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FROM STRATEGY AND PRACTICE TO ORGANIZATIONAL SUCCESS IN INTERNATIONALIZATION: A QUALITATIVE APROACH

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Abstract:
Research background: Digital transformation is recasting the logic of international expansion, yet the literature seldom analyses the mutually reinforcing effects of managerial practice and emergent technologies.
Purpose of the article: Building on semi-structured interviews with eleven senior managers drawn equally from SMEs and large corporations, this qualitative study examines how B2B strategic configurations, when mediated by digital tools, translate into competitive strength and, ultimately, superior organisational performance across borders.
Methods: Thematic analysis uncovers three interlocking mechanisms: (i) dynamic portfolio adaptation, enabling real-time alignment between product attributes and market micro-segments; (ii) data-enabled orchestration of global partnerships that compresses learning cycles and mitigates distance-related risk; and (iii) digitally-driven performance monitoring, which transcends conventional financial metrics by integrating customer-centric and sustainability indicators.
Findings & Value added: Moreover, the findings highlight the strategic salience of intangible digital assets, data-governance routines, analytics competencies and robust cyber-security protocols, in safeguarding reputation and unlocking cross-border synergies, a dimension rarely addressed in prior SME-centred work. When such digital capabilities are embedded in a coherent managerial vision, firms report markedly faster market entry, deeper customer penetration and sustained profitability; where technology is adopted as a mere operational bolt-on, performance spill-overs are largely absent. For practitioners and policy-makers, the study provides evidence-based guidance on designing integrated expansion road-maps that leverage digitalisation to enhance competitiveness and long-run performance in today's hyper-connected global economy. Future research can build upon this foundation by testing the model quantitatively across industries and institutional settings.

Keywords: competitiveness; digitalization; internationalization; organizational performance; managerial practices and strategies

JEL: M12

1. Introduction

Research into internationalisation, and specifically the deployment of B2B managerial strategies and practices, is hardly new; yet this study seeks to offer a timely contribution by examining how organisational behaviour is being reshaped by digital transformation and emergent technologies.

Within the specialized literature the term internationalisation is typically employed in the strategy domain (Bi et al., 2024) to describe the staged, incremental process through which a firm moves beyond its domestic market and expands commercial activities abroad (Kessler and Zipper-Weber, 2023).

Over the past decade, investigating the global development of businesses has become imperative for organisations intent on sustaining competitive advantage (Vatamanescu et al., 2019), and scholarship has increasingly adopted holistic perspectives (Efrat et al., 2017; Du et al., 2023). For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), crossing national borders and establishing an active presence in external markets are challenges that must be addressed judiciously (Arbelo et al., 2024; Vatamanescu et al., 2017, 2019, 2020a, 2020b, 2022). Concurrently, large firms have also been affected by the trend towards an open global position and have engaged in complex strategies to expand their operations in global markets (Anggara et al., 2025).

Companies seeking to enter new markets often adopt growth strategies and strengthen international B2B relationships. Research has detailed how certain growth strategies impact a firm's performance (Cha et al., 2023). Internationalization may involve partnering with strategic allies to share resources, skills, and knowledge, reducing excess capacity, developing new capabilities, and accessing new markets through local partners' know-how, technology, and financial resources (Franco et al., 2020; Vatamanescu et al., 2019).

Internationalization is a complex strategic decision requiring significant investment and affecting organizational performance (Vatamanescu et al., 2014-2022; Song et al., 2015). Multinational corporations dominate due to their ambition, leadership, financial capacity, and resources. Knowledge and learning, especially from B2B relationships and networks, are crucial for development (Casillas et al., 2009; Singh et al., 2022). Managers must identify and pursue multiple international opportunities to understand and acquire knowledge related to internationalization (Meyer et al., 2023). Firms now transcend not only physical frontiers but also digital ones, leveraging global e-commerce and digital platforms to market products, services and solutions (Purkayastha et al., 2021). Substantial investment is channelled into digitalisation in anticipation of performance gains, and numerous recent studies have explored how such investment enhances organisational outcomes (Cui et al., 2022).

In the internationalisation process, integrating emergent technologies—artificial intelligence, cloud computing and blockchain among them—can fundamentally transform how organisations manage operations and engage with overseas markets (Sinha and Roy Chowdhury, 2021; Akter et al., 2022). These technologies complement one another, providing a robust framework for innovation, cost reduction and performance enhancement on international terrains (Sahoo et al., 2024; Silenskyte et al., 2024). Digitalisation also constitutes a decisive response to the competitiveness pressures of a highly globalised marketplace (Vatamanescu et al., 2017). Consequently, organisations intent on maintaining competitiveness and internationalising must focus simultaneously on acquiring new knowledge and adopting novel technologies (Bargoni et al., 2024).

Finally, organisational performance emerges as a direct outcome of internationalisation supported by digitalisation and emergent technologies: firms enhance operational efficiency and strengthen competitive positioning by accessing new markets, optimising supply chains and adapting to diverse global consumer demands. Thus, internationalisation constitutes both a growth opportunity and a critical lever for long-term performance consolidation (Ding et al., 2021).

Building on these perspectives, the empirical studies resorts to semi-structured interviews with eleven senior managers drawn equally from SMEs and large corporations. It seeks to examine how B2B strategic configurations, when mediated by digital tools, translate into competitive strength and, ultimately, superior organisational performance across borders. Thematic analysis uncovers three interlocking mechanisms: (i) dynamic portfolio adaptation, enabling real-time alignment between product attributes and market micro-segments; (ii) data-enabled orchestration of global partnerships that compresses learning cycles and mitigates distance-related risk; and (iii) digitally driven performance monitoring, which transcends conventional financial metrics by integrating customer-centric and sustainability indicators.

2. Methodology

The empirical research is founded on a semi-structured interview design. Semi-structured interviewing is widely recognized in the social sciences as a technique that balances comparability across cases with the flexibility to explore emergent themes—making it an appropriate choice for capturing the nuanced managerial insights underlying internationalisation processes.

The protocol included twelve open-ended questions to gather participants' experiences and perceptions regarding three main constructs: (i) B2B managerial strategies and practices, (ii) competitiveness driven by digitalisation, and (iii) organisational performance. This exploratory approach aims to reveal the relationship among the constructs and establish a basis for the study's subsequent quantitative phase.

Data were collected remotely between January and February 2025 through e-mail exchanges or secure virtual-meeting platforms, in accordance with logistical constraints and the preferences expressed by the interviewees. All conversations were conducted in Romanian, audio-recorded with prior consent, and transcribed verbatim.

The sample included eleven senior Romanian managers who have extensive experience in corporate leadership and cross-border business development (Table 1). They hold pivotal positions in both large corporations and SMEs operating in IT&C, construction, automotive, agribusiness, food production, and financial-banking services. This diverse yet information-rich perspective provides valuable insights into strategy, digital transformation, and performance management.

Rigour was enhanced through constant comparison, investigator triangulation, and active searches for disconfirming evidence. Participants' anonymity was preserved using initials that are not uniquely traceable (e.g., V.P., L.D.). Credibility was reinforced through member-checking, where preliminary interpretations were returned to interviewees for validation and clarification of any ambiguities.

Two limitations should be acknowledged. First, the modest sample size (n = 11), although typical of exploratory work, limits statistical generalisation. Second, focusing exclusively on Romanian managers may restrict transferability to other institutional settings; replication in different socio-cultural contexts would enhance external validity.

Despite these limitations, the methodology provides a robust framework to observe the interactions between strategy, digitalisation, and performance as precursors to successful internationalisation, thereby meeting the exploratory objectives of this investigation.

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Table 1: Profile of respondents in the qualitative research

No.	Initials	Position	Industry	Educational Level	Company Size
1.	V.P.	Vice President, Board Member, Chief Strategy & Operating Officer	IT & C	Higher education	Large company
2.	L.D.	Head of Communications CEE Region	Finance / Banking	Higher education	Large company
3.	D.F.	General Manager	Construction Industrial Sector	Higher education	Large company
4.	V.S.	Founder and General Manager	Food Industry	Higher education	SME
5.	I.L.	Founder and General Manager	Automotive	Higher education	SME
6.	P.Z.	Regional HR Director EMEA (Europe, Middle East, and Africa)	Automotive	Higher education	Large company
7.	O.B.	Development Director	IT & C	Higher education	Large company
8.	R.S.	Founder and General Manager	Food Industry	Higher education	SME
9.	P.M.	Chief of Marketing	Food Industry	Higher education	Large company
10.	D.C.	Communications & Public Affairs Coordinator	Automotive	Higher education	Large company
11.	D.A.	Head of Open Market	IT & C	Higher education	Large company

Source: own elaboration

3. Results

This section synthesises the findings of the qualitative phase and shows how the insights gained from the eleven Romanian executives inform the conceptual framework that will later be tested quantitatively. It is organised around three themes: (i) B2B managerial strategies and practices for internationalisation, (ii) competitiveness enabled by digitalisation, and (iii) organisational performance. The themes are tightly inter-linked, revealing how technology-mediated managerial intent translates into competitive strength abroad and, ultimately, superior firm outcomes.

Managers discussed strategies to meet market demands, form partnerships, and ensure sustainable growth. The study details how managers define and implement internationalization strategies, adapt them to external market demands, and address associated challenges. The findings explore the role of digital transformation in enhancing international competitiveness. Participants described their experiences with adopting and integrating modern digital tools and explained how these technologies improve operational efficiency, simplify decision-making, and strengthen competitive positioning in global markets. The final section analyzes organizational performance influenced by internationalization efforts, examining key performance indicators (KPIs) such as profitability, market share, and customer satisfaction alongside industry-specific metrics.

3.1. B2B managerial strategies and practices for internationalisation

P.Z. explains that the expansion process typically begins with a strategic decision at the group level, followed by the operational development of a new factory. *'The first step is to determine the optimal location for the factory based on a complex analysis. Investment evaluation and cost forecasting are conducted, considering the region's economic potential and available human resources, as success relies on access to a skilled workforce. Only after this* *preliminary stage do we proceed to plan the operational and commercial details'* (P.Z.). This approach highlights a global standardisation strategy.

One practice developed by the companies before making internationalisation decisions is participation in international trade fairs and industry events. Attending events such as Anuga, the world's largest food fair, and SIAL Paris, a central venue for food industry manufacturers and distributors, has facilitated the identification of opportunities and the establishment of strategic relationships (Respondent V.S.). The strategy involves utilising hubs through formal international meetings.

Companies can expedite achieving competitive positions in global markets through strategic actions such as launching innovative products, establishing competitive pricing, and forming direct relationships with local partners to boost visibility. A decisive market entry strategy facilitates results in dynamic sectors with fierce competition (Respondent D.C.). Success requires rapid and assertive action, adapting business models sustainably, and timely partnerships with local entities who drive most sales. To achieve global success, product portfolios must be adapted using differentiation strategies. Integrating new complementary product categories motivates market entry even when it appears saturated (Respondent O.B.). In doing so, the goal is to develop and adapt existing products for international markets by introducing new categories, allowing the company to reach diverse consumers and meet foreign market needs. Put in other words, this approach aligns with resource search strategies in internationalisation.

Two companies in the interview recommend a gradual expansion strategy for entering international markets. This approach allows controlled entry and fast adaptation to local conditions. The project began with initial steps like testing user interaction and identifying requirements, followed by scaling up the product: '*Ensuring compliant and secure services according to each country's regulations was essential'* (L.D.). Following this conceptual pattern, P.M. highlighted that their growth strategy is methodical and systematic, based on deep sector knowledge and recognition of business challenges. This careful planning aims to ensure the company's long-term success and resilience.

These legal entities are established with the explicit intention of operating on an international level, as evidenced by I.L.'s own statements regarding the business he founded: '*From the company's inception, its strategic direction was oriented towards the international market. The majority of our projects are carried out for international clients, providing us with a distinct advantage'*. This standpoint is further substantiated by the testimony of respondent L.D., who asserts that: '*The products are designed on a global scale, with minimal adaptation to local markets. The adaptation of policies to local specifics is more closely associated with customer support and adherence to local legislation or explicit requests from regulatory authorities'*. That is to say, it's being suggested that a standardisation strategy is adopted in the context of internationalisation.

Conversely, when companies lack adequate preparation to confront the challenges of the international market, as is often observed in emerging industries, they must adopt a flexible approach, either by adjusting product offerings or by customising processes, as interview participant D.F. noted.

O.B. states that to enter international markets, the organisation considers local market specifics and allocates resources accordingly. In operationalising it at an organizational level, the designated division handles this responsibility. Each market has unique needs and regulations, so products are adapted to meet local requirements. The company also ensures product development adheres to safety standards, energy efficiency, and compatibility for smooth integration into local ecosystems.

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3.2. The role of key stakeholders in internationalisation

Holistically, the main point that emerged is that stakeholder support might be a decisive enabler of successful expansion abroad. That is, Respondent V.P**.** underlined the gate-keeping influence of regulators, noting that *'each country has its own legal requirements, and we must comply with them before we can operate'*. Equally indispensable, in the early entry stage, are local partners *'because without their collaboration we cannot deliver services until we build our own infrastructure'* (V.P.).

Moreover, strategic alliances with domestic distributors are a favoured route to market. In this respect, Respondent O.B. explained that when the firm wishes to reach consumers more rapidly it *'focuses on strategic partnerships with local distributors'*. The customer, however, remains the ultimate arbiter of internationalisation decisions. As Respondent R.S. put it: *'For us, entrepreneurship entails a constant responsibility towards the client, who must always be at the centre of our concerns. We choose those markets where we can provide a positive consumer experience—this is the essence of any successful business.'*

Marketing agencies and local investors can boost cross-border expansion. Respondent P.M. noted that *'local marketing agencies adjust brand messages and create culture-specific advertising campaigns. Local investors also finance and support new locations'*. What is more, supply-side stakeholders appear to be crucial. Respondent D.C. stated raw-material suppliers are *'the most important stakeholders,'* whereas Respondent D.F. highlighted the essential role of *'logistics-service providers in delivering projects correctly and on time'*.

Beyond this, external expertise is crucial. Respondent L.D. emphasized that consultants must understand market dynamics to create attractive and relevant offerings for customers. Likewise, Respondent V.S. identified other stakeholders like retailers, marketplace representatives, and logistics partners as essential for international success. Additionally, several interviewees highlighted their workforce's importance. Respondent P.Z. stated: *'Our employees drive our international success by implementing our practices and standards globally'*.

Collectively, these testimonies depict internationalisation as a multi-actor undertaking in which regulators, customers, local partners, investors, suppliers, consultants, logistics providers and employees each perform context-specific yet interdependent functions that collectively determine the pace and efficacy of a firm's global expansion.

3.3. Market-selection methods

Interviewee V.S. stressed that target-market selection rests on several determinants, chief among them the demand for a diversified services portfolio and the need to improve service quality. The screening exercise is therefore built on a multifactorial analysis: *'We assessed each market's consumption potential to gauge demand for our products, focusing on economic stability and the regulatory environment. We prioritised predictable business contexts'*. He likewise highlighted competitive scrutiny: *'If a market was already saturated, we looked for ways to differentiate ourselves or for unexploited niches'*.

In parallel, Respondent I.L. outlined a clear, results-oriented approach structured around three core criteria: *'When deciding which markets to enter, we analyse the industry's maturity, the degree of innovation and prevailing price levels in that region'*. Correct alignment between market potential and the firm's internal capabilities can tip the decision to enter, for internal standards and delivery requirements must be upheld if the business model is to remain effective. Accordingly, Respondent P.Z. explained: *'We focus on markets that match our product portfolio and quality requirements, taking into account compliance with ISO 9001 for quality management and ISO 14001 for environmental management. We also assess whether those* *markets can meet our just-in-time delivery needs so we can respond rapidly and efficiently to clients'*.

Pervasively, companies seeking successful international expansion must weigh key factors such as economic growth prospects, competitive intensity and strategic fit with the organisation's overarching objectives.

3.4. Challenges in implementing managerial strategies and practices

Companies face many challenges when expanding internationally due to rapid technological changes and the need to adapt in a digitally connected global market. One major barrier is financial; expansion requires continuous capital, and launching new products needs significant resources, so firms must find ways to secure external funding.

Broader product portfolios can serve diverse international markets but also add financial strain. Respondent R.S. stated that expanding into new markets requires rapid adaptation and constant investment, and while diversification is beneficial long-term, resource allocation must be balanced to maintain financial sustainability. Interviewees highlighted external shocks like inflation, the war in Ukraine, and rising costs, which have reduced consumer purchasing power, lowered product demand, and hindered companies' ability to invest in new markets.

Equally important, further obstacles arise from the need to comply with each target country's legal requirements, manage economic and currency risks and bridge cultural divides. One respondent explained: *'We have adopted hedging strategies and negotiate contracts in stable currencies. In some countries, building trust takes longer and requires a constant presence'* (V.S.). A similar view came from D.A., who concluded that *'the main challenges in adopting internationalisation strategies include cultural and linguistic barriers, complex regulations and intense competition in foreign markets'*.

Other managers highlighted difficulties in securing specialised human capital and in navigating logistical bottlenecks. D.F. noted that a major impediment is *'finding niche specialists—professionals who already possess or can quickly acquire industry-specific skills. This complicates recruitment and undermines our ability to deliver projects to the required standards, especially in international markets where expectations are very high'*. He added that *'road infrastructure slows the transport of our materials and can delay project kick-off'* (D.F.).

Concurrently, strategic shortcomings within the firm may prove equally constraining. L.D. pointed to *'a lack of talent truly capable of managing large-scale international projects and leaders who remain overly focused on traditional operations in empirically controlled environments, showing little interest in performance management'*. Beyond this, resistance to remote collaboration emerged as another barrier. According to I.L.: *'Many firms are used to working only with local suppliers and hesitate to outsource services to remote teams. To overcome that obstacle, we build strong client relationships and demonstrate through our projects that we deliver high-standard solutions regardless of location'*.

Finally, certain companies encounter risks due to swift technological advancements that may diminish returns or necessitate unanticipated capital expenditures. As V.P. cautioned: *'The markets in which we operate evolve rapidly both in terms of technology and customer behaviour. The risk of obsolescence due to emerging technologies is genuine and may require substantial investment to modernise our infrastructure'*.

Jointly, these statements illustrate a complex landscape encompassing financial, regulatory, human-resource, logistical, cultural, and technological challenges—each requiring meticulous management for firms to convert strategic intent into sustained success in the international arena.

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3.5. Digitization and competitiveness through internationalization

The strategic deployment of digital technology allows firms to communicate more fluidly with prospective customers, track their behavioural patterns and anticipate market trends. Even more importantly, these technologies enable companies to design and simulate bespoke solutions while monitoring international markets in real time. Subsequently, organisations can approach clients with tailored, data-grounded proposals. As Respondent D.F. put it: *'Digital tools, first and foremost, help us identify potential customers and make initial contact. They then support us in planning and simulating solutions, and they let us track global market movements in real time so we can foresee emerging trends'.*

To widen their reach, pinpoint qualified prospects and consolidate their international presence, several firms pair artificial-intelligence analytics with professional social media. Respondent I.L. explained: *'We use AI to optimise both our marketing messages and SEO strategy, and LinkedIn is the main channel through which we promote our services and generate leads'.* Smart digital solutions—enterprise-resource-planning suites and business-analytics platforms in particular—facilitate efficient inventory and sourcing management, allow rapid reallocation of investment and confer an edge over rivals that still rely on traditional decision cycles. Respondent O.B. observed: *'The platforms we employ let us manage stocks and procurement more efficiently, cut costs and plan long term, especially given the current supply-chain disruptions. Because we can anticipate local demand and keep prices competitive, we enjoy a strategic advantage when expanding and adapting abroad'.*

In parallel, advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), process automation and cloud services have radically altered the way companies engage with global markets by enhancing operational efficiency and enabling swift responses to market shifts. Respondent V.S. confirmed: *'We used AI to analyse markets and identify consumption trends, which helped us make better-informed strategic decisions'.* Cloud computing, in particular, gives new entrants the agility and remote operability they need before a full in-country infrastructure is in place—a reality reflected in Respondent V.P.'s experience: *'Cutting-edge technologies, cloud solutions included, not only support our international expansion by ensuring high-quality connectivity; they also form an important part of our own offer, because we provide such services to our corporate clients'.*

Supplementary, e-learning platforms have become a valuable resource for improving employee and partner performance regardless of location, especially during expansion into emerging markets. Two of the organisations studied confirmed the practice. Respondent P.Z. noted: *'We need a development and training programme for our people, and it is fully digitalised.'* Similarly, in the Romanian café chain analysed, digitalisation yielded a portal for *'enhancing staff and partner performance, plus an app—available in every country we operate in—that tells clients where the nearest outlet is and details the products on sale'* (R.S.).

The Internet of Things (IoT) and AI are transforming global operations, accelerating processes, enriching the customer experience and lifting overall performance. Respondent D.C. highlighted investments in IoT-enabled connected vehicles: *'These include advanced infotainment systems, roadside-assistance services and other features that turn the car into a connected device'.* AI also plays a central part, as Respondent D.C. added, citing autonomous-vehicle development through partnerships such as the one with Argo AI.

In today's hyper-globalised economy, blockchain ranks among the most effective technologies for handling international financial transfers. Its decentralised, secure architecture allows fast, transparent cross-border transactions. L.D. argued that using cryptocurrency *'dramatically cuts the cost of processing international payments by eliminating intermediaries,* *letting us offer more affordable services to our clients. In addition, cryptocurrencies open doors to emerging markets where conventional banking is limited or absent'.*

E-commerce platforms likewise accelerate foreign-market entry and underpin rapid scaling. Respondent R.S. recounted: *'One of our main objectives was to expand into e-commerce so consumers could access our products 24 / 7. We found it far more efficient to list on established platforms; they have become our most effective technological tools, giving us a quick, low-cost route into new markets, improving brand visibility and allowing us to meet consumer demand more flexibly'.* Operational efficiency underpins international success, and V.S. identified three digital dividends: (i) greater efficiency through *'process automation, which has reduced human error and order-processing time';* (ii) faster expansion because *'digitalisation lets us scale without a physical presence in every country';* and (iii) lower costs because *'digital solutions have cut administrative and logistics expenditure.'*

It has become clear that digital adoption has become a catalyst for organisational transformation, reshaping operational dynamics and the way firms interact with international markets. The resulting agility enables them to anticipate trends and adapt proactively to global customer requirements, thereby reinforcing competitive positioning in a dynamic, highly interconnected environment. Nonetheless, integrating digital technologies abroad is complex and rife with challenges. Respondent I.L. cited three major impediments: *'management's resistance to unfamiliar software; inadequate budgets for new digital solutions; and excessively cumbersome processes, particularly when we work with very large companies'.*

As well as that, cyber-security threats remain ever-present. Respondent L.D. reported that attacks are a *'constant challenge',* to which the company has responded by *'continually enhancing security features in its applications to protect customers from potential fraud'.* Finally, digitalisation can trigger significant cultural friction. As Respondent P.Z. explained: *'As an international company operating in several countries—each with different cultures, visions and capabilities—we faced multiple hurdles in standardising operations. Digitalisation turned out to be especially difficult from a cultural standpoint'.*

Overall, the evidence underscores that thoughtfully deployed digital technologies are integral to building and sustaining competitiveness during international expansion, even as firms navigate the financial, managerial and cultural headwinds that accompany such transformative change.

3.6. Organizational Performance

A primary benefit lies in risk dispersion: entering additional markets reduces dependence on the domestic arena and cushions exogenous shocks. Respondent V.S. reported that overseas entry *'reduced our reliance on the local market and gave us greater financial stability'.* In the same vein, Respondent O.B. observed that geographical diversification *'has markedly increased the contribution of foreign markets to total turnover … while dampening the risks linked to economic fluctuations in particular regions'.* In the same fashion, Respondent L.D. noted a sharp rise in scale and reach: *'We now operate in 38 markets worldwide and serve more than 50 million retail clients'.*

Furthermore, it is important to put forth that internationalisation also amplifies brand recognition. According to Respondent V.S., a foreign presence *'has reinforced our image as a premium brand',* attracting new customers and deepening trust. Respondent R.S. added that global expansion *'presented a unique opportunity to popularise our brand and to build a worldwide community of coffee lovers'.*

On top of this, exposure to diverse market requirements stimulates innovation and thus consolidates competitive advantage abroad. In line with this, Respondent V.S. reflected that

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'we have had to innovate continuously to remain relevant internationally'. Adittionally, Respondent D.F. confirmed: *'Expansion has diversified our revenue streams and bolstered organisational resilience—it allowed us to optimise internal processes and become more competitive across every market in which we operate'.* P.Z. likewise recorded *'a considerable improvement in operational efficiency; our products now enjoy greater appreciation on a global scale'.*

Another noteworthy point is that operational efficiency and robust partnerships are further dividends of going global. Respondent O.B. emphasised *'stronger relations with strategic partners'* as a driver of process gains. In agribusiness, P.M. observed that international reach *'has improved access to digital solutions and tailored finance, accelerating the adoption of technologies that maximise yields and profitability'.*

Contrary to fears of crowding out, overseas success often feeds back into the home base. Respondent V.P. explained that strategic acquisitions and foreign growth *'have underpinned sustainable expansion at home*', financing product development and infrastructure upgrades without harming the local market. Performance improvements materialise visibly in key metrics. That is, *'significant increases in market share, sales volume and customer satisfaction',* recorded D.A., confirming therefore the effectiveness of the chosen strategies.

Measurement, however, must be industry-specific. In automotive, Respondent I.L. tracks *'revenue growth from foreign markets, projects won and international lead-conversion rates'.* What is more, Respondent V.S. focuses on *'overseas revenue and its share of total income,'* complemented by analyses of *'profit margins and region-specific cost structures'.* Beyond this, D.F. relies on *'return on investment to judge whether spending on infrastructure, technology and product adaptation is delivering the expected returns'.* Changing the viewpoint, Respondent V.P. looks at *'number of markets served, market share by service category, revenue-generating units and total turnover',* while Respondent O.B. monitors *'the share of exports in total revenue and the penetration rate in new markets'.* In his sector, Respondent D.C. tracks *'turnover, external-market revenue and units sold per model, which helps us understand customer preferences'.*

All in all, respondents reported marked improvements in these indicators after internationalisation. Yet vigilance remains essential: should performance stall or decline, some firms opt for withdrawal or divestment. As Respondent V.P. explained, *'When results fall short of expectations, we reassess our market strategy—closure of operations is one option on the table'.* Convergently, the evidence shows that the interplay of well-crafted strategies, efficient operations and sustained competitiveness makes internationalisation a decisive lever for long-term organisational success.

4. Discussion

As we have tried to put forth, businesses intent on expanding abroad must devise strategies attuned to the cultural, economic and legal specificities of each target market. The literature confirms that flexible, adaptive approaches enable organisations to address local requirements efficiently and to recalibrate their strategy as learning unfolds (Pahrizal et al., 2024; Vatamanescu et al., 2020a). Putting theory into practice, the interviewees favour a gradual pattern of internationalisation, built around strategic partnerships, which they regard as indispensable for achieving both financial and operational performance. Conceptually, this finding aligns with the work of Vatamanescu et al. (2014,2015, 2016b, 2017, 2020b), who highlight the value of adaptive, stepwise expansion and the pivotal role of relational capital in forging the alliances that underpin international growth.

International expansion nonetheless confronts firms with a complex mix of challenges. Internal pressures—such as the need for continuous innovation and for up-skilling human resources—intersect with external constraints, including macro-economic volatility, cultural distance and rigid or inefficient regulation. The respondents underscored the importance of stable, supportive regulatory frameworks, echoing Chandra et al. (2021), who warn that an unfavourable institutional environment can stifle even managerially competent, entrepreneurially oriented firms seeking to enter new markets.

All interviewees acknowledged the decisive contribution of digital technologies to successful expansion. Advanced solutions—artificial intelligence, cloud computing and business-analytics platforms—confer a competitive advantage (Fraccastoro et al., 2025; Vatamanescu, 2017) by streamlining operations, informing strategic choices and enabling fast responses to market shifts. This empirical insight mirrors the conceptual argument advanced by Lee et al. (2019), namely that digitalisation accelerates internationalisation and affords firms a differentiated strategic position.

As we have empirically witnesed, organisational performance is strongly conditioned by the internationalisation journey itself. Diversified revenue streams, higher competitiveness and superior operational efficiency emerge once firms adapt to external market requirements and implement well-defined strategies. Business networks play a crucial part in this process (Vatamanescu et al., 2018a; 2018b), facilitating knowledge transfer from seasoned managers to less-experienced leaders and thereby fostering resilient collaboration and enhanced organisational outcomes (Vatamanescu et al., 2020b, 2022a, 2022b).

5. Conclusions

Broadly, the qualitative analysis offers an in-depth view of how B2B managerial strategies and practices, together with international digitalisation efforts, shape competitiveness and organisational performance. By tailoring their approach to foreign-market demands and deploying carefully crafted strategies, the firms studied demonstrated tangible pay-offs from internationalisation: revenue diversification, heightened competitiveness and sharper operational efficiency. The data portray a holistic conception of performance that blends financial and operational indicators with a long-term strategic perspective.

Engagement in cross-border activity strengthens not only global positioning but also organisational learning. Informal business networks facilitate the exchange of knowledge between experienced managers and emerging leaders, thereby supporting sustainable collaboration and the design of effective expansion strategies. Theoretically, our findings reinforce the premise that digitalisation, competitiveness through internationalisation and judiciously selected B2B managerial practices constitute a central pillar of international success, and they lay the groundwork for the forthcoming quantitative study.

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, the interview pool—eleven participants—necessarily constrains the generalisability of the results. Second, the inclusion of only one representative per sector and the exclusive focus on Romanian managers circumscribe the applicability of the conclusions to other cultural and economic settings. Third, the varied firm sizes represented may yield heterogeneous perspectives that limit interpretive consistency. Future research could enrich the qualitative strand by engaging a larger cohort drawn from a single industry or organisational type (SME or large corporation), thereby offering a more finely contextualised picture of internationalisation's impact.

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