands for the last 8 years. He founded this company in the Netherlands and despite being influenced by Dutch culture through his partner, he identifies himself more as a European entrepreneur rather than Italian or Dutch. He considers himself creative and resilient but acknowledges challenges in communication, particularly when working in the Netherlands. Some of his communication-related struggles included showing too many emotions or anticipating conclusions during meetings, which was perceived as unprofessional. He learned to adapt and delegate tasks based on the strengths of his team members. Language barriers, especially in establishing connections at social events, were also seen as a challenge.

As the founder of a microelectronics hardware company in the medical field, Entrepreneur C encountered difficulties in communicating the value of their product to pharmaceutical companies and biologists. He recognised the importance of networking, connections, and speaking the same "language" in the conservative pharmaceutical field. Working with a multicultural team and adapting strategies across cultures proved essential to his success. The entrepreneur also noted that bureaucracy in European countries could be a barrier, particularly when applying for government R&D grants. He believes that cultural competence involves having no bias and being flexible in modifying strategies as needed.

Table 4.6 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur C.

Table 4.6 Case 3: Entrepreneur C

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	European entrepreneur, studied and lived in China and the Netherlands, influenced by Dutch culture.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Founder of a microelectronics hardware company in the medical field.
Business Capabilities	Creativity, resilience, communication, delegation, networking, cultural adaptation, working with a multicultural team.
Challenges	Communication struggles, language barriers, bureaucracy, conveying value of product to conservative industries.

Category	Data Collected
Strategies for Success	Adapting and delegating based on team strengths, cultural competence, flexibility in modifying strategies, networking, connections.

4.3.6 Manager C

Manager C is a female co-founder with an engineering background and experience studying abroad in Germany and the Netherlands. She earned a PhD in the Netherlands and took entrepreneurship courses before starting her own business. Manager C's work experience has been primarily developed outside of Italy, which has led to a business approach that emphasises cross-cultural communication styles. With a keen interest in developing cross-cultural skills in the work environment. The markets that Manager C's company operates in are subject to new regulations in the US and EU, which are specific to the products they sell. The company is based in the Netherlands with international staff, making internationalisation a natural step from the outset. The company culture emphasises delegation, trust, and structured processes, which have been essential in managing international business operations.

Manager C found that approaching European countries was easier due to similar regulations and business approaches. However, she encountered difficulties with Japan and India due to language barriers and different business approaches, as well as a lack of connections. Bureaucratic differences also impacted the business significantly. Network building is crucial in this field to establish trust, which has been a key strategy for the success of Manager C. The combination of her education, work experience, and cross-cultural skills makes her a capable entrepreneur for managing international business operations, tackling challenges, and leveraging opportunities that arise.

4.3.7 Entrepreneur D

Entrepreneur D is a female entrepreneur originally from Croatia who grew up in Italy. She gained international experience from living in Singapore, Hong Kong, Colombia, and Thailand. She defines herself primarily as an Italian entrepreneur and appreciates both the flexibility of Italian culture and the hierarchical approach of Asian business culture. However, she has faced gender discrimination in some countries, which posed challenges in managing business activities. With 5 years of entrepreneurial experience, she leads a tech company in the education sector that

provides a subscription service connecting professionals with experts for consulting or educational purposes. To expand internationally, her company prefers to partner with companies that facilitate easy and safe growth. Flexibility has been an important lesson learned from her experiences. Challenges faced in international business operations include gender discrimination in Asian countries and Russia, having to respect hierarchy, and language barriers, and understanding market opportunities and stability.

The entrepreneur acknowledges the need for language skills, knowledge of regulations and local culture, and potentially hiring local people to connect with international markets. Her strategies when interacting in a cross-cultural business environment involve developing knowledge of rules, religion, and politics, and staying informed about the target country.

She defines cultural competence in her business as “understanding the country’s culture to sell more effectively and bring benefits to that culture” (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 Case 4: Entrepreneur D

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Female entrepreneur from Croatia, grew up in Italy, lived in Singapore, Hong Kong, Colombia, and Thailand.
Entrepreneurial Experience	5 years leading a tech company in the education sector providing a subscription service connecting professionals with experts.
Business Capabilities	Flexibility, understanding hierarchy, language skills, knowledge of regulations and local culture, hiring local staff.
Challenges	Gender discrimination, respecting hierarchy, language barriers, understanding market opportunities and stability.
Strategies for Success	Developing knowledge of rules, religion, politics, staying informed about target country, understanding culture to sell effectively

4.3.8 Manager D

Manager D, the co-founder of an Ed-tech company, is dedicated to bridging the gap between organisations and individual skills development in the international arena. With extensive experience in consulting and a strong European identity, he has successfully navigated the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic. In fact, COVID led to increased demand for his company’s services as people sought to adapt or create new business and job opportunities. One challenge he faced relates to privacy concerns among European clients, who are often reluctant to openly share their issues with other professionals online. To address this, the company has implemented a strategy of not sharing client information for both service providers and recipients.

Another challenge this manager identified was language, especially when business English is insufficient for engaging in international business activities in countries where English is neither the first nor second language. Education delivery methods also represent challenges, as preferences vary across countries. In some situations, more practical, hands-on learning was preferred, while others expected to start with high-level concepts before delving into specifics. He discusses how these differences exist within European countries and extends to working overseas as well, where even more diversity emerges. He emphasises that working with Asian clients from a European base can be particularly difficult due to significant differences in communication styles, such as differences in tone and delivery expectations. He states this diversity often leads to confusion, misunderstandings during service delivery, and varying perceptions of service quality. Despite these obstacles, Manager D continues to strive for success in delivering international education services through his Ed-tech company.

4.3.9 Entrepreneur E

Entrepreneur E has a background in biochemistry and is originally from the US. He moved to Australia as an adult, after completing his PhD. He completed an MBA in Australia after starting his own business. He holds an Australian and US passport, but states that he does not identify with any specific cultural background. He admits that he is not good at learning new languages. He founded a company in ecological engineering and believes that patience, persistence, and technical skills are essential for success in the field. In managing international business operations, Entrepreneur E finds it easy to work as an Australian entrepreneur in South Africa, the US, and South America, while facing differences when working with China and Japan. Some politically unstable countries prefer not to take risks and decline opportunities.

His strategy for CQ is respecting people and their culture, and he relies on hiring local managers to manage operations and connect with local people. Language skills are not seen by this professional as crucial for his business, as he is a native English speaker and often uses translation apps for simple transactions. He believes that being respectful, knowledgeable, and genuine is more important for success in cross-cultural interactions. Motivations for internationalisation vary, including opportunities, gaining knowledge, and creating new networks. His personal strategy for success in

cross-cultural interactions is building trust and removing prejudices by establishing personal connections. Table 4.8 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur E.

Table 4.8 Case 5: Entrepreneur E

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Background in biochemistry, originally from the US, moved to Australia, degree, PhD, and MBA.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Founder of a company in ecological engineering.
Business Capabilities	Patience, persistence, technical skills, respect for people and their culture, hiring local managers.
Challenges	Differences when working with China and Japan, politically unstable countries, language learning limitations.
Strategies for Success	Respecting culture, relying on local managers, being respectful, knowledgeable, and genuine, building trust and personal connections

4.3.10 Manager E

Manager E is an environmental scientist who has worked primarily in South Africa, where she lived for a while. With a mixed background and experience living in the UK and Australia, she cannot define herself with just one identity because she discusses how working and living in different places greatly shaped the way she currently runs her business operation. She emphasises that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on her business activities, with some countries facing restrictions and regulations related to the transport of specific seeds essential to deliver her business activities overseas. Language and cultural barriers also presented challenges, increased by the higher use of technology that at the same time allowed meetings and business operation continuity. She notes that perceptions of time during business interactions vary across countries and cultures and sometimes these different understandings of time can be a challenge.

Manager E focuses on market-driven places in which internationalise and emphasises the importance of understanding international markets in terms of needs and cultural requirements from an entrepreneurial perspective. To overcome language barriers she generally uses professional translators who know not just the language but also cultural aspects, to minimise the risk of misunderstandings. Manager E's background in environmental science and cross-cultural experience makes her a potential capable professional for managing international business operations, addressing challenges, and leveraging opportunities that arise in the field.

4.3.11 Entrepreneur F

Entrepreneur F was born in Italy and immigrated to Australia with his parents when he was 5 years old. He grew up in Australia but has also lived in different parts of the world. He has run various businesses in Italy and Australia, including import/export, media, international marketing, arts, and pharmaceuticals. He now focuses on producing and exporting organic cannabis in Italy, with the Australian market as the target. As an entrepreneur, he believes in constant adaptation and emphasises the importance of perseverance, adaptability, and maintaining enthusiasm in everyday business interactions. He relies on others when he feels the need to be equipped by additional technical expertise to manage aspects of his business, mostly related to the quality of the product they deliver.

For cross-cultural interaction purposes, he stresses the importance of understanding differences in mindset and being adaptable. He acknowledges that language skills can help in communication, but he believes that willingness to communicate is more important. He identifies resilience, adaptability, and enjoying the process of achieving goals as crucial capabilities for entrepreneurs, regardless of cultural differences.

When it comes to managing international business operations, he has chosen Italy as the production location for his medical cannabis business due to its cost-effectiveness, advanced regulatory environment for this specific industry, and organic production knowledge that is difficult to find in other countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected the industry, with more people becoming interested in natural health products. He emphasises the importance of communication, intention, and desire in business interactions and believes that his products have universal appeal for wellness and better health. Table 4.9 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur F.

Table 4.9 Case 6: Entrepreneur F

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Born in Italy, immigrated to Australia, lived in different parts of the world, various businesses in Italy and Australia.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Focuses on producing and exporting organic cannabis in Italy, targeting the Australian market.
Business Capabilities	Constant adaptation, perseverance, adaptability, enthusiasm, understanding mindset differences, relying on others' expertise.
Challenges	Communication, navigating different mindsets, adapting to various industries and locations.

Category	Data Collected
Strategies for Success	Resilience, adaptability, enjoying the process, understanding mindset differences, communication, intention, and desire in business interactions

4.3.12 Entrepreneur G

Entrepreneur G was born in Australia, in a family with a long history of Chinese and Taiwanese ancestry. He grew up in Papua New Guinea and studied business and marketing in Australia at a diploma level. Although he has spent most of his life in Australia, his family shares Asian cultural values, so he has difficulty identifying with a specific cultural background and likes to define himself as a “child of the world”. He speaks 4 languages, and he is willing to learn more. Working in coffee shops for a few years, he developed a passion for the coffee industry and sought to gain knowledge from different countries by visiting production and roasting facilities and farms, and working in bars to understand consumer preferences. He believes resilience is a key skill for entrepreneurs and emphasises the importance of adapting to different scenarios to understand different needs and delegate tasks when needed.

His company is registered in China but based in Papua New Guinea. They work with local producers to improve the quality of coffee beans and connect them directly to international markets. He notes that the coffee industry is fragmented, with different businesses focusing on specific aspects of the process. For this reason, he believes that most of the company’s success comes from this direct connection with local farmers, which sets them apart from other companies that act mainly as traders. He also discusses how the coffee industry has changed significantly in the last decade, with issues like mass production, climate change, and COVID-19 impacting production and quality at different stages of production.

Entrepreneur G’s company has expanded into Taiwan, Germany, and Korea. He explains that some internationalisation opportunities emerged unintentionally (e.g. Germany) probably due to the unique flavour of their products which matches the curiosity of some consumers that enjoy being exposed to new flavours. Challenges discussed include working in countries with different mentalities and acknowledging cultural differences. and more criticality during business interaction is perceived due to generational differences in expectations and mindsets, particularly in countries like China where hierarchy based on age is expected. Establishing trust in business

relationships is crucial, regardless of cultural background. Table 4.10 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur G.

Table 4.10 Case 7: Entrepreneur G

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Born in Australia, Chinese and Taiwanese descent, grew up in Papua New Guinea, studied business and marketing in Australia, speaks 4 languages.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Passion for the coffee industry, company registered in China but based in Papua New Guinea, expanded into Taiwan, Germany, and Korea.
Business Capabilities	Resilience, adapting, delegating tasks, connecting with local farmers, acknowledging cultural differences.
Challenges	Working with different mentalities, establishing trust, communication challenges, generational differences in expectations and mindsets.
Strategies for Success	Direct connection with local farmers, focusing on unique product flavours, establishing trust, understanding cultural differences

4.3.13 Entrepreneur H

Entrepreneur H is a Canadian male who speaks French and English. He started his first business at a young age and later expanded into a franchising model, working across Canada, the US, Ireland, England, Scotland, Australia, and New Zealand. Entrepreneur H's company is a fashion wholesale business that sells and represents different brands. The industry is highly competitive, with businesses constantly seeking better supply options and lower production prices. The company imports from various countries, including the UK and Italy, which are considered easy to work with. But he experiences difficulties with France due to regulations and the political climate.

His motivation to internationalise stems from personal needs and the desire to access resources. To manage cultural differences, he tries to create mental maps to remember what people value most in business and then meet their expectations. He sees the ability to wait and understand different types of people as a critical entrepreneurial capability. He values relationships and focuses on working in countries where institutions are important and trusted. He believes that understanding the unwritten rules of social life is crucial for business success, as well as negotiation skills and trusting others to handle collaborations and delegate tasks. He also acknowledges the importance of language skills and technology in facilitating communication but emphasises the significance of patience and listening. Table 4.11 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur H.

Table 4.11 Case 8: Entrepreneur H

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Canadian male, speaks French and English, started first business at a young age, expanded into a franchising model.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Fashion wholesale business selling and representing different brands, working across various countries.
Business Capabilities	Patience, understanding different types of people, mental mapping, negotiation skills, trusting others, delegating tasks.
Challenges	Navigating cultural differences, maintaining relationships, understanding unwritten social rules, language barriers.
Strategies for Success	Creating mental maps, focusing on trusted institutions, valuing relationships, leveraging language skills and technology, patience, and listening.

4.3.14 Entrepreneur I

Entrepreneur I is originally from Germany but has been living in Australia for the last 7 years. In relation to cultural values in life and business he feels much more Australian. He has also travelled extensively and lived briefly in France. He started his entrepreneurial journey at the age of 23 in the toy industry, focusing on scale modelling for adults. Over the years, he has learned to work with contractors from different countries and emphasises understanding other cultures and their business interests, considering language skills, adaptability, and willingness to learn about other cultures as essential factors for success. Generally, he relies on his own capabilities and claims to have never experienced stress due to business; in fact, he views himself as culturally resilient.

His company specialises in retail, modelling, and publishing within the toy industry. This entrepreneur believes that internationalisation is crucial for niche businesses to achieve the necessary market volume. Challenges include government restrictions and taxes, as well as varying customer expectations for service across different cultures. Marketing approaches also differ across countries, with design preferences varying between structured and colourful styles. He discusses the decision to internationalise as market-driven, focusing on countries where scale modelling is popular. Another aspect he emphasises is that working with local distributors is important for certain markets, such as Japan, where customers prefer buying through platforms like Amazon. He notes that on one hand internationalisation allows the company to produce more models and strengthen its position in local markets, but on the other hand, recent challenges have emerged due to logistics issues related to the pandemic (Table 4.12).

Table 4.12 Case 9: Entrepreneur I

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Originally from Germany, lived in Australia and France, travelled extensively, started entrepreneurial journey at 23.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Toy industry focusing on scale modelling for adults, retail, modelling, and publishing.
Business Capabilities	Language skills, adaptability, cultural understanding, resilience, working with contractors from different countries.
Challenges	Government restrictions and taxes, varying customer expectations, marketing differences, logistics issues due to pandemic.
Strategies for Success	Internationalisation, focusing on niche markets, working with local distributors, understanding cultural preferences

4.3.15 Manager I

Manager I is a co-founder with a marketing background. Born and raised in Germany, she has worked as a manager in various industries across a few different countries and industries. She speaks German and English and settled in Australia 7 years ago. She describes the company as specialised, offering a novel product that is not sold through retailers due to its unique nature. It is also culturally embedded since it replicates art pieces from specific locations around the world. Some limitations emerge due to the characteristics of the product, since the scale is based on the “European scale” standard, which can make it challenging to sell the product in the US market which uses a different scale. The target customers are mainly males. The company’s unique product and small size serve a specific niche of the toy market, with only a few competitors across the globe.

This professional focuses on product communication as she believes this aspect is crucial for expanding the business, specifically illustrating how their products and scales suits the replication of specific models. More generally, she believes that promoting the benefits that their specific products offer (e.g. an opportunity to develop fine motor skills and reconnect with themselves in a mentally safe way—2 unique value propositions) needs to be considered crucial for expanding into new markets where this industry is not well developed. She adds that the product they offer may be considered old-school for some countries, but it provides a valuable service by filling a gap in skill development that many people are missing. COVID-19 has affected customer behaviour in terms of spending time and money on hobbies, with some countries cutting back on discretionary spending.

Possessing a marketing background, she explains, allows her to better understand customer needs. Together with some international managerial experience in managing operations in different industries and countries, these facets makes her a capable professional for managing international business operations, addressing challenges, and leveraging opportunities that arise in the niche toy market industry.

4.3.16 Entrepreneur L

Entrepreneur L was born and raised in South Africa and later moved to the UK, New Zealand, and recently to Australia. She identifies as South African even though, as she mentioned, she might never live there again. She studied international business and international law and has a professional background in marketing within the technology sector. She started her own company, focusing on marketing in the digital space, particularly in the no-code space. She believes that having lived in various countries has helped her develop empathy and understanding of different cultures. However, she noted that at different times she has experienced stress and frustration in cross-cultural communication. Her definition of cross-cultural communication is understanding differences and being empathetic.

The main challenges she mentioned related to her industry include market differentiation, global competition, traditional industry practices, and recruiting skilled talent. She has “accidentally” worked with international clients from China, Japan, the US, and the UK but wants to focus on the Australian market before expanding further. Her strategy for internationalisation is not well defined. She started with countries that share the same language and culture, and then she moved on gradually to other countries. The only strategy she has used to effectively internationalise is developing partnerships, such as having an Australian partner in Japan, which has facilitated entry into certain markets.

Other challenges she has faced in entering international markets include understanding communication traits, non-verbal communication, and differences in service delivery expectations. She finds scaling her business to be a significant challenge, as well as adapting to the shifting market landscape involving the use of no-code platforms. Overall, looking at her experience as an entrepreneur, she compares the US and Australian markets and observes that there is more acceptance of

entrepreneurial failure in the US compared to Australia. She described this as an important cultural aspect to consider for entrepreneurship. Table 4.13 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur L.

Table 4.13 Case 10: Entrepreneur L

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Born and raised in South Africa, lived in the UK, New Zealand, and Australia, studied international business and law, marketing background.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Founded a marketing company in the digital space, particularly in the no-code space.
Business Capabilities	Empathy, understanding, cross-cultural communication, adaptability, partnership building.
Challenges	Market differentiation, global competition, traditional industry practices, recruiting skilled talent, scaling the business, shifting landscape.
Strategies for Success	Focusing on local market first, expanding to countries with shared language and culture, leveraging partnerships for market entry

4.3.17 Entrepreneur M

Entrepreneur M is originally from the UK, has travelled extensively in Europe and has lived in Australia for almost 30 years. He considers himself more Australian than British, and he speaks English, French, and a little German. With experience running various businesses, he currently works in strategic consulting as a digital transformation specialist. He believes humility, cultural sensitivity, and adaptability are important qualities for entrepreneurs when conducting international business. While he sometimes uses interpreters to overcome language barriers, he feels that speaking English does not present significant issues in business communication. He embraces new experiences and has an interest in learning from people of different cultures, which helps him better understand business situations. In managing international business operations, he has faced challenges with communication, particularly when working with Asian countries where concerns about “losing face” may prevent the clear expression of problems. Business time zones play a significant role in his selection of countries in which to operate and that is why they focus on the Asia Pacific region. He tends to avoid working with in Philippines due to previous experiences with corruption.

Having a diverse workplace is important to him, and to improve this aspect for his company, he organises a “Strategy Day” to align employees’ goals with the

company's goals. Beyond language barriers, understanding customer needs is crucial from his perspective, due to the nature of service-based business. He considers Australia to be more culturally closed compared to the UK or other European countries. He also believes that there is still a lot to learn about how to be competitive in the future for an Australian company. Table 4.14 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur M.

Table 4.14 Case 11: Entrepreneur M

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Originally from the UK, lived in Australia for 30 years, travelled extensively in Europe, speaks English, French, and some German.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Experience running various businesses, works in strategic consulting as a digital transformation specialist.
Business Capabilities	Humility, cultural sensitivity, adaptability, communication, embracing new experiences, diverse workplace.
Challenges	Communication barriers, cultural differences, time zones, corruption, understanding customer needs.
Strategies for Success	Focusing on the Asia Pacific region, overcoming language barriers with interpreters, aligning employees' goals with company goals.

4.3.18 Manager M

Manager M is an IT professional from New Zealand with a European background, holding an English passport and currently working in Australia. With over 30 years of experience working in the IT field across Europe, New Zealand, and Australia, she has learned over the years the importance of adapting her behaviour and communication style based on the situation and customers she interacts with. The company she works for provides IT services to small businesses and governments, and they have successfully expanded to Malaysia, the US, and Thailand. She embraces cultural differences, including language, and promotes remote work, sourcing talent from overseas when possible. However, she mentions that the challenges arise when working internationally, where conformity to Australian norms is expected. This conformity is difficult to achieve in India, where IT services are more abundant, and prices are low. She highlights how understanding the cultural context and the specific person you are interacting with is more important than just language skills. She believes in “finding common ground”, as mentioned at different times, to effectively communicate and do business, and their success in internationalising in English-speaking countries is a testament to that.

4.3.19 Entrepreneur N

Entrepreneur N is an Australian who initially pursued a teaching career before becoming an entrepreneur. She speaks only English and is involved in the business of producing beef for large supermarkets in Australia and exporting their branded products internationally. They entered the international market when Chinese importers showed interest in their products during an event in Australia, and recently expanded their business exporting to the Singaporean market. She believes it is important to understand the target market and its culture to conduct business overseas and she acknowledges her low international exposure. They chose international markets based on opportunities rather than using a specific strategy. Communication has been the main challenge for her so the company has employed intermediaries who are experts in trading their products and know the local languages. The goal for internationalisation for Entrepreneur N resides more in sharing their passion for food and creating connections, especially because the quantity they can produce is limited and they already serve Australian markets. She generally enjoys cross-cultural interactions and believes that knowing how to communicate is crucial for cross-cultural capability. She has not developed a specific strategy for managing cross-cultural interactions, but she recognises the need to have some knowledge of such interaction to be able to grow in larger markets.

In managing international business operations, challenges include different concepts of product quality, and different standards and requirements. To overcome these challenges, they consider it important to educate buyers on their beef products, and the level of quality offered, and develop their own brand that reflects Australian culture. They initially faced issues with pricing and exclusive relationships in the Chinese and Vietnamese markets. She mentioned how regulations are important when exporting food, especially meat, due not just to the quality of the product but also to different standards. They tried e-commerce through a “business partners matching” initiative, but language barriers remained a big issue. Table 4.15 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur N.

Table 4.15 Case 12: Entrepreneur N

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Australian, former teacher, speaks only English, involved in the beef production industry.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Grows beef for large supermarkets in Australia and exports branded products internationally.

Category	Data Collected
Business Capabilities	Understanding target market and culture, communication, creating connections, passion for food.
Challenges	Language barriers, product quality, different standards and requirements, pricing, exclusive relationships.
Strategies for Success	Employing intermediaries with language skills, educating buyers, developing their own brand, focusing on opportunity-driven internationalisation.

4.3.20 Manager N

Manager N is an individual who has lived most of her life in remote areas of Australia and completed her studies online. The place of internationalisation has been confirmed especially in relation to the challenges raised in negotiations with China. She believes that language skills are crucial in establishing better relationships. COVID has recently impacted on export activities due to government limitations and transportation. Manager N acknowledges that she needs to develop a better understanding of working with people from other countries. She does not consider herself resilient in cross-cultural environments as she is unsure of how to effectively manage conversations.

4.3.21 Entrepreneur O

Entrepreneur O can be defined as a global citizen because of her personal international history and work experience. She has experience living and working in Taiwan, the US, Japan, and Italy. She speaks Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, English, and Italian, and enjoys cross-cultural differences and personal growth through adaptation. She has started multiple businesses outside her original country (Taiwan), including one business in Los Angeles and another in China.

She states that communication and adaptation are important for internationalisation, as she believes that different cultures require different approaches in communication style and other aspects which are specific to the business and work environment. For example, she highlights the difference between direct communication in English-speaking countries and the respect and relationship-focused approach in Asian cultures, such as Japan, which are crucial to understand before being able to conduct business and develop trust. She also mentions the importance of being open-minded to manage conflict and adapt to different situations. Entrepreneur O's business is an app that allows parents to communicate with teachers when their children are in daycare or kindergarten.

She has found success in the US market and sees potential in Europe but acknowledges the need to adapt the app to each country's needs and culture. Her strategy for managing cross-cultural capabilities involves using networks to build trust and relying on others to navigate bureaucratic challenges. In managing international business operations, her main motivation is to use her own strengths as a woman in entrepreneurship working internationally. She recognises that language skills are essential for building international relationships but are not enough on their own. Her entrepreneurial cross-cultural capability involves the ability to build deep connections that enable trust, despite allocating people to a specific context or country of origin simply because of race or nationality. Table 4.16 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur O.

Table 4.16 Case 13: Entrepreneur O

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Global citizen, lived and worked in Taiwan, the US, Japan, and Italy, speaks multiple languages, enjoys cross-cultural differences.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Started multiple businesses outside her original country, including one in Los Angeles and another in China.
Business Capabilities	Communication, adaptation, open-mindedness, relationship-building, managing conflict, trust-building.
Challenges	Adapting products and services to different cultures, understanding communication traits, navigating bureaucracy.
Strategies for Success	Using networks to build trust, relying on others to navigate bureaucratic challenges, adapting to each country's needs and culture.

4.3.22 Entrepreneur P

Entrepreneur P, hailing from a European immigrant family, spent his formative years in Zambia before relocating to South Africa and ultimately settling in Australia a decade ago. Throughout his life, he has been immersed in a rich tapestry of cultural experiences, which have significantly influenced both his personal and professional development. Embarking on his initial entrepreneurial experience at the age of 25, Entrepreneur P eventually founded a successful insurance company with a presence in both South Africa and Australia during his later years. Catering to a diverse clientele, the company offers services to individuals and corporations across various sectors. Through his experiences, Entrepreneur P discovered that adapting his business practices or communication styles, such as modifying his accent, yielded no tangible

benefits. Instead, he focused on introducing innovative approaches to the relatively underdeveloped Australian insurance industry.

When it comes to managing international business operations, Entrepreneur P acknowledges facing challenges predominantly related to addressing the needs and perceptions of diverse populations, rather than explicitly business-related obstacles. He emphasises the paramount importance of comprehending contracts and legal aspects within the insurance industry. The decision to internationalise his business was prompted by the difficulty of expanding within South Africa; the enhanced reputation associated with an Australian enterprise facilitated increased profitability.

Table 4.17 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur P.

Table 4.17 Case 14: Entrepreneur P

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Comes from an immigrant family of European background, grew up in Zambia, lived in South Africa and Australia, influenced by multiculturalism.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Started first venture at 25, opened an office in Australia in the general insurance industry.
Business Capabilities	Understanding people's needs and perceptions, understanding contracts and legal aspects, maintaining authenticity.
Challenges	Difficulty expanding from South Africa, managing people's needs and perceptions, navigating legal aspects.
Strategies for Success	Internationalising to improve company perception, focusing on understanding contracts and legal aspects, maintaining authenticity in new markets.

4.3.23 Entrepreneur Q

Entrepreneur Q was born and raised in the Netherlands with parents originally from Sri Lanka. He speaks Hindi, English, and Dutch, and has a background in IT, economics, finance, and international relations. He does not identify himself as an entrepreneur, but he realised that from a young age, he has always looked for gaps in the market. He appreciates cultural change and has developed an inclusive environment with a diverse team. Over the years, Entrepreneur Q has learned to listen, understand, and adapt by conducting basic research and building knowledge. He has found it easier to engage with Latin American and Eastern European countries due to their openness and direct communication. Working with Asian countries has required a very different approach but is not considered difficult. From his experience, language barriers can be overcome. Using the English language is essential in the international workplace. He recognises that knowing other languages is also helpful since it allows

you to connect better and be flexible in different work-related circumstances. Entrepreneur Q's entrepreneurial capabilities involve identifying and leveraging personal or cultural weaknesses and strengths. He prefers to outsource capabilities when needed, especially in consulting, which requires customer sensitivity and the ability to engage. In his strategy and governance consulting business, he has faced both challenges and opportunities, particularly as COVID has limited globalisation benefits and international interactions. Table 4.18 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur Q.

Table 4.18 Case 15: Entrepreneur Q

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Born and raised in the Netherlands with Sri Lankan parents; speaks Hindi, English, and Dutch; background in IT, economics, finance, and international relations.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Strategy and governance consulting business.
Business Capabilities	Identifying people or culture weaknesses and strengths, leveraging them, outsourcing capabilities when needed, customer sensitivity, and engagement skills.
Challenges	COVID-19 limiting globalisation benefits and international interactions, varying communication styles across countries.
Strategies for Success	Listening, understanding, and adapting; conducting basic research and building knowledge; engaging with diverse countries and cultures; creating an inclusive environment with a diverse team.

4.3.24 Entrepreneur R

Entrepreneur R, born in Australia and with extensive international experience, founded a Registered Training Organisation within the education sector, driven by his passion for teaching and learning. He cherishes establishing connections with local communities during his travels and is a staunch advocate for delivering practical learning experiences. Rather than attributing his entrepreneurial success to any specific skill, Entrepreneur R credits his accomplishments to his cumulative experience and education.

His enterprise specialises in project management and leadership education—areas that have experienced a surge in demand within the market. Over the past few years, this entrepreneurial business has expanded to encompass international qualifications, aligning with both national and global competitors. Entrepreneur R perceives the education market as mature and predominantly English-centric, enabling his company to concentrate on English-speaking markets. He notes the impact of the pandemic on his business, which necessitated a reduction in the workforce but simultaneously provided new opportunities through complimentary online courses.

Emphasising the importance of diversity within his organisation, Entrepreneur R contends that staff diversity generates commercial opportunities. He regards networking as indispensable within the industry and acknowledges the need for a high degree of adaptability to navigate the varying education systems across cultures to successfully internationalise. Entrepreneur R remains dedicated to offering free resources and opportunities to individuals seeking to enhance their skills and secure international employment. Table 4.19 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur R.

Table 4.19 Case 16: Entrepreneur R

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Australian citizen, adopted, extensive global experience, values connecting with local people while traveling.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Started a Registered Training Organisation in the education sector, specialising in project management and leadership.
Business Capabilities	Networking, providing practical learning experiences, adapting to varying educational systems across cultures.
Challenges	COVID-19 impacting the company and staff, reduction in staff, need to align with international competitors.

4.3.25 Entrepreneur S

Entrepreneur S, a Pakistani entrepreneur, runs a software development company specialising in cloud-based platforms for e-commerce. He sees himself as a successful entrepreneur, generating not just profits but societal change. He decided to start his business internationally because there was no local opportunities for this market in Pakistan. To succeed internationally, Entrepreneur S believes in upgrading oneself as a global human, appreciating and accepting other cultures. He emphasises the importance of adapting to cultural norms and different contexts, especially in the wake of COVID-19. His company operates and partners with businesses in various countries, including the UK, Canada, Australia, France, and Ireland, with emerging markets like Bangladesh and Thailand on the horizon. Challenges faced by Entrepreneur S include developing a business presence in countries like Australia and the US and accessing funding to grow internationally. He notes that the market has changed over the past decade, with increased competition and growing importance placed on trust. Language barriers present another challenge, and Entrepreneur S stresses the need to study and understand cultural values and preferences to address business operations effectively. He suggests that more relaxed policies could help Pakistan and other countries extend businesses overseas.

Table 4.20 highlights key aspects of Entrepreneur S.

Table 4.20 Case 17: Entrepreneur S

Category	Data Collected
Individual Experience	Pakistani entrepreneur.
Entrepreneurial Experience	Runs a software development company specialising in cloud-based platforms for e-commerce.
Business Capabilities	Adapting to cultural norms and different contexts, appreciating and accepting other cultures, upgrading oneself as a global human.
Challenges	Developing a business presence in countries like Australia and the US, accessing funding for international growth, language barriers, increased competition, and growing importance of trust.
Strategies for Success	Studying and understanding cultural values and preferences, expanding to emerging markets like Bangladesh and Thailand, advocating for more relaxed policies to extend businesses overseas.
Individual Experience	Pakistani entrepreneur.

4.4 Cross-case analysis

After analysing various case studies, several key patterns emerged, which encompass commonalities of entrepreneurs with high international exposure, different focus and challenges based on the industry orientation, reasons, and choices of countries for internationalisation, and perceived key competencies for the entrepreneurial success of in a cross-cultural setting. The replication logic (see Table 4.21) considers the higher and lower international experience exhibited by the entrepreneurs operating in service or goods-oriented organisations. For this study, the international entrepreneurial experience is not confined to the entrepreneurs' specific roles within the organisations in relation to international business activities. However, for a deeper investigation, it does consider the international and cross-cultural experience of the entrepreneurs at the individual level that could potentially influence their overall entrepreneurial ability to internationalise. Lastly, for data triangulation, perceptions from managers and co-founders were included in the data collection and analysis.

Table 4.21 Literal and theoretical replication logic

Level Of Entrepreneurial Experience	Good Oriented	Service Oriented
High	I, B, F, H	E, Q, R, O, M
Low	A, C, G, N, S	D, L, P

4.4.1 Entrepreneurs with high international exposure

Entrepreneurs I, B, F, H (high international experience, goods-oriented organisations) and E, Q, R, O, M, (high international experience, service-oriented organisations) share a commonality of extensive global experience, despite their different business orientations. The first group, comprising of Entrepreneurs I, B, F, and H, are enterprises that focus on the trade and distribution of goods. In contrast, the second group, Entrepreneurs E, Q, R, O, and M, predominantly run businesses that specialise in providing various services. Within the group of entrepreneurs leading goods-oriented organisations with substantial international entrepreneurial experience, only 2 entrepreneurs (B and H) currently manage their businesses from their home countries of origin. Both entrepreneurs have earned degrees at the doctorate level overseas, and they have found their experience to be instrumental in administering their business operations internationally.

As the founder of a large-scale business that has been active for 20 years, with a footprint in 35 countries, Entrepreneur B quickly grasped the importance of building trust-based relationships. Similarly, Entrepreneur H realised the same but his business, which offers technological solutions for military and civilian applications, required him to engage more closely with local communities to ensure business success. Whenever feasible, delegating tasks became a crucial strategy for Entrepreneur B when securing commercial contracts and gaining a deeper understanding of local challenges, particularly those related to adhering to local and international standards. Entrepreneur H, on the other hand, evidenced the significance of negotiation skills across different cultures as a vital business competence, since his business function mainly focuses on being a wholesaler and distributor for renowned international clothing brands. Entrepreneurs I and F highlight production and distribution as crucial activities that need to be adapted to the varying standards of target markets. They underscore the importance of collaborating with local distributors to guarantee revenues. As part of their internationalisation strategy, Entrepreneur I says they have implemented specific measures, such as maintaining warehouses in strategic locations to minimise management costs, whereas Entrepreneur F noted that adhering to specific advanced quality standards in production forced them to produce only in particular regions overseas.

Entrepreneurs I, B, H, and F also delved into recent challenges that have emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They discussed issues such as logistics disruptions, market instability, the emergence of new, uncodified social norms, and shifts in business interaction preferences. In the case of service-oriented organisations, the entrepreneurs said that the biggest challenges that emerged during COVID-19 mainly involved social and business interactions and the overall impact on the number of employable staff due to the perceived global market uncertainty.

Overall, the common challenges that emerged from the group of entrepreneurs with high international experience, operating in service-oriented organisations (E, M, O, R, Q) refer to adapting their services to different customer expectations across the globe. Entrepreneur O, M, E stated that this impacts the perception of the quality of the intangible product. Another common problem centred on managing employees working from home and from different time zones to deliver timely services and needing to address differences in workplace styles (Entrepreneur M). Although Entrepreneur O possesses distinctive personal and entrepreneurial experiences that distinguish her as an international entrepreneur and a global citizen, commonalities emerged among Entrepreneurs E, M, and O. For instance, all 3 individuals have successfully established businesses in countries different from their countries of origin. This starkly contrasts with Entrepreneurs Q and R because, despite their vast international experience, they initiated their ventures within their native countries, where they had spent most of their lives acquiring an in-depth understanding of implicit social and business norms. They considered international expansion only after establishing a solid local presence, thereby confronting new and diverse business landscapes.

A further disparity arises when comparing Entrepreneurs Q and O. Entrepreneur Q showcases a more managerial vision, enriched by a keen interest in international relations, which has helped him to establish his overseas operations. In contrast, despite having spent numerous years in managerial roles, Entrepreneur O exhibits a more obviously entrepreneurial personality, characterised by business curiosity, openness to diverse cultures, and a high level of flexibility and adaptability in her personal and professional life. These traits have enabled her to fully seize opportunities and enthusiastically navigate the complexities and challenges of various business environments. Entrepreneur R, instead, discussed how he took advantage of the

predominance of the UK education system to deliver professional courses and multiple international qualifications, bypassing the challenges of adaptation to various languages or systems. His company delivers training only in the English language and follows the international standards of the global educational system. He noted the advantages of speaking different languages to access new markets.

" The language is not a barrier for this business purpose." (Entrepreneur R)

A good insight into the importance of language barriers was discussed by Entrepreneur M, who operates in a service-oriented organisation and displays a high level of personal and entrepreneurial international experience. Entrepreneur stated: "Communication is crucial to understand customer needs for a business based on service delivery". Manager M reiterated the importance of speaking the same language but added that speaking the same language, English, for example, does not mean being able to communicate faultlessly. Different characteristics also exist between English native speakers who come from other parts of the world. This manager added, "Also, different accents between English native speakers people play a crucial role in communication" (Manager M).

The examination of entrepreneurial approaches and experiences across a multitude of industries and varying degrees of global exposure focused on a set of interconnected patterns integral to the efficacious conduct of business within an international setting. The resultant themes derived from an in-depth analysis of these case studies underscore the multilayered competencies required for proficient operation within international business ecosystems. This proficiency requires a confluence of international expertise, aptitude for cultural assimilation, strategic methodologies, proficiency in the language, capability to cultivate relationships founded on trust, and the resilience to withstand and adapt to unprecedented challenges, exemplified by the COVID-19 pandemic scenario. This amalgamation of skills and traits ultimately defines the success trajectory within the complex landscape of global entrepreneurship.

4.4.2 Drivers of entrepreneurial expansion

The group of entrepreneurs who demonstrated a lower level of international entrepreneurial experience, operating in service-oriented organisations (D, L, and P)

found that they faced substantial challenges related to the internationalisation of critical business activities. These difficulties primarily arose from varying degrees of competency in engaging and connecting with individuals overseas. For example, Entrepreneurs P and D discussed managing individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds who exhibit differing needs and perceptions in the workplace, especially where various rules, religions, and politics coexist. For instance, Entrepreneur L articulated the difficulties in correctly comprehending and applying overseas regulations and industry practices, recruiting staff abroad, and developing strategies for market differentiation, particularly under the pressure of global competition.

A characteristic shared by the entrepreneurs in this group (D, L, and P) is that despite being born, living, and working in different countries, exposure to a different environment was insufficient for them to understand the cultural traits embedded in business practices. As the oldest entrepreneur, Entrepreneur P adopted a unique business approach, where his eagerness to enforce business rules in a different country overshadowed the necessity to adapt to local norms for business purposes. He perceived this approach as instrumental in bringing innovation from a country where a field is well-established to a new one, such as Australia, where, based on his perception, the field is not advanced enough. More precisely, what became apparent is that, according to Entrepreneur P's cultural values, adaptability in specific situations is perceived more as a form of weakness rather than a strategic approach to internationalisation. On the other hand, Entrepreneur D spoke of the challenges she encountered due to not only to understanding the importance of hierarchy in specific cultural contexts but also not realising the impact of gender discrimination when dealing with certain overseas partners. These experiences necessitated Entrepreneur D to delegate tasks to male colleagues to ensure effective engagement.

Further commonalities emerged among entrepreneurs with less international experience, operating in goods-oriented organisations, especially between Entrepreneurs C and G. Both addressed the influence that different generations can have on establishing trust in business contexts. To increase trust, Entrepreneur C emphasised the importance of networking in that field because of the rules that take place in that specific cultural environment: “[The] pharmaceutical field is a very conservative field, so network and previous connections are essential to work across

borders mainly for security reasons”. Entrepreneur C added, “Finding the right channel means speaking the same language in the pharmaceutical field.”

The co-founder (Manager C) also discussed the importance of building trust and enhancing the perception of their product’s quality. To achieve this, they found it necessary to collaborate with a recognised academic in the field to introduce the product and secure external funding. Furthermore, as the youngest participants in the study, Entrepreneurs C and G highlighted how their young age negatively affected trust-building in business interactions, especially in some specific regions like Europe and China. Entrepreneur A, also a young entrepreneur, operates from Australia, where these issues did not clearly surface in this study. The perceived challenges of this group of entrepreneurs were primarily related to stakeholder engagement with the sole objective of guiding basic business operations. These operations include contract negotiation, shipment organisation, raw material sourcing for cost reduction, product quality assurance based on established protocols, pricing, and general communication with stakeholders. Language barriers emerged as a common hurdle, which most overcame by using translators, as was the case of Entrepreneurs D and S.

What emerged when comparing the entrepreneurs with low levels of international experience producing goods versus those operating in service-oriented organisations, is that the entrepreneurs working in goods-oriented organisations attempted to overcome cultural barriers with simple strategies. Entrepreneur S, for example, understood the importance of learning about cultural differences before undertaking interactions and used advanced translator tools during conversations. Instead, Entrepreneur N preferred to use professional translators and external personnel specialised in international trade to effectively guide international business interactions. In fact, Entrepreneur N, despite limited knowledge about cultural diversity, claimed to prefer to see individuals as “genuine human beings” without thinking about or paying too much attention to differences in races or cultures. For business purposes, she said, “Communication is so important, and it is also very difficult” (Entrepreneur N). She added that, “The most successful communication for us is when other people speak English well due to our lack of language skills”.

She mentioned that to overcome problems due to communication and enhance brand promotion in overseas markets, she works more on generating engaging advertisements on online platforms to inspire people and educate customers and

stakeholders on the quality they can offer through their products. In service-oriented organisations, using translation tools or external personnel only for translation purposes was not considered a viable option because of the nature of the business, which requires a high level of interaction to deliver the business effectively. Entrepreneurs D, L, and P all recognised the significance of initially expanding their operations into countries where the language was either the same or similar and where a cultural parallel existed. This was a strategic approach to reduce communication issues and ensure the effective delivery of their services. Overall, this group of entrepreneurs (D, L, P) acknowledged the criticality of linguistic and cultural compatibility in their expansion decisions, underscoring the key role of these factors in facilitating efficient service delivery.

Although the findings revealed different elements that influence entrepreneurial decisions during the process of internationalisation, an important focus was the choice of the target country for expansion. Figure 4.3 presents a histogram of the quantitative analysis for the internationalisation decisions made by the entrepreneurs.

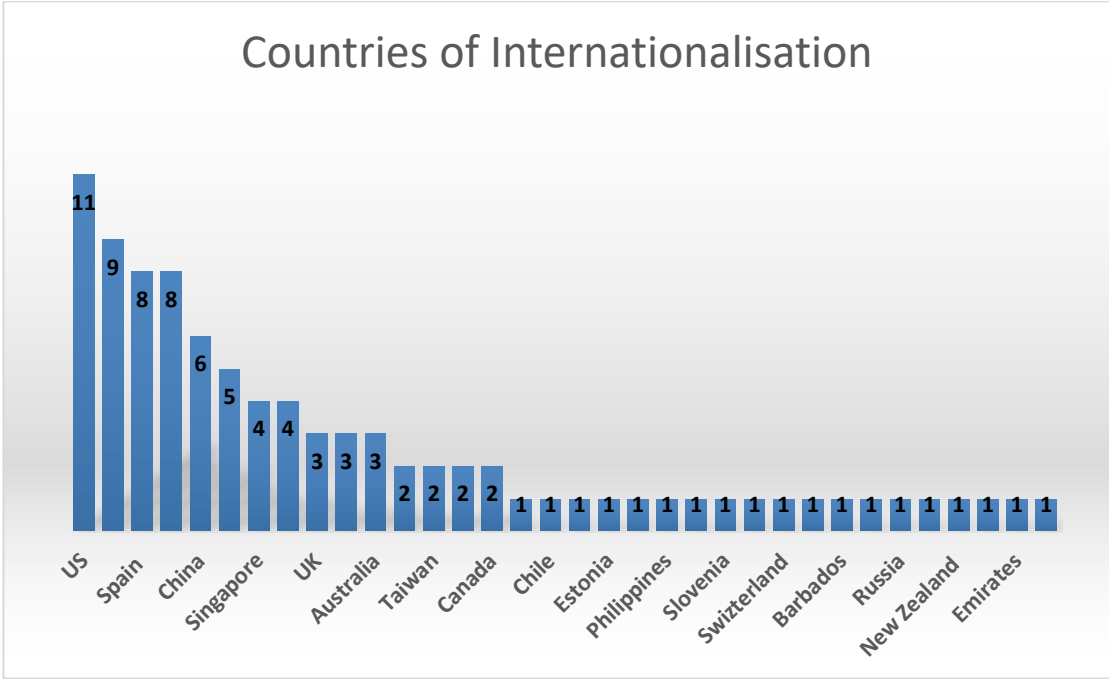


Figure 4.3 Frequency of internationalisation per country

The US stands out as the most favoured destination for business internationalisation, followed by Italy and South Africa. There is also a noticeable prevalence of English-speaking nations, such as Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Canada among the preferred locations. English, widely recognised as the *lingua*

franca of global business, was also used in this study as the language able to bridge communication gaps between individuals whose native languages differ. English is the primary language in countries such as the US, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Canada and this characteristic could make these nations more convenient for entrepreneurs originating from English-speaking countries or those proficient in English to conduct their businesses. On the other hand, in Italy, South Africa, Germany, Spain, and France, although each has its own official language, English is also widely spoken, especially in the business sectors of South Africa and Germany. This prevalence could potentially aid entrepreneurs in their business operations.

Contrastingly, countries like China, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Japan, United Arab Emirates, India, and Papua New Guinea each have their distinct official languages, with proficiency in English varying greatly. Nevertheless, it's important to note that English is frequently used in business environments in these countries, particularly in India and the United Arab Emirates. It is also critical to mention that all entrepreneurs and managers involved in this study use English for their business dealings. This fact underscores the importance of English proficiency in global business, and partially explains why many entrepreneurs are inclined towards English-speaking countries or those where English is commonly used in business environments.

In terms of adapting, nearly every entrepreneur, regardless of their business orientation and level of international experience, offered a unique perspective on this issue. The oldest entrepreneur in the group, Entrepreneur P has extensive experience operating businesses in and outside Australia. He has a European background and has lived for an extended period in South Africa. Twenty years ago he moved with his company to Australia. Entrepreneur P stated:

I did not try to adapt or change... I just continued to do what was meaningful to me... a lot of Australians do not know what they are talking about, they have no knowledge about this specific industry, my idea was to bring do something new so not to adapt to what already existed in the market.

Entrepreneur F stated the opposite:

I do not think I have a particular entrepreneurial style, but probably my style is to adapt to wherever environment in meet and blend... because there is no point

in trying to take techniques or the approached that I have learned in one setting and then trying to force them into some other environment that does not fit.

Looking at the strategies for success, all the entrepreneurs developed different approaches to establishing trust at different levels, in terms of adapting to local norms and languages, connecting with local professionals or distributors, and learning about cultural differences for business purposes. Comparing entrepreneurs, those with lower international experience evidenced the need to understand more about which strategy could be adopted to facilitate internationalisation, as discussed explicitly by Entrepreneurs N, S, D and L.

4.4.3 Motivation for business expansion across borders

To thoroughly evaluate the potential for success exhibited by the entrepreneurs in the cases studied within the international context, further delving into the principal motivations that fuelled these entrepreneurs to expand their businesses internationally was undertaken. These data are reported in Table 4.22, which provides a list of the motivations that drove the entrepreneurs to internationalise. The data are categorised by participant, industry type and the entrepreneurs' level of international experience. This table aims to offer crucial insights into the diverse factors influencing entrepreneurs' decisions to operate internationally. These motivations can be linked to the type of organisation (goods- or service-oriented), specific field, or the level of international entrepreneurial experience (High or Low), which can facilitate international operations at different levels.

Table 4.22 Entrepreneurs' motivations for expansion, based on industry type and level of international experience

Entrepreneur	Emergед reasons for internationalisation	Organisation Type	International Entrepreneurial Experience
I	To access a larger customer base beyond domestic borders. Leverage unique market opportunities and untapped demand in foreign markets: gain a competitive advantage by offering specialised products to international markets. Maximise growth potential by expanding into international markets with fewer competitors in a niche segment.	G	H
B	Capitalise on the international demand for mining equipment and solutions.	G	H
F	To ensure production processes based on specific standards that only a few places can	G	H

Entrepreneur	Emerg ed reasons for internationalisation	Organisation Type	International Entrepreneurial Experience
	currently ensure for the specific industry product. To access new markets and regulations. Establish strategic partnerships with international distributors. Capitalise on the growing international demand for medicinal cannabis products.		
H	To expand market reach and tap into new customer segments.	G	H
E	Accessing external demands through a casual, opportunistic approach.	S	H
R	Access broader international markets	S	H
Q	Access larger markets. Leverage specialised expertise.	S	H
	Learn from diverse markets; partner with international clients		
O	Growth and expansion.	S	H
	Learning and knowledge acquisition through different cultures and perspectives.		
M	Personal intrinsic motivations. Reach different markets.	S	H
	Access different capabilities and skills. Allow constant competitiveness.		
	Enable multiple international partnerships. Lower labour costs while maintaining high standards.		
C	Access international partnerships. Assess different capabilities and skills. Assess funding from international organisations.	G	L
	Access lower labour costs		
A	Willingness to grow.	G	L
	Access to raw materials.		
	Establish an international partnership to build an international brand.		
G	Lower labour costs while maintaining high standards.	G	L
	Willingness to grow.		
N	Access external demands through a casual, opportunistic approach.	G	L
	Opportunities to differentiate, access to a larger demand.		
	Brand growth and recognition.		
S	Reach new opportunities, lower labour costs.	G	L
P	Business growth and need to adapt to new markets.	S	L
L	Access to external opportunities for business grow.	S	L
D	Access to external demand with the purpose of growing internationally.	S	L
	Access to external capabilities. Establish international partnerships. Learning and knowledge acquisition. Willingness to build an international brand. Personal intrinsic motivations		

Note: Goods-oriented (G), service-oriented (S), high (H), low (L)

Examining entrepreneurs managing goods-oriented organisations, for Entrepreneur I, who sells a niche and culturally embedded product, internationalisation was pursued as a strategic decision to access a larger customer base to capitalise on unique market opportunities. He aspires to gain a competitive advantage by offering specialised products and maximising growth potential within niche international markets. Entrepreneur B's decision to venture into international markets originates from the necessity to connect with the global network, as the industry is dominated by only a few international partners. Consequently, the primary driver behind this entrepreneur's internationalisation is the industry's structure, with the international demand for mining equipment exerting a significant influence. In the case of this entrepreneur, engaging in international operations is not merely a choice, but a necessity, dictated by the industry's extensive international network. The primary factor driving Entrepreneur F's internationalisation strategy is the need to produce goods that comply with high industry standards, currently achievable in only a few locations across the globe, and specific regulatory constraints. This strategy aims to tap into new markets, particularly those with business-friendly regulations, and to establish strategic collaborations with international distributors. Lastly, for Entrepreneur H, internationalisation was always an inherent part of their business model. Their primary goal is to expand market reach and tap into new customer segments due to their need for collaborations with international brands.

Examining entrepreneurs heading service-oriented organisations, Entrepreneur E adopted a more relaxed approach to internationalisation, striving to meet foreign demand using strategies based on available opportunities. Entrepreneurs R, Q, O, and M shared comparable motivations. Their goal is to access broader markets and leverage their unique skills and knowledge. These entrepreneurs highlight the value of learning from various markets and gaining insights from different cultural viewpoints, suggesting a keen desire for growth and cultural understanding. Entrepreneur M stands out, with a specific focus on maintaining competitiveness and fostering international collaborations while ensuring low labour costs and high standards.

When observing entrepreneurs who manage goods-oriented organisations, namely C, A, G, N, and S, their primary focus is on fostering growth and establishing international partnerships. Despite their relatively limited international experience,

these entrepreneurs see the potential in procuring funding from international entities, as is the case with Entrepreneur C, and accessing raw materials, as discussed by Entrepreneur A. Their shared objective is to create international recognition, ensuring high quality while lowering labour costs. Similarly, Entrepreneurs P, L, and D, who manage service-oriented organisations, view internationalisation as a vehicle for augmenting their business growth and a means of adapting to new markets. Although they also have less international experience, they strive to form international partnerships and acquire external capabilities. Entrepreneur D acknowledged the importance of learning and knowledge acquisition, indicating a willingness to understand and adapt to the international markets they are keen to penetrate.

In summary, regardless of the extent of international experience or the organisation's orientation, entrepreneurs' fundamental motivations to internationalise include reaching larger markets, seizing unique opportunities, seeking growth, and adapting to new markets. However, the level of international entrepreneurial experience plays a role in shaping these motivations' complexity and strategic nature. Entrepreneurs with high levels of international experience tend to approach international expansion with greater sophistication and a planned culture-sensitive strategy. An intriguing commonality emerged from 2 female entrepreneurs regarding their motivations to internationalise; they both sought to fulfil intrinsic personal aspirations. Entrepreneur D, for instance, expressed her intent to leave a significant mark on the industry, saying, "I would like to make an impact in the industry where I am working in". Entrepreneur O shared her satisfaction in exploring new cultural realms and fulfilling challenge of adapting and conducting business within them, stating: "I love what I do... I like that... I am happy to see that I can succeed overseas". This observation underlines how personal motivations can also play a significant role in the internationalisation journey for some entrepreneurs.

4.4.4 Perceived essential business competencies for internationalisation

The study sought to look at and compare the business skills that entrepreneurs thought were most important for running successful international businesses, based on their own personal experiences doing business in other countries.

Table 4.23 Entrepreneurial viewpoints on essential business competencies for internationalisation

Entrepreneur	Required Business Capabilities	Business field	Organisation Type	International Entrepreneurial Experience
I	Language skills Adaptability Cultural understanding, resilience Working with contractors from different countries	Hobby/Toys	G	H
B	Building relationships Connecting with customers Understanding problems, securing commercial contracts Meeting international standards	Mining equipment	G	H
F	Constant adaptation Perseverance Adaptability Enthusiasm Understanding mindset Differences Relying on other's Expertise	Medical	G	H
H	Patience, and understanding of different types of people. Mental mapping Negotiation skills, Trusting others Delegating tasks	Fashion	G	H
E	Patience Persistence Technical skills Respect for people and their culture	Ecological engineering	S	H
R	Networking Provide practical learning experiences Adapt to varying educational systems across cultures	Education	S	H
Q	Identify people or culture weaknesses and strengths and leverage them Outsourcing capabilities Customer sensitivity Engagement skills	Strategic consulting	S	H
O	Communication Adaptation Open-mindedness relationship-building Managing conflict Trust-building	Software production	S	H
M	Humility Cultural sensitivity Adaptability Communication	Strategic consulting	S	H

Entrepreneur	Required Business Capabilities	Business field	Organisation Type	International Entrepreneurial Experience
C	Embracing new experiences Embracing a diverse workforce Creativity Resilience Communication Delegation Networking Cultural adaptation Working with a multicultural team	Medical	G	L
A	International business understanding Cultural understanding Communication Stakeholder engagement	Sustainability	G	L
G	Resilience Adaptation Task delegation Connection with local farmers Acknowledging cultural differences	Food industry	G	L
N	Understanding target market and culture, communication Networking Passion for the business field	Food industry	G	L
S	Adapting to different contexts and cultural norms Appreciation towards other cultures Upgrading oneself as an entrepreneur and a global human	Software production	G	L
P	Understanding different people's needs and perceptions Understanding contracts and legal aspects Maintaining authenticity	Strategic consulting	S	L
L	Empathy Understanding cross-cultural communication Adaptability	Strategic consulting	S	L
D	Partnership building Flexibility Understanding hierarchy Language skills Knowledge of regulations as well as local cultures Hiring local	Strategic Consulting	S	L

Note: Goods-oriented (G), service-oriented (S), high (H), low (L)

Based on the data presented in

Table 4.23, it's evident that adaptability and communication skills hold significant value for both service- and goods-oriented businesses across various fields, regardless of the entrepreneur's international experience. These capabilities are considered crucial for successfully operating an international business, highlighting the need to tailor business practices and strategies to accommodate diverse cultural, legal, and market contexts. Furthermore, the ability to guide effective communication emerges as essential, especially in terms of managing or engaging with people of different backgrounds, nurturing international collaborations, and interacting with clients from diverse cultural backgrounds. Navigating cultural traits is considered a crucial capability for entrepreneurs for internationalisation regardless of their international experience level or business orientations. This also reflects the profound influence of cultural elements during international business operations, transactions, and partnerships, as discussed by Entrepreneur C.

Looking at variations, it becomes evident that the industry and type of organisation influence the specific capabilities perceived as essential. For example, in the case of the ecological engineering entrepreneur (E), there is a big emphasis on the need for technical skills and specialised. Similarly, understanding legal contracts and aspects is considered vital in the strategic consulting field (Entrepreneur P), highlighting the importance of legal compliance and contract management in this line of business.

The international entrepreneurial experience level also appears to shape the focus of necessary capabilities. Entrepreneurs with less international experience give substantial weight to empathy and understanding hierarchy, reflecting the learning process involved in international business operations and the significance of these interpersonal skills in fostering international partnerships. Lastly, practical capabilities linked to their businesses' operational aspects are vital for goods-oriented businesses, particularly those with less international entrepreneurial experience. Aspects such as connecting with local farmers (Entrepreneur G) and hiring local people to facilitate international operations (Entrepreneur D) illustrate the direct interaction with the local context and its important implications for their supply chain and operations.

When considering the type of business, it's noticeable that entrepreneurs overseeing goods-oriented organisations, irrespective of their level of international

entrepreneurial experience, underscore the value of certain practical skills and understandings pertinent to their operations and markets. As an example, the entrepreneur operating in the mining equipment field (Entrepreneur B) cited the importance of connecting with customers and complying with international standards. This reflects the need to comprehend and adhere to internationally applicable, industry-specific standards. In a similar way, Entrepreneur G, operating in the food industry, highlights the significance of forging connections with local farmers and appreciating cultural differences, thus demonstrating the crucial role that local supply chains and cultural sensitivity play in their business operations. Contrastingly, entrepreneurs managing service-oriented organisations seem to stress the importance of capabilities linked to interacting with diverse clients and adapting to various systems or cultures. For instance, the entrepreneur involved in the education field (Entrepreneur R) highlighted the importance of networking and adjusting to different educational systems across cultures. This indicates the high flexibility and adaptability required in service-oriented businesses, which frequently has a diverse client base. Another example is Entrepreneur Q, who operates in strategic consulting and places emphasis on identifying cultural strengths and weaknesses, customer sensitivity, and engagement skills. This focus illustrates the significance of understanding and navigating cultural traits when interacting with clients in a consultancy role.

Good- and services-oriented organisations both identify a common set of capabilities they perceive as essential, although the level of importance differs. These include communication, cultural understanding, and adaptability. The identification of these skills across both types of organisations underscores their broad applicability in any international business setting, independent of the organisation's specific operations.

In conclusion, despite the existence of universally perceived essential capabilities across all entrepreneurs, the nature of the organisation—whether goods- or services-oriented—does seem to shape the specific business-related capabilities deemed necessary for success. However, it's crucial to note that the perceived requirements of each organisation are also influenced by the specific industry context and the level of international experience of the entrepreneur at its helm.

Table 4.24 presents a comprehensive ranking of business capabilities required to navigate the challenges of the international landscape as perceived by the group of

entrepreneurs. The ranking is derived from the frequency and spread of mentions observed in the data, providing insights into the perceived significance of various capabilities for success in the international marketplace. The rankings generated reflect the priority skills and competencies necessary for succeeding in global business ventures.

Table 4.24 Ranking of essential business capabilities for entrepreneurs, based on perceived importance and frequency

Rank	Business Capability	Description
1	Adaptability	Ability to adjust and thrive in different cultural, legal, and market environments
2	Communication	Effective communication, particularly in diverse cultural contexts
3	Cultural understanding	Understanding and respecting different culture traits
4	Networking/Relationship-building	Building and nurturing relationships with partners, customers, and stakeholders
5	Resilience/Persistence	Ability to persevere and adapt in the face of challenges and setbacks
6	Technical skills	Industry-specific knowledge and skills relevant to the specific field
7	Understanding different types of people	Empathy, open-mindedness, and understanding of diverse perspectives
8	Management skills	The delegation of specific tasks, understanding hierarchy where needed, and conflict management skills
9	Negotiation skills	Ability to negotiate and secure favourable agreements and contracts
10	Creativity	Thinking outside the box and generating innovative solutions

Adaptability emerges as the most valued capability across entrepreneurs, regardless of the field and levels of international experience. It signifies their acknowledgment of the requirement to adjust to perform in various cultural, legal, and market environments. This capability is perceived as vital for navigating possible shifts in circumstances and capitalising on opportunities in diverse contexts.

The second important type of capability includes communication abilities, particularly those necessary to operate in multicultural settings, as in the case of internationalisation. Clear and engaging communication is perceived as essential for managing diverse work environments, fostering international partnerships, and engaging with customers from various cultural backgrounds. Communication ability is immediately followed by cultural understanding. This is a vital capability that includes the entrepreneurial need to appreciate and respect different cultures, as it

enables them to navigate cultural traits, establish trust, and build meaningful relationships with stakeholders.

The ranking further emphasises the value of networking and relationship-building. Cultivating strong connections with partners, customers, and stakeholders is recognised as crucial for business growth, collaboration, and expansion into new markets.

The entrepreneurs consider resilience and persistence as essential abilities strictly connected to their role, since these traits enable them to persevere in the face of challenges and adapt to setbacks, which are inherent in the entrepreneurial journey.

Technical skills are also considered important capabilities, especially in industries requiring specific knowledge and expertise. Such skills enable entrepreneurs to deliver high-quality products or services and maintain industry standards. However, these types of skills are considered the least important for those with a high level of international experience in both goods- and services-organisations. Technical skills delegation is also a strategy that can be adopted.

4.5 Perspectives from managers (data triangulation)

Key insights emerged from the interviews conducted with managers of the selected entrepreneurial firms regarding their internationalisation strategies. While limited by the relatively small number of conducted interviews, these insights underscore two main drivers for internationalisation: innate entrepreneurial aspirations and practical considerations arising from challenging situations.

The study found that practical factors often become crucial during demanding situations, driving firms to adapt and innovate. Managers B, D, E, L and N highlight that successful internationalisation does not always depend on the type of business or industry. Instead, certain universal capabilities, like the ability to adapt to new environments and regulations and efficient management of international networking and communication, are more essential.

The ability to adapt was the focus for Manager M as she navigated unfamiliar business landscapes and re-thought strategies. She also mentioned that speaking the same language, English, for example, still presents a significant challenge when working in countries like Canada, Australia, and the UK, as the use of the same

language varies across contexts and countries. Therefore, it is crucial to consider networking and communication abilities before connecting with international partners and suppliers. In this study, the perspectives of managers were employed as part of data triangulation to validate the findings on entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities (ECCCs). For instance, managers' emphasis on adaptability and effective networking aligned with entrepreneurs' self-reported experiences, strengthening the identification of universal capabilities required for internationalisation. In cases where perspectives diverged—such as differing views on the role of cultural knowledge in addressing regulatory challenges—these discrepancies were analysed in light of contextual factors like market focus or firm size. This triangulation process not only reconciled differing viewpoints but also deepened the study's understanding of how ECCCs are developed and applied, enhancing the transparency and rigor of the analysis. These findings are significant as they shed light on the universal factors influencing the successful internationalisation of entrepreneurial firms, regardless of their industry or type of business, according to the insights shared by the managers during the interviews.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 5 focuses on a discussion of the research results. After a short introduction (section 5.1) to link the study's purpose and the gap in the literature, this chapter then presents the research results, identifying the ECCC structure and components in section 5.2, with a focus on the differences between service- and goods-oriented organisations. Sections 5.2.1 to 5.2.4 present a discussion on the link between individual international experience and international entrepreneurial experience, and the research questions are presented in section 5.3.

5.1 Introduction

The in-depth exploration of entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities requires a comprehensive examination of the diverse knowledge, skills, and attitudes that constitute them. To accomplish this, research was undertaken into the distinct or overlapping interpretations of terms such as abilities, skills, competencies, and capabilities. This inquiry, informed by the Entrepreneurial Ability Model (Chapter 2, Figure 2.4), adopted the most recent definitions of these abilities in the entrepreneurial domain (as described in Chapter 2).

Entrepreneurs often confront intricate cultural norms, values, and expectations that influence the behaviours of various stakeholders, including customers, partners, and employees. Central to this discussion is how entrepreneurs can proficiently communicate across cultural barriers, employing a spectrum of culturally sensitive communication forms. The principles of CQ theories (outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2) were applied to understand entrepreneurs on an individual level and subsequently probe their cross-cultural capabilities in the entrepreneurial sphere, particularly when operating across national borders. Key to this research is understanding how entrepreneurs adapt their strategies, products, and services to suit diverse markets and demonstrate a global mindset. Entrepreneurs who perceive the world as an interconnected system and grasp the implications of global trends for their businesses are likely to flourish in today's economy.

5.1.1 Exploring the nature of entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities for internationalisation purposes

In multicultural environments, the Livermore CQ model, discussed in Chapter 2, underscores the fundamental role of cross-cultural capabilities in leadership positions. These capabilities, which include cultural self-awareness, the comprehension and respect for diverse cultural norms and values, proficiency in cross-cultural communication, flexibility, adaptability, and the adoption of a global viewpoint, form the cornerstone of effective multicultural leadership.

As the investigation was framed and expanded to the entrepreneurial domain, the need emerged to include additional cross-cultural entrepreneurship-specific capabilities. Initially, it was assumed that entrepreneurs operating within a multicultural context should possess elements of creativity and innovation, display a tendency for risk-taking, be resilient, be able to identify and exploit opportunities, demonstrate resourcefulness, especially in resource-limited circumstances, understand and navigate varying cultural and legal frameworks, and sustain effective cross-cultural relationships. The debate around entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities essentially focuses on how these abilities, knowledge, and attitudes come together to enable effective navigation of cultural differences within multicultural environments. This integration is essential for entrepreneurs who intend to globalise their business operations, penetrate new markets, and establish collaborations with culturally diverse partners. Developing and refining these capabilities can foster trust, minimise potential cultural misunderstandings, and create value for entrepreneurs and their varied stakeholders.

In addition to these general competencies, this research work also zeroes in on specific entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities that permit entrepreneurs to strategise across markets for international business operations. This includes an exploration of creativity and innovation in identifying and customising solutions to different markets, risk-taking and resilience in the face of uncertainty, and adaptability in resource-constrained environments. How entrepreneurs navigate different legal and regulatory frameworks also forms a key component of this research. The final exploration area pertains to building relationships across cultures. This research aims to highlight the importance of trust, respect, and mutual understanding in nurturing

successful partnerships and collaborations. This requires a deep dive into cultural sensitivity and effective conflict management in culturally diverse settings.

This study focuses specifically on the various aspects of international business operations that are integral to the internationalisation process from an entrepreneurial perspective, thereby enabling entrepreneurs to thrive in a globalised economy. By illuminating these capabilities, it will be possible to understand what can empower entrepreneurs to create sustainable value, explore new markets, and build prosperous businesses that positively contribute to the global economic fabric. Cultural differences wield a considerable influence on the type and management of international operations when comparing goods- versus services-oriented enterprises (Fakhreldin, 2021). Overall, all organisations comprehend the need to adapt to local cultural norms and values, which forms the bedrock for establishing strong relationships with overseas customers, partners, but also with employees.

For service-oriented firms, cultural disparities directly impact the delivery and customisation of services, as cultural traits dictate preferences and expectations. Recognising and catering to these differences is key to enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Akpi et al., 2020; Austin, 2006; Paparoidamis et al., 2019; Rand, 2015). For goods-oriented entities, cultural contrasts predominantly affect preferences related to the product (Fakhreldin, 2021).

5.2 Results

The main contribution of this study is a formalised structure of entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities (see Figure 5.1). Based on this conceptual map, ECCCs are influenced by the international experience of individuals and by the organisation or industry, due to the different nature of the international business operations the entrepreneur needs to consider and possibly develop strategies for. In other words, evidence was found that ECCCs are types of abilities that enable entrepreneurs to recognise, adapt, and strategise their business operation in response to the unique characteristics of various business and industry contexts. They 1) encompass the individual components of the entrepreneur, 2) are a specific function of the business, and 3) incorporate unique entrepreneurial elements (motivational, cognitive, meta-cognitive and behavioural) that guide business strategies and decisions.

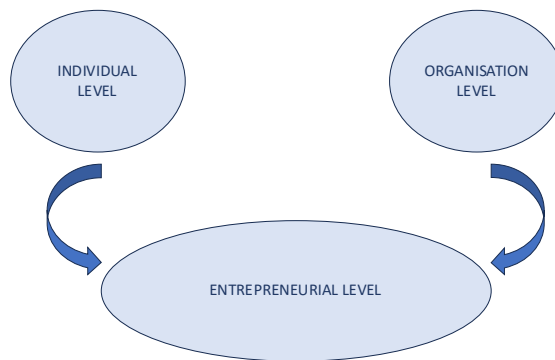


Figure 5.1 ECCCs components conceptual map (Source: Author)

While investigating the ECCC, the focus will first be on the connection between the individual and entrepreneurial levels, and then on how this concept extends to an organisational level. The discussion will then delve deeper into the elements that make up ECCCs, aiming to thoroughly apply these elements across multiple dimensions, as detailed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities across different levels and components

Cross-Cultural Entrepreneurial Capabilities: Levels & Components	CQ Drive	CQ Knowledge	CQ Strategy	CQ Action
Individual Level	Interest and confidence in adapting to new cultures (e.g. willingness to learn new languages)	Understanding of cultural similarities and differences (e.g. knowledge about cultural values, norms, and practices)	Consciousness about one's own and others' cultural preferences during interactions (e.g. adjusting one's approach when interacting with individuals from different cultures)	Adapting behaviour to different cultural contexts (e.g. adjusting body language, tone, and choice of words to match the cultural setting)
International Entrepreneurial Level	Motivation to understand different cultures for business expansion (e.g. an entrepreneur seeking to immerse themselves in the culture of a potential market for business growth)	Knowledge of cultural norms and business etiquette in various countries for successful business dealings (e.g. understanding business customs and dynamics of local markets)	Planning and adapting strategies for cross-cultural business interactions (e.g. researching business customs and communication styles of potential foreign business partners)	Adapting communication and negotiation styles to align with cultural expectations of international counterparts (e.g. modifying negotiation tactics based on cultural norms)
Organisational/ Field Level	Service: Drive to understand customer needs in different cultures (e.g. consulting company adapting to local tastes)	Service: grasping cultural norms that impact service perceptions (e.g. an IT service company adapting its service level agreement to suit local norms)	Service: Strategising service delivery to align with different cultural norms (e.g. an ecological firm modifying its priorities in different locations)	Service: Adapting customer interaction styles for different cultures during service delivery (e.g. a software company training its customer service representatives in cultural sensitivity)
	Goods: Understanding of cultural preferences in product design (e.g. products manufacturer incorporating local design preferences)	Goods: Understanding cultural influences on product use and acceptance (e.g. a cosmetic company adjusting product formula for different climates)	Goods: Strategising product design, marketing, and distribution to suit different cultures (e.g. an electronics company offering localised versions of its products)	Goods: Adapting negotiation styles with stakeholders and product characteristics for different cultural contexts (e.g. a clothing brand creating culturally sensitive marketing campaigns)

From the analysis, it was gleaned that understanding ECCC's requires a layered approach, scrutinising 3 distinct levels. The next sections delve deeper into the key characteristics of these components across these varied levels.

At the individual level, the focus is on the 4 types of capabilities described by Livermore's CQ model which has 4 components: the CQ Drive (Motivational CQ), CQ Knowledge (Cognitive CQ), CQ Strategy (Metacognitive CQ), and CQ Action (Behavioural CQ). The CQ Drive component relates to the individual level of interest, drive, and motivation to adapt to new cultural settings. Since for this study, the individual is the entrepreneur, it's about the willingness to put oneself in unfamiliar cultural situations and having the confidence and belief that you can handle that situation. An individual with high CQ Drive is not only curious about other cultures but also possesses the intrinsic motivation to learn about and engage with them. This motivation often leads to more substantial and effective interactions with people from different cultures. The CQ Knowledge component refers to understanding cultural similarities and differences, understanding something about how other cultures function, and the potential impact of cultural values, practices, and conventions on human behaviour. This knowledge includes understanding economic systems, societal norms, religious beliefs, and language traits. This component can also be described as having a mental map of how different cultures operate, which enables more informed decision-making and strategy development for communication purposes.

The CQ Strategy (Metacognitive CQ) component relates to how an individual uses cultural knowledge in a practical way. It's about the conscious, individual process of thinking and being aware of others' cultural preferences during interactions. This includes planning appropriate strategies before multicultural interactions, being aware of others' cultural perspectives during those interactions, and then checking and adjusting the personal mental map after those interactions. CQ theory discusses how individuals with high CQ Strategy can adjust their assumptions and adapt their behaviour based on new cultural experiences. CQ Action is the last component, and it pertains to the individual ability to adapt, in terms of behaviour when confronted with different or uncommon cultural contexts. It's about demonstrating appropriate verbal and non-verbal actions when interacting with people from different cultures. This could include altering body language, expression, tone of voice, or choice of words to suit the new cultural context. People with high CQ Action are skilled enough to pick

up subtle cultural cues and adjust their behaviour accordingly to establish rapport and communicate effectively.

At the entrepreneurial level, the individual CQ components are applied to the international entrepreneurial field, so further specific capabilities are involved. The entrepreneurial CQ Drive refers to the passion for learning and understanding different cultures that fuels an international entrepreneur's drive to succeed in unfamiliar markets. This intrinsic motivation prompts entrepreneurs to engage with various cultures, learn the local language, and understand societal norms and customs. For example, an entrepreneur with high CQ Drive may proactively seek opportunities to immerse themselves in the culture of a country they plan to expand their business into. The entrepreneurial CQ Knowledge refers to the understanding and knowledge about cultural norms, values, and rules of different cultures. For an international entrepreneur, this might mean understanding specific business etiquettes in various countries, the dynamics of local markets, or the expectations of foreign business partners. This knowledge allows entrepreneurs to anticipate cultural challenges and navigate around potential difficulties.

The entrepreneurial CQ Strategy involves planning, checking, and revising mental strategies during and after cross-cultural interactions for business purposes. For example, an international entrepreneur with a high CQ Strategy might prepare for a business meeting with a potential partner from a different culture by researching their business customs and communication styles. During the meeting, they may observe and adapt traits, and afterwards reflect on the experience and adjust their strategy for future interactions. The entrepreneurial CQ Action refers to the ability to adapt behaviours to different cultural contexts, effectively facilitating cross-cultural business interactions. For an international entrepreneur, this might mean adjusting their communication style or negotiation tactics to align with the cultural expectations of their foreign counterparts. This could include using appropriate body language, tone, gestures or showing respect for certain cultural norms or traditions during a business meeting or negotiation practices. At this level, international entrepreneurs can develop and apply these 4 CQ components and enhance their ability to operate effectively across different cultural contexts and succeed in their global ventures. Figure 5.2 provides a detailed overview of the 4 key components of CQ that are crucial for entrepreneurs, along with their descriptions and practical implications.

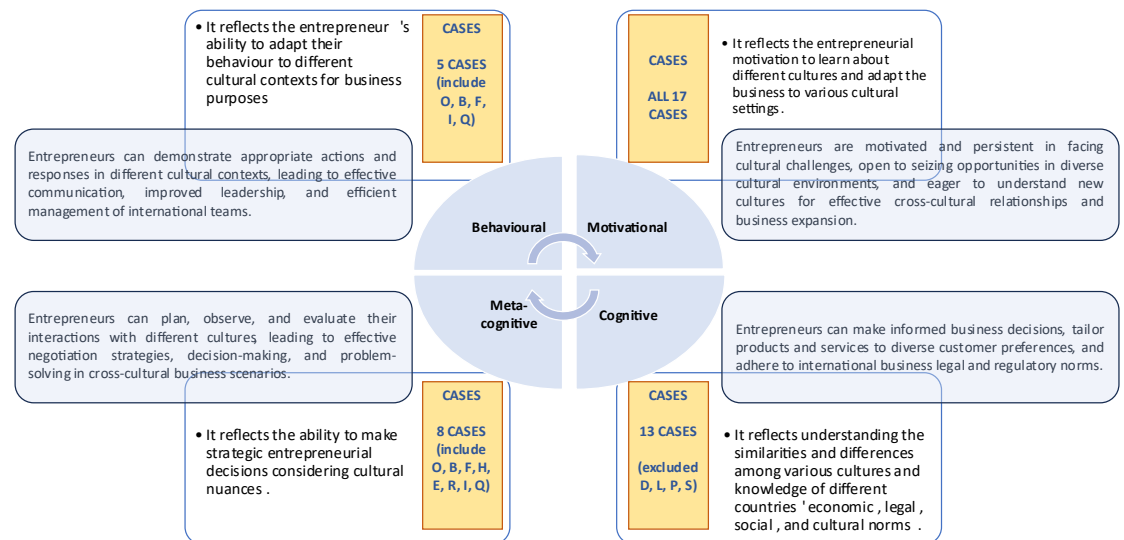


Figure 5.2 ECCC's components description, definition, and practical implications (Source: Author)

This study probed the ECCC's to examine the specific impacts of each component, from the entrepreneurial to the organisational levels. The results of this approach could help entrepreneurs to refine their strategies and enhance their decision-making in diverse international business environments. Table 5.2 highlights the key differences that distinguish each entrepreneurial CQ element (drive, knowledge, strategy, and action).

Table 5.2 Entrepreneurial cross-cultural elements and their application in service- and goods-oriented entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurial CQ Element	Services-Oriented Entrepreneurs	Goods-Oriented Entrepreneurs
CQ Drive	Higher motivation to learn about and adapt to different cultures.	Focus on understanding cultural influences on product preferences.
CQ Knowledge	Understand cultural norms and values that affect expectations and perceptions of services.	Comprehend cultural impacts on product use, style, features, colours, symbolism, etc.
CQ Strategy	Strategise a cross-cultural approach in service delivery, including altering communication and service processes.	Strategise product design, marketing, or distribution to suit different cultures.
CQ Action	Adapt behaviours for high-degree personal interactions, including language, body language, and customer service style.	Adapt negotiation styles with distributors, and tailor advertising messages for different cultural contexts.

The application of the 4 components of CQ can indeed vary depending on the type of organisation, since different focuses and different types of international operations can take place. Four key factors that distinguished the entrepreneurial firms emerged: type of interaction, tangible versus intangible, adaptability and customer expectations. These are described in Table 5.3 and reported in relation to each case in Table 5.4.

Table 5.3 Key industry factors distinguishing organisation type that emerged from the data analysis

Key Factors Emerged Services-Oriented Entrepreneurs	Goods-Oriented Entrepreneurs
Type of Interaction: Involves real-time communication and service delivery, guided by cultural understanding. Cultural adaptation and local compliance focus.	Type of Interaction: Requires understanding of the market's cultural norms to guide product development and design. Logistic and regulatory focus.
Intangible Good: Services need to be adaptable to meet diverse customer expectations based on specific cultural requirements.	Tangible Good: Products need to match the cultural preferences of the target market.
Adaptability: Services should adjust to fit cultural norms like punctuality and meeting structures.	Adaptability: Vital before product development, considering cultural specifics like dietary laws or usage habits.
Customer Satisfaction: Driven by cultural factors, including service process, communication style, and perceived value and time associated.	Customer Satisfaction: Achieved by meeting cultural expectations about product features, usage, and quality.

Table 5.4 Key factors across cases

FACTORS	A goods	B goods	C goods	D service	E service	F goods	G goods	H goods	I goods	L service	M service	N goods	O goods	P service	Q service	R service	S goods	Frequency total	Fr Goods	Fr Service
TYPE OF INTERACTION	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	13	6	7
TANGIBLE VS INTANGIBLE	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	6	5	1
ADAPTABILITY	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	11	7	4
CUSTOMER EXPECTATION	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	12	7	5

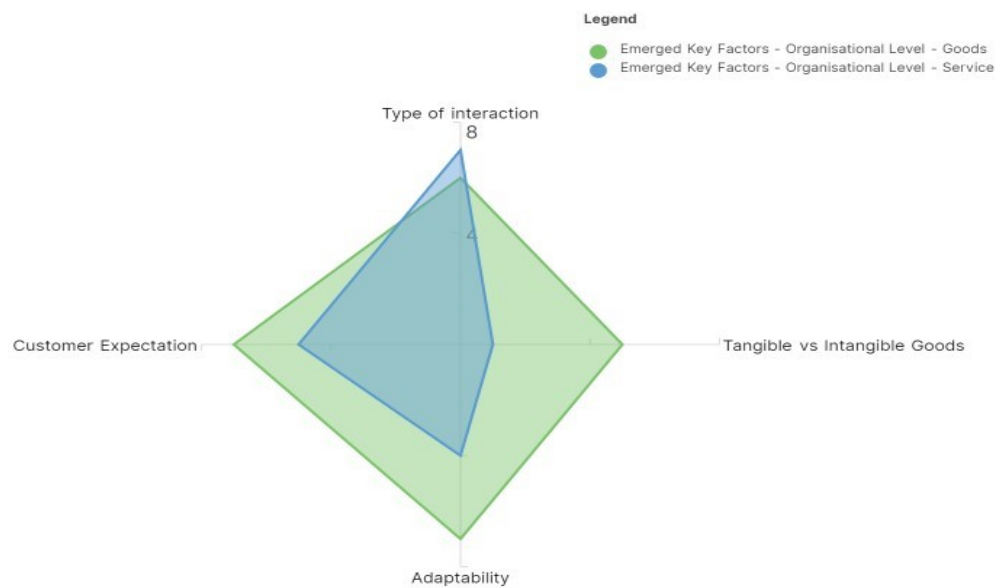


Figure 5.3 Comparison of factors between service- and goods-oriented organisations (Source: Author)

Figure 5.3 summarises the key factors that emerged from the analysis, in relation to the type of organisation. Adaptability, customer experience and tangible vs intangible goods appear to be key aspects for goods-oriented organisations, whereas the type of interaction matters most in a service-oriented environment. The latter may be because differences in terms of service expectations can be easily adapted to different cultural contexts case by case.

Goods-oriented and service-oriented entrepreneurs face distinct challenges in cross-cultural environments. Goods-oriented entrepreneurs focused on manufacturing and distribution often deal with supply chain issues, product adaptation to local

markets, and regulatory challenges like tariffs and import/export laws. They must also navigate currency fluctuations and ensure their products meet cultural preferences and legal standards. In contrast, service-oriented entrepreneurs face challenges centred around cultural and language barriers, building trust with clients, and adapting service delivery to meet local expectations. Their success depends on effective communication and the ability to establish strong relationships, requiring them to develop and apply ECCCs.

The importance of comparing goods-versus services-oriented businesses from an entrepreneurial cross-cultural perspective, lies in its capacity to illustrate how various CQ dimensions can interact with different business types (illustrated in Figure 5.4). For instance, Figure 5.4 highlights the emphasis on CQ Action and CQ Strategy in services-oriented businesses, where there's a need for direct, real-time interaction with customers. Conversely, it stresses the importance of CQ Knowledge in goods-oriented businesses, where understanding cultural preferences beforehand can inform product design and development. Table 5.4 also underscores the requirement for adaptability in services, which requires a robust understanding of cultural contexts, and the influence of cultural factors on customer expectations in both types of businesses.

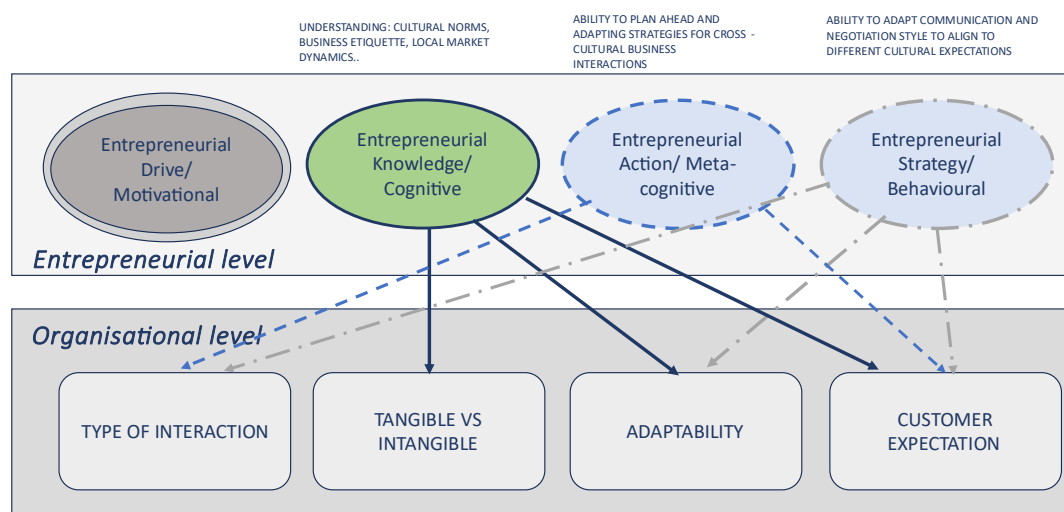


Figure 5.4 Impact of the entrepreneurial cross-cultural dimensions in relation to the 4 key factors that distinguish the type of business: goods- vs services-oriented (Source: Author)

The links illustrated in Figure 5.4 enables a comprehensive understanding of the role of CQ in diverse business scenarios. It enables entrepreneurs to appreciate the

significance of honing different CQ dimensions to ensure their businesses thrive in a multicultural marketplace.

5.2.1 The link between individual versus entrepreneurial international experience

It is important to explore the link between individual versus entrepreneurial international experience based on the cases analysed. Individual international experience, as discussed case by case in the within-case analysis, generally encompasses studying abroad, travel experiences, working abroad, language learning, and having partners or friends from other cultures. The entrepreneurial international experience includes running a business in multiple countries, networking with international clients and partners, taking part in international business events, living abroad to run the business, and exploring new international markets.



Figure 5.5 Link between international entrepreneurial and individual experience (Source: Author)

The intricate interplay between individuals' international experience and entrepreneurial international experience, as shown in Figure 5.5 and Figure 5.6, is fundamental to this study's purpose. The following section provides more description of each component that can be found in both international experiences.

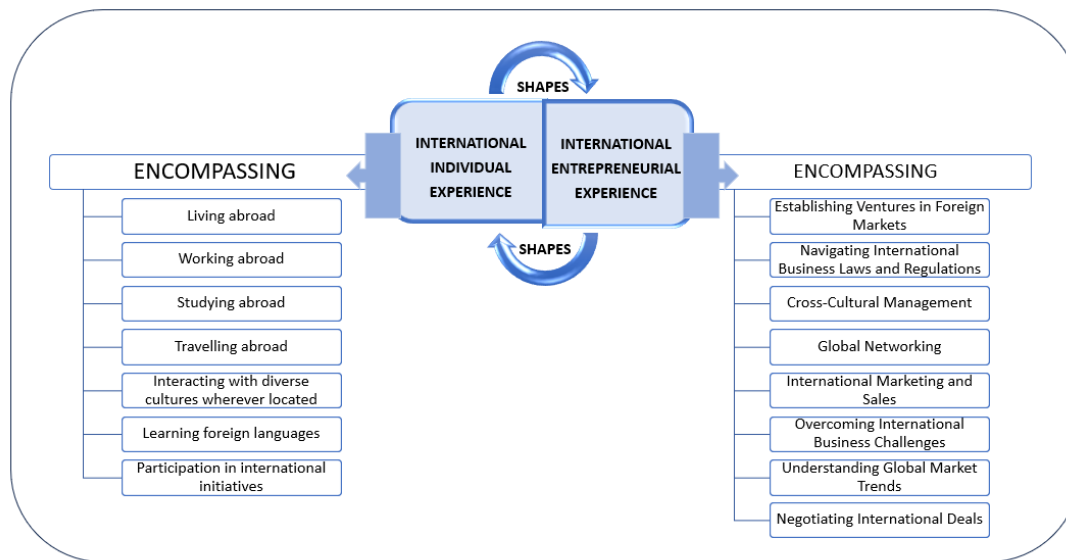


Figure 5.6 Components of international personal and entrepreneurial experience (Source: Author)

5.2.2 What does individual international experience encompass?

Individual international experience encapsulates a broad spectrum of elements associated with residing, journeying, studying, or being employed in foreign nations. The critical essence of this experience is about acquiring familiarity with, and insight into, diverse cultures, and then employing this knowledge in a globalised context. It provides individuals with the opportunity to encounter different cultures, lifestyles, and business practices, often leading to an enhancement of their CQ.

The experience of living abroad is one key aspect. It often requires immersion in an unfamiliar culture, acquisition of a new language, and adaptation to a novel lifestyle. Such experiences enhance comprehension of cultural norms and values, proving to be an asset in both business and personal contexts. Working in a foreign environment forms another crucial component. It presents an individual with exposure to worldwide business practices and heterogeneous workplace cultures. This could include navigating through unfamiliar business customs, negotiation styles, and organisational structures.

Studying abroad constitutes another significant dimension of international experience. Educational pursuits in foreign countries often imply deep cultural immersion and offer opportunities to interact with local students, teachers, and

community members. These interactions broaden one's understanding of the host culture. Frequent travel to various countries also contributes significantly to international experience. Such travels expose individuals to diverse cultures, cuisines, languages, and customs, thereby widening one's worldview and augmenting cultural adaptability. Interaction with diverse cultures, even without physical relocation, is a considerable part of gaining international experience. Such interactions in multinational corporations or diverse communities can enhance CQ. Learning a foreign language also plays a crucial role in attaining international experience. Proficiency in foreign languages often correlates with a profound understanding of the associated cultures and strengthens one's ability to communicate and engage with individuals from those cultures. Finally, participating in international projects provides hands-on experience in managing cross-cultural differences. It enriches one's ability to function effectively within an international framework. Thus, while individual international experiences can be exceptionally varied, they all pivot around the central principle of understanding and applying knowledge of diverse cultures in a global context.

5.2.3 What does international entrepreneurial experience encompass?

International entrepreneurial experience constitutes a wide array of activities and interactions that an entrepreneur undertakes within the worldwide business arena. It amalgamates the practical skills, knowledge, and insights obtained from initiating and managing enterprises across various cultures and markets. One of the critical elements of this experience includes establishing ventures in foreign markets. Starting and operating a business in a foreign country affords entrepreneurs firsthand experience with international market dynamics, legal and regulatory environments, and cultural traits influencing business operations. A crucial aspect of international entrepreneurial experience involves navigating international business laws and regulations. Understanding and adhering to the business laws, regulations, and customs of different nations form integral parts of this experience. Cross-cultural management is another key facet. The capability to manage diverse teams, resolve cross-cultural conflicts, and communicate effectively across cultures are indispensable skills garnered through international entrepreneurial activities. Building global networks also forms an essential part of the international entrepreneurial experience. Establishing

relationships with international partners, investors, customers, and other stakeholders can offer invaluable insights into global business practices and trends.

Experience in international marketing and sales is a significant component of international entrepreneurship. Tailoring marketing strategies and sales tactics that resonate with varied cultures and consumer behaviours forms the crux of this experience. Overcoming international business challenges, including language barriers, time zone differences, cultural misunderstandings, and supply chain complexities, contribute substantially to the international entrepreneurial experience. Addressing these challenges can provide valuable lessons and foster resilience in an international business environment. A deep understanding of global market trends is a vital part of international entrepreneurial experience. This understanding encompasses global economic trends, consumer behaviours, and competitive landscapes across diverse markets. Negotiating international deals is also important for gaining international entrepreneurial experience. It involves understanding and navigating cultural norms around negotiation when dealing with contracts, partnerships, or investment deals with foreign entities. Collectively, all these elements foster the holistic development of an entrepreneur, equipping them to successfully launch and grow ventures in the global marketplace.

As revealed in this research, these 2 facets of international experience are interwoven and reside harmoniously within the same individual, each shaping and informing the other. For instance, one's individual international experience, marked by living and working in diverse countries, can inject a global perspective into their entrepreneurial undertakings. Understanding local market needs and cultural norms due to personal immersion in various cultures can enrich their entrepreneurial strategies and tactics. Conversely, the entrepreneurial international experience serves as a catalyst for individuals to broaden their personal international experience. Engaging in entrepreneurship on an international scale offers myriad opportunities to explore various countries, forge connections with new people, and immerse oneself in an array of cultures.

Notably, these experiences are not isolated phenomena. Instead, individual international experience and entrepreneurial international experience mutually enrich each other, thereby furnishing individuals with a comprehensive understanding of the global business environment. Ultimately, this investigation underscores that these 2

forms of international experiences are reciprocal. They collaboratively shape one another, augmenting the individual's overall capability to navigate and succeed in the complex global business landscape. Through this symbiotic relationship, personal international experience can influence entrepreneurial strategies, while entrepreneurial endeavours can simultaneously expand personal cultural awareness and understanding.

In brief, while individual international experience provides a general understanding of different cultures, entrepreneurial international experience offers a deeper understanding of the global business environment, and the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a global marketplace.

5.2.4 Entrepreneurial international experience and different levels of entrepreneurial CQ

Although it was not possible to quantitatively measure individual levels of CQ, using the data collected and considering the different components both types of experience it was possible to distinguish each case based on the level of international experience (both personal and entrepreneurial), and the low or high level of entrepreneurial CQ displayed during business interactions. Figure 5.7 presents the cases in relation to the 2 dimensions.

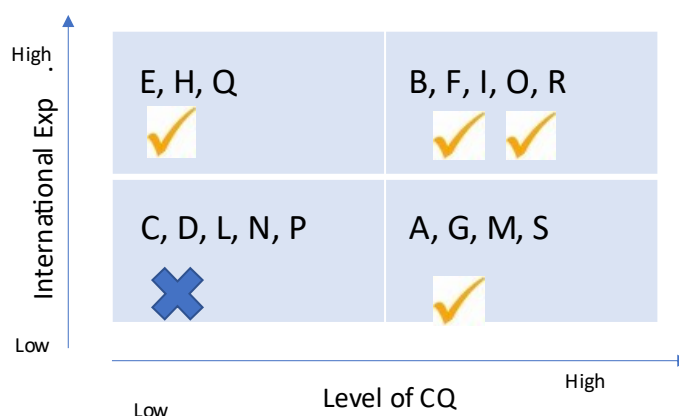


Figure 5.7 Components of international personal and entrepreneurial experience (Source: Authors)

From this analysis, it was possible to distinguish the existing relationship between international experience vs high or low level of CQ of international entrepreneurs displayed during business interactions.

While analysing the relationship between international experience vs high or low level of entrepreneurial CQ, 4 possible scenarios emerged. In the first scenario the entrepreneur is well-equipped to succeed in international markets due to the complementary combination of high CQ and high international practical experience. In the second scenario, high international experience and low CQ means that the entrepreneur may have a general understanding of cultural differences but misses the ability to recognise, understand, and adapt to those differences in real-world situations. Generally, they experience misunderstandings, relationship challenges, and decreased business success. The third scenario—low international experience combined with low CQ—produces the poorest outcomes, impacting the likelihood of successful international operations. However, the willingness and openness to expand across borders will certainly guarantee the presence of a CQ drive, which is crucial to enhance both CQ and international experience. The fourth and last scenario is when low international experience is combined with high CQ. In this case, entrepreneurs have the right knowledge and capabilities to interact in a cross-cultural scenario. However, low international experience will not allow a full application of their potential cross-cultural capabilities during international business interactions.

5.3 Research questions

In the following sections, the research questions that have guided this study will be addressed. Through rigorous analysis and in-depth exploration, each question will be answered comprehensively to shed light on the subject matter under investigation.

5.3.1 RQ1 How do international entrepreneurs perceive their level of cross-cultural capabilities?

Entrepreneurs in this study were asked to define ECCCs in their own terms. This was designed to provide a foundational understanding of how they perceive their own levels of cross-cultural competence. The responses offered rich insights into their self-assessments and illustrated a general view that ECCCs involve the ability to adapt to new contexts where various rules and cultural norms apply. Many entrepreneurs (A, C, D, E, H, L, Q, S), associated ECCCs with “cultural sensitivity” and the grasp of “unwritten rules” (B, F, O,) in specific business settings. Entrepreneur F, for instance, defined cross-cultural capabilities as:

the ability to understand people need, share empathy while listening their own stories with the goal to adapt to different environment even if something makes no sense...in short they include resilience, adaptation and enjoyment of the business element of achieving that often is represented by a moving target.

These findings are consistent with existing literature on CQ, which outlines several components like CQ knowledge, CQ strategy, and CQ action. While all entrepreneurs recognised the value of foundational cultural knowledge for successful international business interactions, they were generally less attuned to the strategic aspects of these capabilities. However, it is worth noting that from a strategic perspective, delegation emerged as a commonly employed strategy among the more experienced international entrepreneurs.

In summary, the entrepreneurs in this study generally saw themselves as possessing strong cross-cultural capabilities, particularly those already active in international business. However, they also acknowledged areas for growth, especially in the strategic application of these capabilities.

When asked about their resilience for cross-border activities, 14 entrepreneurs responded affirmatively, while the remaining 3 were cautiously optimistic, responding with “I hope so” (I), “I believe so” (S), and “I think so” (N).

5.3.2 RQ2 Why are cross-cultural capabilities important to their business?

In answering the question “Why are cross-cultural capabilities important to their business?”, it was possible to break down the importance of ECCCs into 2 key areas: a) ECCCs enhance core entrepreneurial skills, and b) ECCCs offer a toolkit of strategies for navigating the complexities and opportunities of international business.

Table 5.5 The role of ECCC in entrepreneurial skill enhancement

Core Entrepreneurial Skills	Effectiveness Of ECCC	ECCC Component
Innovativeness (Entrepreneur A, O, G, F)	ECCC broadens creative horizons through cultural insights.	Knowledge
Risk-Taking (Entrepreneur N, F, C, F, D)	ECCC fosters a balanced approach to risk through cultural adaptability.	Drive
Inner Discipline (Entrepreneur I, F, G, D, E, N)	ECCC promotes self-discipline through constant learning and adaptability.	Action
Change Orientation (Entrepreneur M, E, R, F)	ECCC equips entrepreneurs to lead change by adapting to diverse settings.	Action
Persistence (Entrepreneur O, F, E, G, I, M)	ECCC boosts persistence through resilience in diverse challenges.	Drive
Resilience (Entrepreneur F, O, B)	ECCC strengthens resilience by helping adapt to varied cultural norms.	Action

As reported in Table 5.5, ECCC play a crucial role in reinforcing essential entrepreneurial skills. Considering innovativeness, for example, entrepreneurs find that their exposure to diverse cultural perspectives enriches their creative thinking. Entrepreneur A highlighted how the knowledge of this diversity has contributed to generating innovative solutions for their business.

Risk-taking is another core entrepreneurial skill that benefits substantially from high cross-cultural capabilities. Entrepreneurs B and F pointed out that understanding different cultural attitudes to risk allows them to make calculated decisions, especially in unfamiliar international markets.

Regarding inner discipline, entrepreneurs like C and M found that the need to continuously adjust to diverse cultural norms helps cultivate focus and self-control. This capability aligns with what is often considered the “action” component of ECCC, and it has been central to entrepreneurs’ business operations.

The skill of Change Orientation, or what Entrepreneur D calls “adaptability”, is also enhanced by ECCC. The need for this skill was also noted by entrepreneurs F, O, and Q. According to them, this makes entrepreneurs not just responsive to change but also proactive agents of change in different cultural environments. Entrepreneurs like E and F talked about how resilience and persistence, key to any business venture, are honed by the challenges of operating in multiple cultural landscapes. They pointed out that these experiences prepare them to face future obstacles with increased resolve.

In international business, ECCC's bring added value by opening up more opportunities for enhanced business success (see Table 5.6). Entrepreneurs G, E and O act as good examples. They all stress the importance of understanding local cultures to adapt and succeed in international markets. Specifically, Entrepreneur G, involved in coffee production, pointed out the challenges of operating in New Papua Guinea. In this region, rural areas have a tribal culture, so Western communication methods and management standards are ineffective. Adapting to this environment requires navigating a high level of complexity. Effective communication, crucial for relationship-building in foreign markets, is another area where ECCC's prove invaluable. Entrepreneur H credited their cross-cultural skills with helping to forge strong relationships with various stakeholders abroad. Entrepreneur Q also highlighted that strategies for managing cultural differences is also crucial within the same organisation where people from different cultural backgrounds work together daily. Understanding the legal landscapes of different countries is a necessity for international business. Entrepreneurs Q, G, B, and N found that their cross-cultural understanding facilitated better compliance with foreign legal and regulatory frameworks, which was also instrumental for business negotiation—a focal point stressed by Entrepreneurs B and N.

Entrepreneur B went a step further to explain how these capabilities have helped them build their brand reputation internationally as well as customer trust, which is a critical factor for long-term success in a field where only a few stakeholders manage the whole system. A good brand reputation also makes it easier to enter into new markets. Entrepreneurs M and Q stressed the need for cultural understanding for talent acquisition and team management. Ethical considerations and corporate social responsibility were mentioned by Entrepreneur A and Manager A. The pandemic has added another layer of complexity to international business, making ECCC's even more crucial. Entrepreneur Q highlighted how the pandemic required swift adaptability and effective remote communication skills, both of which are components of ECCC.

Table 5.6 provide descriptors of the effectiveness of ECCC's for internationalisation.

Table 5.6 Top 10 descriptors of the effectiveness of ECCCs for internationalisation purposes

Descriptors of Effectiveness of Entrepreneurial Cross-Cultural Capabilities for Business Internationalisation		
1. Market Understanding and Adaptation	Cross-cultural capabilities enable entrepreneurs to understand diverse markets, consumer behaviours, and cultural preferences. This understanding allows them to adapt their products, services, and business strategies to meet local market demands.	E, G, O, A, B, C, D, F, H, L, M, R
2. Effective Communication and Relationship-Building	Entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities facilitate effective communication with stakeholders in foreign markets, including customers, suppliers, partners, and government officials. Building strong relationships based on cultural understanding and respect is crucial for successful international expansion.	Q, H, B, C, O, D, E, F, G
3. Navigating Legal and Regulatory Frameworks	Internationalisation involves navigating different legal and regulatory frameworks. Cross-cultural capabilities help entrepreneurs comprehend and comply with local laws, regulations, and business practices, ensuring legal compliance and minimising risks in foreign markets.	Q, G, B, N, F, S
4. Negotiation and Business Development	Entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities play a vital role in negotiation and business development processes. Understanding cultural traits, negotiation styles, and decision-making processes enables entrepreneurs to build trust, secure deals, and forge successful partnerships in international markets.	B, N, F, M, D
5. Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptability	Entrepreneurs with cross-cultural capabilities are sensitive to cultural differences and can adapt their behaviour, communication styles, and business practices to align with local customs and expectations. This fosters trust, acceptance, and long-term success in foreign markets.	O, B, D, R, M
6. Risk Management and Cultural Sensitivity	Cross-cultural capabilities help entrepreneurs identify and mitigate risks associated with entering new markets. Understanding cultural norms, values, and sensitivities enables entrepreneurs to navigate potential pitfalls and avoid cultural missteps that could harm their internationalisation efforts.	F, B, O, A,
7. Market Entry Strategies and Competitive Advantage	Entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities contribute to developing effective market entry strategies. By understanding the cultural landscape, entrepreneurs can position their offerings uniquely, differentiate themselves from competitors, and gain a competitive advantage in international markets.	B, F, D, M
8. Talent Acquisition and Team Management	Internationalisation often involves building diverse teams and acquiring talent from different cultures. Entrepreneurs with cross-cultural capabilities can effectively recruit, manage, and retain international talent, fostering a diverse and inclusive organisational culture that supports global expansion.	M, Q, E
9. Brand Reputation and Customer Trust	Entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities enable entrepreneurs to establish a positive brand reputation and build trust among international customers. By respecting cultural norms, values, and preferences, entrepreneurs can create authentic connections and establish themselves as trusted partners in foreign markets.	B, A, E

10. Ethical Considerations and Corporate Social Responsibility	Internationalisation requires entrepreneurs to navigate ethical considerations and corporate social responsibility in different cultural contexts. Cross-cultural capabilities help entrepreneurs understand and respond to societal expectations, ensuring responsible business practices and maintaining a positive corporate image internationally.	A, F
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The findings conclude that ECCCs contribute significantly to understanding and adapting to diverse markets, facilitating effective communication with stakeholders, and navigating foreign legal and regulatory frameworks. They are instrumental in negotiation and business development, fostering cultural sensitivity and adaptability, and managing risks. The capabilities also help develop unique market entry strategies, manage diverse teams, and foster a positive brand reputation in the international arena. Moreover, they assist entrepreneurs to address ethical considerations and corporate social responsibility in varying cultural contexts. The relevance of these cross-cultural capabilities is further amplified in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has required a swift adaptability, effective remote communication, an acute understanding of local market dynamics, trust-building amidst crises, risk diversification, crisis management, and the adept use of digital technologies. This points to the criticality of ECCCs in navigating the modern international marketplace's multifaceted and dynamic landscape.

5.3.3 RQ3 How can entrepreneurs be clustered based on their cross-cultural capabilities?

This study identified 2 prominent clusters that differentiate entrepreneurs working across-borders, based on the nature of the motivational components of the ECCCs. The motivational components manifested in 2 forms a) intrinsic cultural motivation and b) extrinsic business motivation. Entrepreneur extrinsic business motivation is characterised as the motivation to learn about different cultures and adapt the business to various cultural settings. This makes the motivational component at the entrepreneurial level distinct from the individual level. The entrepreneurial motivation has a purpose, and its level of importance can differ among entrepreneurs, leading to 2 different scenarios, as follows.

1 Entrepreneurs with predominantly intrinsic cultural motivation. These entrepreneurs are intrinsically motivated to engage in cross-cultural experiences, often seeking them out for personal growth rather than immediate business gains. For

example, Entrepreneur G and O were already deeply immersed in overseas experiences, like studying or living abroad, even before venturing into international entrepreneurship. The individual motivation here serves as a foundational element that potentially strengthens the other components of ECCC's. In simple terms, these entrepreneurs view the cross-cultural journey as a valuable experience in itself, not just as a means to an end.

2. Entrepreneurs with predominant extrinsic business motivation. In contrast, entrepreneurs in this category are primarily driven by the business outcomes of their cross-cultural interactions (e.g. Entrepreneurs S and P). This focus on business-centric goals often leads them to experience frustration and stress more quickly when navigating unfamiliar cultural terrains. Their approach might be more pragmatic, but it also renders them less resilient when faced with cultural challenges, making them potentially less effective in the long term.

The effectiveness of cross-cultural exposure for entrepreneurs is significantly influenced by the type of motivational drive they possess. Specifically, intrinsic cultural motivation amplifies the benefits of international experiences. Entrepreneurs driven by this form of motivation gain a deeper understanding of various aspects of a foreign culture, from communication to negotiation tactics.

Importantly, the concept of “depth of experience” plays a crucial role for both types of entrepreneurs—those with intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. A depth of understanding, which entails delving deeply into the intricacies of a culture, proves more valuable than simply having a broad but shallow range of cultural experiences. This depth enhances entrepreneurial strategy and is often more naturally developed by those with intrinsic cultural motivation.

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Chapter 6: Concluding contributions

Chapter 6 discusses the contributions of this study, starting with a contribution map in section 6.1 that links the main contribution with secondary contributions. Each contribution is discussed separately in Tables 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3, where the gap bridged by each contribution is identified and discussed. Practical and theoretical implications are also discussed for each contribution in section 6.2. Then, limitations and future studies are presented in section 6.3.

6.1 Introduction

This research provides a deeper understanding of the intricate dynamics of the international entrepreneurial experience, underscored by the complex interplay of cultural variables. The following section delineates the critical contributions of this exploratory research on ECCC in the context of international operations. This study provides empirical evidence of and sheds light on the multifaceted elements of ECCC pivotal to the success of international entrepreneurial efforts. In this section, all the contributions stemming from the research are reported, with a focus on ECCC, designated as the main contribution and labelled C1. The Contributions Map (see Figure 6.1) serves as a visual guide of the relationships between contributions, positioning ECCC centrally to indicate its significance. These range from foundational aspects of ECCC to key factors such as personal experiences, entrepreneurial innovation, generational gaps, cultural stressors, and language intricacies that can influence communication styles, including values of stereotypes within the field.

The Contribution Map delineates 9 significant findings, beginning with the primary key contribution C1, which is supported by associated findings to provide a comprehensive overview of ECCC. These findings span from personal (Catalytic Factors) to entrepreneurial (Contributing Factors) and industry-specific factors (Influencing Factors) that can either enhance or constrain the effectiveness of C1. Specifically, C5 serves as a catalyst for C1, while C2, C3, and C4 further enhance and refine C1 by contextualising these capabilities within the entrepreneurial domain. Contributions C6, C7, C8, and C9 are also depicted as influencing factors that impact

the effectiveness and depth of C1's success, either due to field-specific or general external factors.

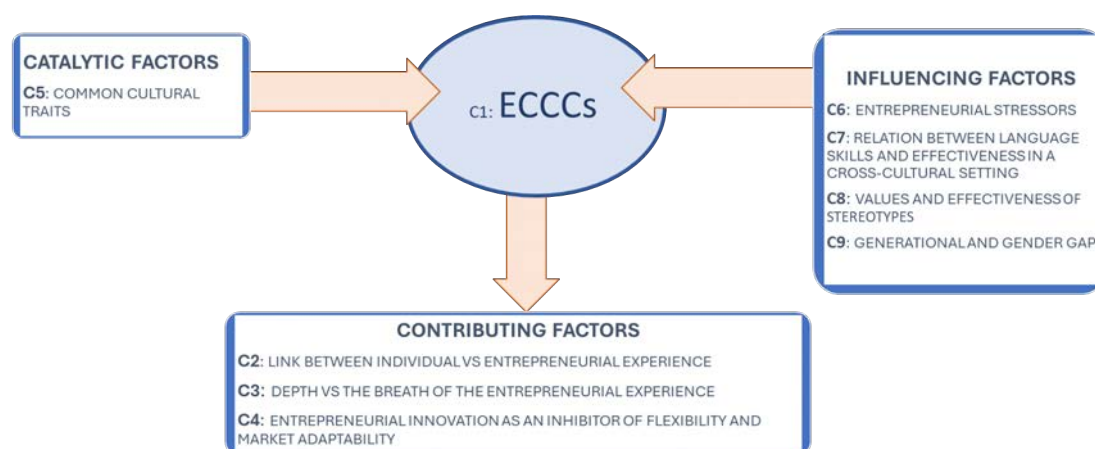


Figure 6.1 Contributions map (Source: Author)

6.1.1 Contributions C1 and C5

Table 6.1 presents the principal contribution, C1, alongside a pertinent secondary contribution (C5), collectively providing insights into the nature and characteristics of ECCC's as well as the identification of the common cultural traits of international entrepreneurs that exhibited the highest ECCC's. ECCC's are a distinctive set of abilities that allow entrepreneurs to navigate, adapt, and orchestrate their business operations across borders amidst diverse business, industrial, and cultural environments. These findings allowed the researcher to identify ECCC's constituted by 3 foundational pillars: 1) the personal attributes of entrepreneurs, 2) particular business functions, and 3) unique entrepreneurial constituents (motivation, cognitive, meta-cognitive, and behavioural). What sets C1 apart from existing frameworks, such as Cultural Intelligence (CQ), is its specific emphasis on entrepreneurial contexts. Unlike CQ, which primarily focuses on cultural adaptation and awareness in leadership or general organizational roles (Earley & Ang, 2003), ECCC's incorporate a more dynamic and applied lens tailored to entrepreneurial decision-making, strategic agility, and operational orchestration. While CQ provides a foundation for understanding cultural nuances, ECCC's extend this by addressing the unique demands of entrepreneurship, such as opportunity recognition, international market entry, and innovation within diverse cultural settings. This distinction makes C1 a pivotal

theoretical advancement, bridging the gap between general cross-cultural frameworks and the practical realities faced by international entrepreneurs.

The complexities of real-world industry experiences in international operations have highlighted the need for cultural traits for service- and goods-oriented organisations. It is evident that the key to thriving in global markets is not just understanding but adapting to local cultural practices and values in a more strategic way. This adaptation is paramount for laying a solid foundation for enduring relationships with clients, business partners, and teams abroad. In service-driven organisations, cultural differences affect how services are delivered, how they are customised, and how much attention customers expect from service providers. In goods-oriented organisations, on the other hand, cultural differences mostly affect customers' preferences or specific needs when it comes to the products they sell (Fakhreldin, 2021). They also affect customers' preferences when it comes to buying (Charoensukmongkol, 2015; Fakhreldin, 2018; Tuan, 2016). Despite the company focus, the knowledge of how to deal with those differences allows entrepreneurs to tailor their offers to meet local expectations, increasing customer satisfaction as well as loyalty, as confirmed by previous scholars (Akpi et al., 2020; Austin, 2006; Paparoidamis et al., 2019; Rand, 2015).

Previous studies have highlighted the importance of CQ for entrepreneurs operating internationally, not only for the purpose of better adapting to foreign markets but also to make better decisions, highlighting the relationship between CQ and the success of international business ventures (Fakhreldin, 2021; Rand, 2015). This study identified a gap in knowledge, in terms of the literature's inadequate understanding and identification of cross-cultural capabilities for international entrepreneurs. While cross-cultural capabilities have been extensively studied from a leadership perspective, the entrepreneurial angle remains underexplored. This understanding is important for the international entrepreneurship field since it equips entrepreneurs with the ability to interpret the international business landscape with more depth and strategically and dynamically adapt their businesses to foster strategic international growth. Through C1, ECCCs offer a novel theoretical contribution by integrating cross-cultural adaptability with the entrepreneurial functions of identifying and leveraging opportunities, managing risks, and innovating across culturally diverse contexts,

thereby addressing the unique needs of the entrepreneurial domain. This gap has been filled with C1.

Contribution C5 identifies cultural traits among entrepreneurs who excel in ECCCs, extending the research on entrepreneurial abilities across borders (Pan, 2017; Pennetta et al., 2022). It also helps explain how specific cultural traits, including confidence, adaptability in diverse cultures, tolerance of cultural biases, and a notable curiosity, fuel cultural learning and allow an entrepreneur to more easily develop ECCCs. These traits are exemplified via Entrepreneurs O, B, G and M, who all display the characteristic of agility in different cultural contexts for business effectiveness. These findings (C5) go beyond the common understanding that cultural knowledge and capabilities are important and can be acquired, highlighting that regardless of their geographic or industrial roots, entrepreneurs with advanced ECCCs embody common cultural values. Such values encapsulate a sincere engagement with cross-cultural interactions, robust self-assurance, adaptability across diverse cultures, tolerance towards cultural biases, and an enduring curiosity driving cultural learning. This secondary insight is pivotal as it acts as a catalyst, accelerating the manifestation of ECCCs as explained in C1, by delineating how shared values can enhance the cross-cultural adeptness of entrepreneurs.

Collectively, these 2 contributions reveal an understanding of ECCCs, illustrating how common cultural traits (C5) foster the growth and application of ECCCs (C1). The discussion underscores the instrumental role of shared cultural traits as catalysts, providing a more lucid pathway for entrepreneurs who aspire to navigate and flourish in global markets.

Table 6.1 Contributions C1 and C5

CONTRIBUTIONS	EVIDENCE	SUPPORTING DATA	FIELD RELEVANCE	GAPS BRIDGED BY CONTRIBUTIONS
C1: Main Contribution Defined the concept of ECCCs	<p>Evidence was found that ECCCs are a type of ability that enable entrepreneurs to recognise, adapt and strategise their business operations in response to unique characteristics of various business, industry, and cultural contexts. They are: 1) individual components of the entrepreneur, 2) a specific function of the business, and 3) incorporating unique entrepreneurial elements that guide business strategies and decisions (motivational, cognitive, meta-cognitive and behavioural).</p> <p>FIELD RELEVANCE: international entrepreneurship, CQ</p>	All cases	international entrepreneurship, CQ theory development. cross-cultural capabilities for international entrepreneurship	<p>Research has identified cross-cultural capabilities as experiences with diverse cultures, or psychological and socio-cultural adaptation, and opportunity recognition. However, the research fails to identify how these capabilities are used by international entrepreneurs or how this impacts entrepreneurial success (Kadam et al., 2019). This study identifies and introduces ECCCs as an international performance framework—a distinct, threefold framework influenced by the entrepreneur’s individual attributes, role, and specific business conditions. This not only extends the existing concept of CQ but also offers entrepreneurs a targeted lens through which they can refine cross-cultural business strategies for greater effectiveness.</p> <p>Link to RQ1 & RQ2</p>
C5: Secondary Contribution Identified Common Cultural Traits of entrepreneurs with enhanced ECCC	<p>It was identified that entrepreneurs who excel in ECCCs share common cultural values regardless of their nationality, background, or industry. This is irrespective of their country of origin, background, or field of operation. These values include genuine engagement in cross-cultural interactions, confidence, adaptability in diverse cultures, tolerance of cultural biases, and a notable curiosity that fuels cultural learning.</p>	I, B, R, H, E, Q, R, O, M	international entrepreneurship regarding entrepreneurial traits	<p>This contribution adds incremental enhancement to the established literature on entrepreneurial skills and traits (Pennetta et al., 2022) necessary to operate internationally. While conventional studies have zoomed in on inherent entrepreneurial competencies, findings generated by this study suggest a more layered narrative in international settings.</p> <p>Link to RQ2</p>

6.1.2 Contribution C2, C3 and C4

Table 6.2 lays out 3 contributions (C2, C3, and C4) that help form ECCCs, and which delve deeper into specific aspects of individual and entrepreneurial experiences in international settings. The table also shows the significance of the “depth” versus “breadth” of the entrepreneurial international experience, and the delicate balance between entrepreneurial innovation and adaptability.

While previous studies frame entrepreneurial experience as a practical application (Morris et al., 2012), as an entrepreneurial mindset in this study (Daspit et al., 2023) in contribution C2, the relationship between the individual and entrepreneurial experience is highlighted because it is critical to navigate through global cultural traits since both reside in the same individual as entrepreneur and have their own impact. The evidence generated from this study points to a more enriched framework for devising effective cross-cultural strategies, bridging the gap identified in the existing literature regarding how personal and entrepreneurial experiences intertwine to influence international outcomes. Entrepreneur O’s extensive international experiences, accumulated while studying and working in various countries, have deeply enriched her personal perspectives and business strategies. These immersive exposures cultivated a unique understanding of different cultures, enabling her to tailor her entrepreneurial offerings with a sensitivity to local needs and customs. Her personal journey of adaptation and learning has seamlessly translated into business acumen, giving her ventures a distinctive edge in diverse markets.

Conversely, Entrepreneur B, born in Australia, where he spent most of his life, has had a more confined international exposure, limited to completing a post-doctorate overseas. Although this overseas stint allowed him to grasp the significance of cultural adaptation in business, his understanding has remained primarily professional and somewhat superficial. Unlike Entrepreneur O, Entrepreneur B’s personal experiences did not intertwine as deeply with his business insights, compelling him to depend on regional managers with local expertise to effectively navigate the cultural and operational traits of various markets. Lacking the intertwining of deep personal aspects and his business insights, Entrepreneur B found it necessary to rely on regional managers with extensive local expertise to effectively navigate the cultural and operational traits of various markets and ensure that the business would resonate with local preferences and expectations.

Contribution C3 focuses on assessing the quality of the entrepreneurial international experience. It elaborates on the value of the “depth” (quality) as opposed to the “breadth” (intensity) of the entrepreneurial international experience. These findings suggest that the quality and intensity of international experiences play a crucial role in formulating and executing cross-cultural capabilities. Entrepreneur B boasts a broad spectrum of international experiences, having worked in numerous countries over the last 20 years in the capacity of an entrepreneur for the same business. This wealth of geographical diversity has equipped him with a breadth of experiences, exposing him to a multitude of countries and cultures. However, the exposure seems to be more horizontal, focusing on the quantity of cultures and countries navigated. In contrast, Entrepreneurs A, I, and O have operated in fewer countries but demonstrated a more profound, vertical understanding of the cultural traits influencing business operations. Their experiences, although limited in geographical spread, are characterised by depth and quality, enabling a richer comprehension of the subtleties affecting various aspects of business, from product and service traits to divergent customer expectations. This creates a scenario where Entrepreneur B represents a wide, somewhat superficial exploration of cultures, while Entrepreneurs M, O, and I illustrate a more intense and distinctive understanding, despite their narrower operational geography. These varied approaches illustrate the contrast between breadth and depth in international business experiences.

The depth of international experiences cultivates a self-concept of clarity, which is instrumental in recognising cultural biases, thereby helping entrepreneurs to craft strategies for fruitful cross-cultural interactions. The existing literature predominantly focuses on the breadth or the variety of cultural experiences (Santhosh, 2023; Winkler et al., 2023), leaving the importance of the depth of such experiences unexplored. This contribution explains how the depth of international experiences is pivotal in navigating complex cultural landscapes, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of cross-cultural strategies.

Lastly, contribution C4 delves into the intricate balance between entrepreneurial innovation and adaptability. The evidence generated through this study underscores that an overcommitment to innovation may upset this balance, particularly when adjusting to new markets. Although innovation is a hallmark trait of an entrepreneurial mindset, as exemplified by Entrepreneur P, these findings suggest that a

disproportionate emphasis on innovation, related to the how services are delivered, may inhibit flexibility and adaptability across diverse cultural settings. This revelation suggests a balanced entrepreneurial approach that harmonises personal entrepreneurial aspirations with cultural sensitivities, advocating for a clearer perspective on entrepreneurial international expansion and diverging from the prevailing notion that primarily associates entrepreneurial innovation as the chief driver of international expansion.

These contributions build on the main contribution, C1, and provide a stronger understanding of the factors influencing international entrepreneurial success.

Table 6.2 Contributions C2, C3 and C4

CONTRIBUTIONS	EVIDENCE	SUPPORTING DATA	FIELD RELEVANCE	GAPS BRIDGED BY CONTRIBUTIONS
C2: Secondary Contribution Identified a link between individual vs. entrepreneurial experience	Evidence was found that there is a relationship between an individual and an entrepreneur's experiences when navigating global cultural differences. This interplay can both positively and negatively influence attitudes on various cultural values that the international entrepreneurship needs to deal with. These findings reveal a unique understanding of how international entrepreneurs adapt and respond to different cultural contexts, which offers a richer framework for crafting effective cross-cultural strategies.	All cases	International entrepreneurship—both entrepreneurial and international individual experiences	Existing literature highlights international entrepreneurial experience as influencing the acquisition of international opportunities. However, how personal and entrepreneurial experiences interrelate to influence international outcomes (Morris et al., 2012) is unknown. The C2: Incremental contribution fills this gap by finding a symbiotic relationship between these types of experiences, which affect attitudes toward different cultures and how these influence business operations and decisions. This is important because it offers a robust model for exploiting international opportunities, thereby aiding entrepreneurs in crafting more effective cross-cultural strategies from both a business and personal aspect. Link to RQ3
C3: Secondary Contribution Identified the Value of the depth vs. breadth of international experience	This research identifies the critical role of depth versus breadth of international experience for entrepreneurs. This variance of experience has an important role in how IEs formulate and exploit CCCs. What emerged is that depth, defined as the quality and intensity of international experiences, is more important than simply having a wide range of varied experiences, referred to as breadth. This depth reinforces a self-concept of clarity, which is essential for identifying cultural biases (through reflection). Recognising such biases is key for entrepreneurs when formulating strategies for effective cross-cultural interactions. This finding refines our understanding of international entrepreneurial experience, offering a more targeted approach for entrepreneurs to navigate cultural complexities.	F, M, O, G, Q, P	International entrepreneurship	What it is known from existing literature is that international entrepreneurship research has traditionally been focused on the breadth or the variety of cultural experiences for global strategy rather than depth. How the depth of such experiences, characterised by their richness and intensity, impacts entrepreneurial success (Winkler et al., 2023) is yet to be distinguished from breadth, and the importance of depth is unknown. This contribution fills this gap by finding that depth, which reinforces a self-concept of clarity, for the international entrepreneurship is more pivotal than breadth in assisting the international entrepreneurship with agilely navigating complex cultural landscapes. This is important because it gives entrepreneurs a solid approach to formulate effective cross-cultural strategies, emphasising the quality over quantity of international experiences, and helping to minimise bias. Link to RQ3
C4: Secondary Contribution Identified the delicate balance between entrepreneurial innovation and entrepreneurial adaptability	Evidence was found that entrepreneurial overcommitment to innovation can compromise the delicate balance between pushing the boundaries with new ideas and being flexible enough to adjust to changing circumstances when needed to fit in new markets. This is because although innovativeness represents one of the predominant traits of an entrepreneurial mindset, entrepreneurial innovation and adaptability can collide across borders. As a result, entrepreneurial innovation can also act as an inhibitor of flexibility and market adaptability. FIELD RELEVANCE international entrepreneurship	P	International entrepreneurship regarding entrepreneurial traits and entrepreneurial abilities	The existing research posits that entrepreneurial innovation is the primary driver of entrepreneurial international expansion (Pastelakos et al., 2023). This contribution identifies a gap by suggesting that an overemphasis on innovation can hinder adaptability in diverse cultural contexts. C4 highlights the need for a balanced approach that considers both personal entrepreneurial ambitions and cultural sensitivities for global success. Link to RQ3

6.1.3 Contribution C6, C7, C8 and C9

Table 6.3 sheds light on the secondary contributions, C6 to C9, which probe into various factors and relationships that impact ECCCs in the context of international entrepreneurship. These contributions offer rich insights into the stressors that affect entrepreneurs, the significance of language skills, the value of cultural stereotypes, and the influence of cross-generational and gender barriers in cross-cultural entrepreneurial operations.

Starting with contribution C6, the investigation revealed that certain stressors tend to diminish the effectiveness of ECCCs. The findings showed that various cultural, environmental, and business difficulties such as language barriers, legal complexities, currency fluctuations, trade barriers, and time zone differences can hamper the effectiveness of ECCCs across all components, from motivational to behavioural. Entrepreneur N, operating in a goods-oriented sector, encounters stressors like language barriers and legal complexities that hinders their ECCCs and motivation to expand internationally. These challenges introduce high levels of uncertainty and stress in transactions, making business dealings with certain countries less appealing. On the other hand, Entrepreneur M, in a service-oriented business, faces issues due to time-zone differences that obstructs real-time engagement with stakeholders and reduces the willingness to interact with specific countries, thus negatively impacting ECCCs. This contribution adds to the extant literature on entrepreneurship and stress (Kariv, 2008; Lerman et al., 2021) by elucidating specific stressors affecting international entrepreneurial effectiveness and expanding our understanding of potential inhibitors to ECCCs.

Contribution C7 brings to light the relationship between language skills and effectiveness in a cross-cultural setting. Findings revealed that while language proficiency is vital, it doesn't guarantee effective cross-cultural communication due to the variance in communication styles and different meanings of words even within the same language. This trait is critical for trust-building, negotiations, and collaborations in international business settings. Although Entrepreneur N and P both talked about the significance of speaking a common language for effective international business interactions, a significant observation emerged from Entrepreneur P. He is originally from South Africa and moved to Australia to expand his business. He said that even with English as his native language, subtle variations such as differing accents and

contextual discrepancies posed big challenges. These factors in communication subtly influenced trust-building, illustrating the complexity and sensitivity involved in cross-cultural entrepreneurial engagements. By probing beyond the conventional emphasis on English as the lingua franca (Ismail & Pek, 2023; Odiljonovich, 2023) in cross-cultural business communication, this contribution provides a fresh perspective on the limitations of language proficiency, advocating for a broader understanding of key cultural traits.

Contribution C8 introduces an intriguing concept concerning the value and effectiveness of entrepreneurial stereotypes across borders, adding value to the recent literature on the stereotypes of successful entrepreneurs (Hamdani et al., 2023; Lyonnet & Stern, 2023; Mattner & Sundermeier, 2023). These findings point out that cultural stereotypes could indeed bolster international business, especially when such stereotypes add value to products or services in sectors like fashion and food. A particular example here is the case of Entrepreneur H in the fashion industry who speaks French and sells French brands, and Entrepreneur N who produces and sells Australian beef in an industry where the quality of the product is associated with entrepreneur stereotypes. The Country of Origin effect turns cultural elements into unique, appealing offerings, challenging the traditional notion that stereotypes have a negative connotation in cross-cultural settings. This enriches the current understanding of ECCCs by illustrating how strategically leveraging cultural stereotypes can enhance international business effectiveness and foster trust.

Lastly, contribution C9 unveils the cultural barriers that entrepreneurs encounter, specifically focusing on cross-generational and gender barriers in communication (Carmichael & Mazonde, 2016; Mahmood et al., 2012; Mehtap et al., 2017). These findings underscore that in certain industries, generational values, as is the case for Entrepreneur G, rather than mere cultural variations, shape cross-cultural differences. This is of particular significance for young entrepreneurs such as Entrepreneur G or female entrepreneurs, for example Entrepreneur D, who often delegate international representation to seasoned professionals, adopting a strategic approach to navigate the intricacies related to trust-building in global markets.

This contribution addresses a void in the scholarly discourse by underlining how age and gender can serve as distinct hurdles in international entrepreneurship, impacting the potency of ECCCs. While prior studies have delved into the challenges

of international operations under certain circumstances (Mehtap et al., 2017), there has been less emphasis on understanding how demographic elements call for tailored strategies for success in cross-cultural business interactions.

Table 6.3 Contributions C6, C7,C8 and C9

CONTRIBUTIONS	EVIDENCE	SUPPORTING DATA	FIELD RELEVANCE	GAPS BRIDGED BY CONTRIBUTIONS
<p>C6: Secondary Contribution</p> <p>Identified</p> <p>Entrepreneurs' stressors negatively influence ECCC</p>	<p>Cultural, environmental, and business factors such as language barriers, legal complexity, currency fluctuations, trade barriers, and time zone differences negatively influence ECCC's in each component, from motivational to behavioural.</p>	<p>P, N, F, L, M, E, S</p>	<p>International entrepreneurship and CQ regarding potential cross-cultural competencies inhibitors</p>	<p>This contribution enriches the current literature on entrepreneurial stressors impacting the effectiveness of international operations (Lerman et al., 2021). C6 in particular identifies stressors that can affect ECCC. This unique understanding provides a deeper dive into the complexities faced by entrepreneurs in a cross-cultural setting, showcasing the intertwined relationship between external stressors and the ECCC's functional components.</p> <p>Link to RQ1 & RQ2</p>
<p>C7: Secondary Contribution</p> <p>Explained the relationship between</p> <p>Language Skills and Effectiveness in a cross-cultural Setting</p>	<p>This research proved that language proficiency alone is not enough for effective cross-cultural communication. It highlights that within the same language, variations in communication styles and meanings can still hinder trust-building, negotiations, and collaborations.</p>	<p>M, O, E, B, F, G</p>	<p>International entrepreneurship, CQ, international business in relation to the link between language proficiency and business effectiveness</p>	<p>This contribution fills an existing gap by providing clarity on the limitations of using English, for example, as the lingua franca (Odiljonovich, 2023) in cross-cultural business communication. While English is widely considered essential for international transactions, this contribution emphasises that fluency alone does not ensure effectiveness, urging a focus on cultural traits.</p> <p>Link to RQ1 & RQ2</p>
<p>C8: Secondary Contribution</p> <p>Identified a concept.</p> <p>Values and Effectiveness of Entrepreneurial Stereotypes Across Borders</p>	<p>This study found evidence that cultural stereotypes can enhance international business, particularly when these differences add value to a product or service, as seen in industries like fashion and food. The Country of Origin effect in these sectors can turn cultural elements into unique and appealing offerings.</p>	<p>H, D, N</p>	<p>International entrepreneurship, CQ in relation to the power of stereotypes for business purposes</p>	<p>This contribution fills a gap in the existing literature by challenging the conventional view that stereotypes are often negative in cross-cultural settings (Mattner & Sundermeier, 2023). Specifically, it highlights how in certain sectors, like fashion, cultural stereotypes can be strategically harnessed to enrich product value and increase market appeal. This contribution extends our understanding of ECCC's, emphasising that leveraging cultural stereotypes can not only enhance international business effectiveness but also build trust.</p> <p>Link to RQ1 & RQ2</p>
<p>C9: Secondary Contribution</p> <p>Identified entrepreneurial cultural barriers for ECCC.</p> <p>Cross-generational and gender barriers in communication</p>	<p>This contribution showed that in certain industries, generational values, rather than cultural variations, shape cross-cultural differences. This is particularly relevant for young or female entrepreneurs who often delegate international representation to professionals, which is a strategy crucial for navigating global market complexities.</p>	<p>G, D</p>	<p>International entrepreneurship in relation to cultural barriers affecting entrepreneurs across countries and industries</p>	<p>This contribution fills a gap in the literature by highlighting that age and gender can act as specific barriers in international entrepreneurship, impacting the effectiveness of ECCC's. While existing studies have examined challenges in international operations in specific conditions (Mehtap et al., 2017) few have explicitly focused on how these demographic factors require unique strategies for successful cross-cultural business.</p> <p>Link to RQ1 & RQ2</p>

6.2 Theoretical and practical implications

This study contributes to theory by demonstrating a crucial link between individual CQ and entrepreneurial success in international business, shedding light on how CQ affects global business activities. These findings show variations in industry-focused adaptations, suggesting that strategies might differ across sectors. This study introduces tools to measure entrepreneurial cross-cultural skills, adding invaluable insights to the fields of entrepreneurship and cross-cultural management. Moreover, it underscores that global success is not just about business know-how but involves understanding and capitalising on key cultural factors.

In the following sections, the 9 important contributions of this exploratory research will be presented. Each significant finding will be analysed to reveal its importance and highlight its theoretical depth and practical usefulness. The goal is to create a rich discussion that connects theoretical ideas with real-world applications, improving the clarity and strength of the overall analysis. This approach aims to enhance the academic value of this field, ensuring that these research findings resonate within scholarly discussions as well as practical realms, providing new insights and useful applications to the field.

From a practical standpoint, entrepreneurship training that focuses on international business could be enhanced by incorporating modules that accentuate cross-cultural skills, which are increasingly vital in a globalised economy. When evaluating the promise of entrepreneurs or potential investments, firms and investors could factor in cross-cultural capabilities. The insights derived from this study can guide entrepreneurs in strategic decision-making concerning market choices and cultural adaptation. Additionally, understanding these cross-cultural aspects can aid in reducing conflicts and misunderstandings during international and domestic relationships. Entrepreneurs can also leverage this knowledge for better collaborations and networking in foreign markets. This deep understanding of cultural specifics can also lead to better market-specific product and service adaptations. Lastly, policymakers might find the findings valuable when designing international trade, entrepreneurship, and investment guidelines. This research holds significant potential to reshape the landscape of international entrepreneurship. The findings not only deepen our theoretical understanding but also offer tangible, actionable insights for

practitioners in the field. By emphasising the critical role of CQ, the study paves the way for more informed strategies for businesses aiming to make their mark on the global stage.

In the following section, each contribution is discussed in term of theoretical and practical implications.

6.2.1 Contribution 1: Entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities

Firstly, defining ECCC's has emerged as a pivotal contribution in the field of international entrepreneurship, delineating a unique framework essential for navigating the multifaceted landscapes of business and culture. The ECCC's are a specialised set of competencies that enable entrepreneurs to recognise, adapt, and strategically align their business operations with the unique characteristics of various industrial and cultural contexts. ECCC's are articulated through an integration of individual entrepreneurial attributes, functional business strategies, and distinct entrepreneurial elements encompassing motivational, cognitive, meta-cognitive, and behavioural dimensions.

ECCC's are characterised by 3 main components: 1) the individual attributes of the entrepreneur, 2) specific business functions, and 3) elements guiding business strategies and decisions. This formulation facilitates a detailed integration of entrepreneurial capabilities with operational business strategies across varied cultural settings. ECCC's are instrumental because they equip entrepreneurs with distinct competencies, enabling them to adapt and strategically orient their business operations to resonate with diverse industrial and cultural environments. This conceptualisation enriches the existing literature, providing a broader understanding of the multifaceted dimensions of ECCC's for international operations. Previous studies have discussed cross-cultural capabilities from a sociological standpoint or from a more general leadership perspective. This definition of ECCC's contributes to the existing literature with a more profound, contextual investigation and interpretation of entrepreneurial tactics and strategies in the intricate global business landscape.

The ECCC's form the platform of a framework that articulates the integration of entrepreneurial attributes with functional business strategies across diverse cultural landscapes. ECCC's are pivotal because they equip entrepreneurs with a specialised set of competencies essential to effectively adapt and strategically align their business

operations with different contexts, resonating with the unique characteristics of various industrial and cultural contexts. This new conceptualisation extends existing literature by offering a more comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional aspects of ECCC while operating internationally. The ECCC provide a foundation for a deeper, more contextual exploration and analysis of entrepreneurial activities and strategies in the complex global business environment.

The theoretical implications of this contribution are profound. ECCC bridge the existing gaps in international entrepreneurship research by strengthening the conceptual clarity and operational precision of cross-cultural entrepreneurial strategies. C1 facilitates a richer and more holistic understanding of how entrepreneurs can leverage diverse cultural experiences and insights for enhanced business strategy and execution. This contribution amplifies the theoretical robustness of CQ and international entrepreneurship, providing a refined lens through which the impact of entrepreneurial cross-cultural capabilities on international business performance can be examined and understood.

Practically, the concept of ECCC operates as a versatile tool for entrepreneurs, acting as a guide to enhance cross-cultural strategies and decision-making processes. It serves not only as a dynamic framework for navigating the complexities of international business landscapes but also as a practical resource for fostering enriched entrepreneurial agility and strategic effectiveness in both local and global contexts. It extends beyond the realms of traditional cross-cultural capabilities, offering entrepreneurs a dynamic framework through which they can navigate the complexities of international business landscapes and a strategic approach to enhancing agility and effectiveness. This framework can also be used by entrepreneurs as a self-assessment tool, providing actionable insights into their strengths and areas for improvement, enabling them to operate effectively across diverse cultural and market environments. For educators, ECCC offer a structured model to integrate cross-cultural competencies into entrepreneurial training programs, ensuring learners are equipped with the skills to thrive in multicultural settings. Similarly, policymakers can leverage ECCC to design initiatives and policies that support businesses in achieving cultural competence, promoting innovation, and driving economic growth in global markets. Thus, ECCC stand as a cornerstone for practical innovation, fostering enriched

entrepreneurial acumen and strategic prowess across diverse cultural horizons, and enhancing the trajectory of entrepreneurial success in the global business arena.

6.2.2 Contribution C2: Shaping the link between individual vs entrepreneurial experience

The exposition of a distinct relationship between individual and entrepreneurial experiences when navigating global cultural disparities marks a vital secondary contribution to the study of international entrepreneurship. This discovery is instrumental because it reveals the symbiotic interplay between personal and entrepreneurial experiences, offering a rich tapestry of insights into how these dual experiences harmonise to influence attitudes to the multifarious cultural values encountered in international entrepreneurship.

In theoretical terms, this contribution significantly bolsters existing scholarly discourse, infusing a richer, clearer understanding of how international entrepreneurs adapt and strategise in varied cultural contexts. This contribution essentially bridges a clear gap in existing literature by revealing how personal and entrepreneurial experiences collaboratively sculpt and influence international entrepreneurial outcomes and attitudes to diverse cultures. This fosters a more integrated, holistic framework that enhances the conceptual richness and explanatory power of theoretical models explicating the acquisition of international opportunities by entrepreneurs.

In terms of practical implications, the identification of a relationship between individual and entrepreneurial experiences could lead to valuable strategic insights for international entrepreneurs. It enriches the strategic capabilities of entrepreneurs by offering a unique model that elucidates the optimal exploitation of international opportunities and allows them to integrate both personal and entrepreneurial experiences. This could lead to more crafted and refined effective cross-cultural strategies, thereby facilitating enhanced navigational acumen in the entrepreneurs' journey across the intricate terrains of global cultural diversities and business landscapes. The incorporation of this enriched perspective allows entrepreneurs to tailor their strategies with heightened sensitivity and adaptability to cultural variances, optimising their trajectory towards successful international entrepreneurial efforts.

6.2.3 Contribution C3: Depth vs breadth of the entrepreneurial international experience

The discernment of the pivotal role played by the depth as opposed to the breadth of international experience in entrepreneurial success represents an insightful secondary contribution to the field of international entrepreneurship. This notable finding illuminates the critical essence of the quality and intensity (depth) of international experiences in shaping and optimising the formulation and exploitation of cross-cultural capabilities by international entrepreneurs.

This contribution introduces a new perspective to theory that enriches the existing literature on international entrepreneurship. Distinguishing between the depth and breadth of international experiences exposes in-depth understanding, emphasising the critical importance of the richness and intensity of experiences in bolstering the effectiveness of cross-cultural strategies. This critical realisation advances scholarly discourse by prioritising the depth of experiences, which enhances self-concept clarity and facilitates the critical recognition and reflection of cultural biases, thus enriching the strategic arsenal of international entrepreneurs.

Practically, this enhanced understanding offers a valuable strategic compass for international entrepreneurs. It illuminates a pathway that underscores the significance of cultivating rich, intense, and quality international experiences that enable entrepreneurs to navigate the complexities of various cultural landscapes with enhanced agility and precision. By fostering a self-concept of clarity, entrepreneurs are empowered to formulate more robust, reflective, and effective cross-cultural strategies. This practical understanding is instrumental in guiding entrepreneurs towards minimising biases, optimising strategic formulations, and thriving amidst the multifarious cultural intricacies inherent in global entrepreneurial landscapes. Thus, the acknowledgment of the depth of experiences emerges as a cornerstone, enabling entrepreneurs to refine, optimise, and navigate their cross-cultural strategies with heightened effectiveness and success.

6.2.4 Contribution C4: Common cultural traits of international entrepreneurs with advanced ECCCs

The recognition of common cultural traits among entrepreneurs who exhibit enhanced ECCCs is a significant secondary contribution to the field of international

entrepreneurship. This research accomplishment is crucial since it transcends geographic, industry, and background boundaries, unveiling the universal cultural values shared by successful international entrepreneurs. These values encompass genuine engagement in cross-cultural interactions, robust confidence, remarkable adaptability in diverse cultures, tolerance of cultural biases, and an intrinsic curiosity that stimulates continuous cultural learning and exploration.

From a theoretical standpoint, this discovery illuminates the universal characteristics that boost ECCCs, enriching the existing body of knowledge on entrepreneurial traits and skills in international contexts. The identification of these common cultural traits heralds an important shift in narrative in the domain of international entrepreneurship, enhancing the existing literature by adding depth and breadth to our understanding of entrepreneurial competencies. This contribution delicately weaves a tapestry of inherent entrepreneurial competencies and the dynamic influence of cross-cultural interactions and adaptations in the international business landscape.

Practically speaking, this insight into common cultural traits offers a valuable blueprint for aspiring international entrepreneurs. It provides clear directional cues and practical guidance on cultivating and harnessing essential cultural values and competencies that can propel their entrepreneurial success in diverse cultural arenas. Entrepreneurs can strategically nurture and leverage these identified traits, optimising their cross-cultural capabilities and enhancing their adaptive capacity and effectiveness in various international business ecosystems. This insight allows for a more strategic and informed approach to cultivating essential entrepreneurial traits conducive to flourishing in the global entrepreneurial landscape.

6.2.5 Contribution 5: Entrepreneurial innovation as an inhibitor of flexibility and market adaptability

The identification of the delicate equilibrium that exists between entrepreneurial innovation and adaptability emerges as a key secondary contribution in the realm of international entrepreneurship. This contribution underscores a critical awareness that an overcommitment to entrepreneurial innovation may inadvertently disrupt the essential balance, compromising flexibility and adaptability in novel market landscapes.

For theory, this contribution enriches the academic landscape by revealing a unique perspective that challenges prevailing notions. Whereas existing research predominantly heralds entrepreneurial innovation as the quintessential driver of international expansion, this contribution fosters a refined understanding that too profound a focus on innovation might inadvertently obfuscate and hinder essential adaptability in various cultural contexts. This realisation encourages a paradigmatic shift, advocating for a more balanced and harmonised integration of innovation with adaptability to facilitate successful entrepreneurial navigation across diverse global landscapes.

Practically, this enriched comprehension can guide international entrepreneurs in their strategic decision-making processes. By fostering a balanced synergy between innovation and adaptability, entrepreneurs are empowered to strategically modulate their approaches, ensuring that an overt emphasis on innovation does not compromise essential flexibility and market adaptability. This balanced approach paves the way for a more refined, agile, and successful entrepreneurial journey across varied cultural and market landscapes, promoting a harmonised alignment between innovative pursuits and adaptive capacities, thus optimising the trajectory of entrepreneurial success in international domains. This revelation thus stands as a beacon of strategic wisdom, guiding entrepreneurs towards a harmonised and balanced approach that optimally integrates innovation with adaptability in the multifaceted realm of global entrepreneurship.

6.2.6 Contribution C6: Entrepreneurs' stressors negatively influence ECCC's

The insightful identification of various stressors that adversely impact ECCC's constitutes a crucial secondary contribution in the field of international entrepreneurship research. This contribution unravels the intricate web of external cultural, environmental, and business stressors—such as language barriers, legal complexity, currency fluctuations, trade barriers, and time zone differences—and elucidates their detrimental influence on the functional components of ECCC's, ranging from motivational to behavioural aspects.

This contribution presents a significant enhancement of the existing body of knowledge because it enriches our conceptual understanding of the challenges and stressors that pervade the international entrepreneurial landscape. Where pre-existing

literature primarily orbits around generic entrepreneurial stressors, this study delineates the specific external stressors that impinge upon ECCCs, thereby facilitating comprehension of the interconnected complexities faced by entrepreneurs in cross-cultural settings.

From a practical standpoint, these insights highlight pivotal strategic implications for international entrepreneurs. Armed with this in-depth understanding, entrepreneurs can cultivate enhanced strategic foresights and adaptive capacities to navigate the identified stressors more effectively, thereby optimising the resilience and functionality of their ECCCs. This practical insight facilitates strategic alignments and adaptations that bolster the entrepreneurs' capacities to navigate the multifaceted challenges intrinsic to cross-cultural entrepreneurial realms, thus enhancing their operative effectiveness and strategic acumen in international ventures. Hence, the identification and elucidation of these specific stressors serve as a crucial navigational guide, equipping entrepreneurs with enhanced strategic tools and insights to navigate the intricate landscapes of international entrepreneurship with precision and success.

6.2.7 Contribution C7: Relationship between language skills and effectiveness in cross-cultural settings

Contribution C7 delineates critical understanding of the intricate relationship between language skills and effectiveness in cross-cultural settings in the realm of international entrepreneurship. This notable contribution elucidates that mere language proficiency is insufficient to foster optimal effectiveness in cross-cultural communication and interactions. Specifically, this research underscores that even within the universal application of a common language, inherent variations in communication styles and nuanced semantic divergences can present formidable barriers, impeding trust-building, negotiations, and collaborative synergies.

For theory, C7 offers a deeper, richer insight into the role of language proficiency in cross-cultural business environments. While prevailing scholarship tends to extol language proficiency, particularly English, as the lingua franca and an important asset for international business transactions, this contribution unveils a more intricate perspective. It emphasises that beyond linguistic fluency, attention to and navigation of subtle cultural factors and variances in communication styles are imperative for fostering effective cross-cultural interactions and collaborations.

This refined understanding offers significant practical implications for international entrepreneurs, steering strategic orientations and communicative approaches. Equipped with this enriched perspective, entrepreneurs can enhance their linguistic proficiency with sensitivity to and appreciation of the subtle cultural and communicative variations that pervade cross-cultural business interactions. Such a harmonised integration of language skills and distinctive cultural sensitivity fosters enhanced effectiveness in cross-cultural communications, negotiations, and collaborative efforts, thereby bolstering the likelihood of success with international entrepreneurial ventures. Hence, C7 emerges as a profound guidepost, showing the path to enhanced communicative effectiveness and success in the multifaceted realm of international entrepreneurship.

6.2.8 Contribution C8: Values and effectiveness of stereotyping

Contribution C8 reveals an insightful perspective on the intersection of cultural stereotypes and entrepreneurial effectiveness across international borders. This exploration shows that cultural stereotypes can be instrumental in enhancing the allure and value of products or services in international business arenas. Specifically, this research reveals that in certain sectors, such as fashion and food, the Country of Origin effect can be leveraged to change cultural elements into unique, captivating offerings.

For theory, C8 offers a compelling paradigm shift, challenging and diversifying the current academic body of work that portrays stereotypes as detrimental in cross-cultural business contexts. By highlighting the strategic potential of cultural stereotypes to increase product or service value and market appeal, this contribution provides innovative insights into the discourse on ECCCs. It refines the academic understanding of stereotypes, portraying them not just as biases but potentially strategic tools that, when used correctly, can enhance business value and effectiveness in international markets.

For practice, C8's revelations provide international entrepreneurs with actionable strategies and considerations. It shows the pathways that entrepreneurs can strategically take to navigate cultural stereotypes and bolster the value proposition and market allure of their goods or services. Such strategic leveraging of stereotypes can facilitate enhanced market differentiation, competitive advantage, and trust-building in cross-cultural business landscapes. Thus, C8 can guide entrepreneurs towards

strategic actions that harness the potential of cultural stereotypes to optimise business effectiveness and success in the global entrepreneurial ecosystem.

6.2.9 Contribution C9: Generation and gender gaps challenge ECCC efficiency

Contribution C9 is an exploration into the realm of entrepreneurial cultural barriers within the framework of ECCCs, with a distinct focus on cross-generation and gender dimensions. This insightful research shows that in certain industries, it is the generational values and gender considerations that predominantly influence cross-cultural variations and interactions, overshadowing broader cultural differences.

The theoretical significance of this contribution is that it reveals underexplored dimensions of cultural barriers in international entrepreneurship. By focusing on age and gender as pivotal factors, C9 enriches the existing body of knowledge, introducing a more diversified and richer understanding of the barriers influencing the effectiveness of ECCCs. It bridges a crucial gap in the literature, extending the discourse beyond conventional cultural considerations to incorporate the impactful roles of demographic factors such as age and gender in international entrepreneurial strategies and outcomes.

For practice, this contribution offers strategic insights for international entrepreneurs, especially those dealing with the complexities of cross-generation and gender barriers in global markets. C9's findings offer practical guidance, suggesting that young or female entrepreneurs might benefit from employing experienced professionals to help them deal with the intricacies and challenges of global market landscapes. This finding underscores the need for entrepreneurs to develop adaptive strategies that help them deal with the unique demands and considerations of age and gender barriers. Consequently, C9 can help entrepreneurs to form and execute strategies that are more precise, relevant, and effective in navigating the multifaceted cultural landscapes of international business.

6.3 Limitations and future studies

While this research provides valuable insights, there are limitations that need be acknowledged. First, conducting interviews solely in English may have introduced language barriers, potentially affecting the depth of responses from non-native

speakers. These limitations only apply to specific cases rather than the general study population. Language barriers might have limited some entrepreneurs from fully articulating their experiences or thoughts in a richer manner. Also, the scope of the study did not encompass emotional elements like stress management or emotional intelligence, which, while not central to the research question, could be relevant in individual cases for understanding how entrepreneurs navigate culturally diverse settings.

These 2 limitations are not considered critical enough to affect the overarching findings and conclusions of the study, but the combination of language and emotional aspects might be considered an opportunity for future studies. Future research could aim to delve deeper into these aspects by including interviews in multiple languages or adding variables related to emotional intelligence due to the existing link between language characteristics and display of emotions across cultures. These avenues could further enrich our understanding of ECCC's in specific cultural and emotional contexts.

While this exploratory study provides new findings on ECCC's, it does note the impact of digital technologies on these capabilities. In an increasingly digitised business environment, entrepreneurs face new challenges in virtual communication, digital collaboration, and online cross-cultural interactions. These technological aspects are outside the scope of this study but present a valuable opportunity for future research. Future studies could explore how ECCC's need to be adapted to function effectively in digital environments, integrating CQ with digital competencies for successful internationalisation.

Considering the findings from this research, numerous opportunities present themselves for further exploration in the realm of ECCC's used for internationalisation. An important avenue would be the temporal variation in the level of ECCC's. Given that cultures are dynamic, and business environments continually evolve, it is important to understand how these capabilities fluctuate over time, adapting to novel contexts and challenges.

Another promising direction could involve employing a longitudinal research design, which could provide a deeper understanding of the progressive nature of ECCC's acquisition and deployment. Furthermore, examining the interplay between ECCC's and generational differences might shed light on how varying worldviews and experiences influence cross-cultural entrepreneurial efforts. A gender-focused lens

could provide critical insights into the distinct challenges and strategies employed by male and female entrepreneurs in cross-cultural contexts. Understanding and refining Entrepreneurial Cross-Cultural Capabilities (ECCCs) has significant practical implications for entrepreneurs, educators, and policymakers. Entrepreneurs can use the insights to navigate cultural challenges more effectively, while educators and trainers can integrate these findings into programs that build cross-cultural competence. Policymakers, on the other hand, can develop initiatives to support businesses operating in diverse cultural settings.

Future research could greatly benefit from reviewing failed international ventures to expand the ECCCs model. Analysing these failures may offer insights into the limitations of existing ECCCs in practice, particularly in terms of adapting to digital environments, emotional intelligence, and cultural fluctuations. By examining the reasons for failure—such as ineffective cross-cultural communication, misalignment with local norms, or inadequate adaptation to virtual and digital challenges—researchers could refine the ECCC framework. This focus is critical because understanding failures provides a practical lens to test and enhance the robustness of ECCCs, ensuring their applicability in complex, real-world scenarios where cultural and technological dynamics are constantly evolving.

Future studies might also benefit from a comparative design that contrasts startups with established firms or businesses hailing from diverse industry sectors. Such an approach could reveal if the magnitude and nature of ECCCs differ according to the firm's maturity or sector specificity. Exploring diverse cultural and industry contexts is essential because these environments present unique challenges and opportunities that shape how cross-cultural capabilities are developed and applied. This ensures that the ECCC framework remains versatile and relevant across varying entrepreneurial landscapes.

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Glossary

Communication Abilities

The competencies that enable individuals to effectively convey information across various mediums and cultural contexts, ensuring clarity and understanding.

Cross-Cultural Capabilities

The ability to function proficiently in diverse cultural settings by understanding and adapting to different cultural norms, values, and communication styles.

Cultural Awareness

The recognition and comprehension of cultural differences and similarities, and their impact on communication, behaviour, and interactions in various environments.

Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

A set of capabilities that empower individuals to relate to and work effectively across cultural boundaries. It consists of four key components: CQ Drive, CQ Knowledge, CQ Strategy, and CQ Action.

Cultural Knowledge

An understanding of the beliefs, values, practices, and social systems within different cultures, allowing for better interaction and collaboration in multicultural contexts.

Entrepreneurial Abilities

The inherent or acquired abilities that enable individuals to identify business opportunities, create value, and foster innovation within entrepreneurial ventures.

Entrepreneurial Capabilities

A set of skills and knowledge applied within a context that allows entrepreneurs to successfully manage and grow their businesses, including strategic adaptability and risk management.

Entrepreneurial Competences

A combination of skills, attitudes, and knowledge applied within a context and essential for entrepreneurial success. These competencies encompass a wide range of abilities going from core entrepreneurial to personal, managerial and technical.

Entrepreneurial Cross-Cultural Capabilities

The ability to effectively manage and operate entrepreneurial ventures in diverse cultural settings by leveraging cultural intelligence and adapting to cultural differences.

Entrepreneurial Cross-Cultural Competences

The specific skills and knowledge required to navigate cultural differences in entrepreneurship, such as effective communication, negotiation, and collaboration with individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

Entrepreneurial Skills

The practical abilities necessary for launching, managing, and scaling a business. These skills include financial management, marketing, leadership, and strategic planning.

Entrepreneurship

The process of recognizing opportunities, creating value, and building ventures to exploit those opportunities. Entrepreneurship often involves innovation, risk-taking, and strategic foresight.

International Entrepreneurship

The pursuit of entrepreneurial activities across national borders, involving the identification and exploitation of international opportunities, and adapting to diverse cultural and regulatory environments.

Internationalisation

The process by which businesses expand their operations into international markets, necessitating adaptation to new cultural, regulatory, and market conditions.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Introduction and Business context

- Can you tell me more about yourself, your background and where do you come from?
- How would you describe your business and industry sector?
- Do you consider it a successful business for international markets? If so, why?
- Could you describe your internationalisation experience from the beginning and what has changed over the last years?
- How would you describe yourself as entrepreneur?
- Why and when did you start internationalising your business?
- Do you believe your international experience as entrepreneur required you to develop a new entrepreneurial style over years? if yes, can you explain why?

Entrepreneurial cultural context

- Which cultural background do you identify with?
- Are you familiar with other cultures? If yes, which ones? Which are your perceptions about those?
- Have you noticed any difference between your and foreign cultures you interacted with?

Cross-cultural aspects

- How would you describe your first international experience?

- Which one was your first foreign country where you conducted business and what are the reasons you chose that one?
- Could you describe how you target foreign markets and the motivations that drive you to choose specific markets?
- Considering all countries, you work with, which ones were the most challenging from your perspective?
- Could you describe any cultural challenges that you experience when dealing with foreign countries?
- Why would you consider those as challenges?
- Have you ever experienced any behavioural failure working in a diverse environment? If so, can you share your experience?

Cross-cultural capabilities

- Do you believe to hold some distinctive personal capabilities which are from your perspective crucial for your business success? If so, why are those important?
- Did you learn new skills from previous international experiences?
- Have ever relied on your staff's capabilities to conduct business overseas? If so, could you describe an episode where this happened and which capabilities were used?
- Do you consider language skills crucial for business development in international markets?
- In your opinion, are language skills enough to enable effective cross-cultural communication at international level?

Managing different cultures

- What are the main motivations which driven you to work in foreign markets?
- Have you ever experienced any successful or failure episode in a cross-cultural interaction? If so, can you please provide an example for each of those cases and explain what did you learn?
- Have you ever developed strategies to manage cultural differences?
- Could you describe some incidents in a cross-cultural business setting which were somewhat stressful? Why did you describe those incidents as stressful and how did you cope with those?

Positive Attitude and Resilience

- Do you feel you have a positive attitude towards cross-cultural differences?
- Do you consider yourself resilient to work in a diverse cultural setting?

Conclusion

- As international entrepreneur, what do cross-cultural capabilities mean for your business?
- There is anything else about your experience or thought you would like to add concerning your specific entrepreneurial experience?

Appendix B

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Navigating through entrepreneurial skills, competencies and capabilities: a systematic literature review and the development of the entrepreneurial ability model

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to define, classify and interconnect the wide range of known entrepreneurial abilities with terms such as skills, capabilities and competencies, which have been used inconsistently within the entrepreneurial field.

Design/methodology/approach – This investigation is based on a systematic literature review and strengthened by a meta-analysis equipped with a bibliometric study to assist the generation of outcomes with a quantitative investigation.

Findings – This study proposes an evolving entrepreneurial ability model which interconnects genetic and acquired skill types, capabilities and competencies and is equipped with an Entrepreneurial Skills Map essential to operate in the 21st century.

Research limitations/implications – The proposed model is specific to the entrepreneurial field.

Practical implications – This study supports universities and government agencies for the development of educational programs to prepare current and future entrepreneurs to match the changes in the new environment that has emerged with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Originality/value – This research contributes to the entrepreneurship research domain by shedding light on the inconsistent use of non-standardised terminologies and providing an entrepreneurial model and updated skills map to guide scholars to frame research in the post-COVID era with more clarity.

Keywords Entrepreneurship, International entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial skills, Entrepreneurial abilities, Entrepreneurial competences, Entrepreneurial capabilities, Entrepreneurial competencies, Skills, Entrepreneurs

Paper type Literature review



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