



***MEDIATING ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURIAL
ORIENTATION IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INNOVATIVENESS
AND NETWORKS ON INTERNATIONALIZATION OF SMEs IN NIGERIA***

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GSM 2019 31



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By

AHMED IBRAHIM KARAGE

**Thesis Submitted to Putra Business School, in Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

July 2019

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DEDICATION

To my father Ibrahim Ausaja of blessed memory and my mother Habiba Kakawo, my late grandmother Kabobo Kaka and my late brothers Abubakar Ibrahim and Mohammed Mbarka.



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

MEDIATING ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INNOVATIVENESS AND NETWORKS ON INTERNATIONALIZATION OF SMEs IN NIGERIA

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July 2019

Chairman : Raja Nerina Raja Yusof, PhD
Faculty : Putra Business School

Innovativeness and network are arguably important factors that are associated with a firm internationalization. There is an increase in the body of literature on the role of innovativeness and network on a successful internationalization of SMEs. However, research on domestic and international perspectives of firm innovativeness and network in a single framework to ascertain their impacts on the SMEs internationalization remains scarce. Furthermore, the mediation effect of international entrepreneurial orientation (IEO) dimensions (Innovativeness, Pro-activeness and Risk-taking) on the above relationship has a strong appeal but lacks empirical support. Likewise, what is not yet clear is the moderation effect of export promotion program on the association between international entrepreneurial orientation and the internationalization of SMEs. Given the above motivation, the study developed a conceptual framework based on dynamic capability view and supported by internationalization theory to examine whether domestic innovativeness, international innovativeness, domestic network and international network influence the internationalization of SMEs in Nigeria. In addition, the study investigated the mediating effect of international entrepreneurial orientation on relationship between the antecedents and outcome and export promotion programs as contingency of the relationship between IEO and internationalization of SMEs. The study used Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software version 3.2.7 and sample data collected from 266 Nigerian exporting SMEs. The results showed that domestic innovativeness and domestic network were statistically significant with medium to large effect sizes, albeit international innovativeness and international network were insignificant. These results support two out of the four hypotheses on direct relationships. The mediating effect of innovativeness and risk-taking dimensions of IEO has been found to be significant, with small to medium effect sizes in the model. However, the moderation hypotheses have not been supported by the data collected for this study. The findings extend both empirical and

theoretical literature on international entrepreneurship that has been underexplored. With these results, the researcher concludes that the study makes contribution to theory and practice. Direction for future study has been suggested based on the limitations identified in the study.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PERANAN ORIENTASI KEUSAHAWANAN ANTARABANGSA SEBAGAI
PENGANTARA HUBUNGAN DI ANTARA INOVASI DAN RANGKAIAN
DARIPADA PERSPEKTIF DOMESTIK DAN ANTARABANGSA DAN
PENGANTARABANGSAAN IKS DI NIGERIA**

Oleh

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Inovasi dan jaringan adalah dibahaskan sebagai faktor penting yang dikaitkan dengan pengantarabangsaan sesebuah syarikat. Terdapat peningkatan badan literatur mengenai peranan inovasi dan jaringan dalam kejayaan pengantarabangsaan IKS (industri kecil dan sederhana). Walaubagaimanapun, kajian terhadap inovasi dan jaringan syarikat dari perspektif domestik dan antarabangsa di dalam satu rangka kerja untuk menentukan impak kepada pengantarabangsaan IKS masih kurang. Disamping itu, kesan pengantaraan dimensi orientasi keusahawanan antarabangsa (IEO) (Inovasi, Proaktif dan Pengambilan risiko) dalam perhubungan di atas sangat menarik untuk dikaji, tetapi kurang sokongan literatur. Sama juga seperti di atas, apa yang tidak jelas lagi adalah kesan moderasi program promosi eksport kepada perhubungan di antara orientasi keusahawanan antarabangsa dan pengantarabangsaan IKS. Dengan motivasi di atas, kajian ini membangunkan rangka kerja konseptual berdasarkan pandangan keupayaan dinamik untuk memeriksa samada inovasi domestik, inovasi antarabangsa, jaringan domestik dan jaringan antarabangsa mempengaruhi pengantarabangsaan IKS di Nigeria. Tambahan pula, kajian ini menyiasat kesan pengantaraan orientasi keusahawanan antarabangsa kepada perhubungan di antara antecedent dan hasil dan program promosi eksport sebagai syarat kepada perhubungan di antara IEO dan pengantarabangsaan IKS. Kajian ini menggunakan Permodelan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation (PLS-SEM) dengan perisian SmartPLS versi 3.2.7 dan data sampel dikumpul dari 266 IKS Nigeria. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa keinovatifan antarabangsa, jaringan domestik dan antarabangsa adalah signifikan secara statistik dengan saiz efek kecil ke sederhana, walaupun keinovatifan domestik tidak signifikan. Keputusan ini menyokong tiga daripada empat hipotesis mengenai perhubungan langsung. Kesan pengantaraan dimensi pengambilan-risiko di bawah IEO telah dijumpai signifikan, menyumbang saiz efek kecil di dalam model. Walaubagaimanapun, hipotesis moderasi tidak disokong oleh data yang dikumpul di

dalam kajian ini. Dapatan ini mengembangkan kedua-dua literatur secara empirik dan teori dalam keusahawanan antarabangsa yang didapati jarang dikaji. Dengan keputusan ini, penyelidik menyimpulkan bahawa kajian ini membuat sumbangan kepada teori dan praktik. Halatuju bagi kajian di masa hadapan telah dicadangkan berdasarkan had yang telah dikenalpasti di dalam kajian.



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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 19 July 2019 to conduct the final examination of Ahmed Ibrahim Karage on his thesis entitled “Mediating Role of International Entrepreneurial Orientation in the Relationship Between Innovativeness and Networks on Internationalization of Smes in Nigeria” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	African Development Bank
BGs	Born Globals
BOI	Bank of Industry
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EAN	Exporters Association of Nigeria
ECI	Economic Complexity Index
EEG	Export Expansion Grant
EO	Entrepreneurial Orientation
EPP	Export Promotion Program
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEC	Federal Executive Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IEO	International Entrepreneurial Orientation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INVs	International New Venture
MNCs	multinational corporations
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NEPC	Nigerian Export promotion council
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
SMEs	Small and Medium Scaled Enterprises
UNCTAD	United Nation Conference on Trade and development

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

Chapter one covers the study background and the research topic in the literature and research context which enables identification of the research gaps, leading to a statement of problem of the study. Research questions and objectives were also discussed. The significance of study to SMEs, academia and policy were elaborated upon. Scope of the study was also highlighted, key terms definition and the organization of the chapter are also contained in the section.

1.2 Background of the Research

There have been substantial transformations in international business environment due to the globalization of the world economy at the beginning of the 1970s. These transformations occur in economic and international trade agreements, liberalization of markets, rising of low-cost technology which eliminates distance by bringing people and places together (Oyson, 2011). As globalization of economy increases, many firms are motivated to expand their businesses to international markets. The decisions regarding the process of internationalization are tied around market choice, mode of entry and timing (Hermannsdottir, 2008).

Internationalization is a process of extending business operations beyond national borders especially for firms that operate in a domestic market. Panda & Reddy (2016) consider internationalization as expanding firm activities by extending international operations and commitment of resources in more than one country. Braga, Correia, Braga and Lemo (2017) identified market and cost factors as the motivation for internationalization. The market factors include; growth needs, enjoying economies of scale, exploiting internal skills and competencies, using the available production capacity, improving profits margins, diversifying risks, small size of the domestic market, proximity to important customers and consequence of the innovation process. The cost related motivation includes the searching for low-cost labor, reaction to competitors' strategies and proximity to materials supply.

Several other definitions of internationalization do exist. Oviatt & Mcdougall (2005) denoting international entrepreneurship, conceptualized the internationalization as a “*discovery, exploitation and evaluation of opportunities beyond national borders to create products and services*” (p.540). Korsakien and Tvaronavi, (2012) refer to internationalization as firm’s expansion of its operations in international markets. Whereas, Hisrich (2007) relied on resources to define internationalization to be the process of mobilizing, building and developing a set of resources to carry out international activities.

The internationalization success depends on many factors, most of them affecting an economy entirely, such as the production resources availability and availability of infrastructure services. Furthermore, the existence of institutions and policies that support the growth of industries, factors related to technology, production and capabilities in innovation are important determinant of internationalization success (Yeoh, 2014).

Scholars have described the process of SMEs internationalization from diverse theoretical viewpoints. Some of the theories used in explaining internationalization process include but not limited to internationalization theory (Uppsala model) proposed by (Valne and Johanson, 1977) and international entrepreneurship (Oviatt & Mcdougall, 2005). Other theories which explained internationalization include the strategic behavior theory, born global theory, the network theory of internationalization, product life cycle theory, behaviorist internationalization theory, the eclectic theory, the network theory of internationalization and transaction cost theory (Jurek, 2012).

According to Kuivalain, Sundqvist, Saarenketo and Mcnaughton (2012) and Swoboda and Olejnik (2016) three influences of internationalization of a firm exist. These are environmental, firm level and managerial influences. The environmental factors include distance, technology, country of origin and the industry. The firm level factors include capabilities, strategic orientation, knowledge and liabilities and finally, the managerial factors consist of mindset, company experience and entrepreneurial orientation.

Internationalization of SMEs have increased substantially in decades due to speed at which information and communication technology, globalization and international trades develop (Kunday & Şengüler, 2015; Navarrete-hinojosa et al. 2016). Similarly, the changes caused by technology in a social and economic system are the major factors that facilitate the acceleration of the recent trend in SMEs internationalization (David, 2016). These developments have changed the ways SMEs conduct businesses worldwide by taking advantage of the borderless world due to regional economic integration policies of economic openness, support by governments and institutions as well as market liberalization (Amorós, Ciravegna, Etchebarne, Felzensztein, & Haar, 2015). The elimination of trade barriers and the impact of technology enables SMEs to compete with multinational corporations (MNCs) within and outside their home countries (Etemad, 2005). Lis & Mauch, (2012) believe that liberalization of trade has the disadvantage of making possible a tense competition and market saturation but have also significantly enhanced SMEs' competitiveness in the global market.

Garvey and Brennan (2016) suggest that factors that affect internationalization of SMEs are found in their internal and external environments. For instance, external environmental factors such as government policies regulate investment outflow proactively through coordinated activities. Evidence shows that successfully internationalized firms have benefited from their country governments (Rasiah, Gammeltoft, & Jiang, 2010). It was however, found in other studies that procedural

task, environmental and governmental factors constitute barriers to SMEs export capability (Fornes, Cardoza, & Xu, 2012). Similarly, there are problems associated with SME exporters in their host countries like logistic management and product quality acceptance (Neupert, Baughn, & Dao, 2006), which are common barriers to a successful internationalization of SMEs. Further evidence of government policy has been elaborated by Child and Hsieh (2014) that, SMEs in various circumstances require different supports regarding information access and therefore need support from government agencies for advice regarding internationalization programs on how to develop network relationships. Further evidence shows that the spread of communication and information technologies for example in Latin America over the past three decades has vastly improved both the trading of services and the sector's propensity to innovate (Hernández, Hualde, Mulder, & Sauvé, 2016).

This study focuses on internationalization of SMEs in Nigeria. The study discusses how innovativeness and network at domestic and international markets influence SMEs internationalization. The Nigerian government has a development policies to encourage foreign trade and internationalization of SMEs, and in an effort to achieve the desired export performance of SMEs and other developmental objectives, the government came up with a development plan referred to as “Vision 20:2020” for medium and long term development. What vision 20:2020 means; by the year 2020, Nigeria will be among the top 20 economies of the world. One of the strategic goals of the vision is to attain a better economy by achieving greater productivity, competitiveness, and diversity. The vision was approved by the Federal Executive Council (FEC) of Nigeria on October 14, 2009, endorsed by the national council of state on June 8, 2010 and launched by the President on June, 14, 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

The plan further provides the following specific objectives to make the vision a reality; reduction in the level of unemployment, innovation driven economy, and increasing capacity for knowledge based economy. The strategy for job creation in the vision involves among others; labor intensive technologies, export expansion and an improved system of production in public work, agriculture and SMEs (Eneh, 2011). Another factor that called for strengthening the internationalization policy in diversifying the economy is the declaration by the National Bureau of Statistics that the Nigerian economy was in recession (National Bureau of Statistics, 2015). Recession is when there is consistent slowing down of an economy for a period of six months or more (Osior, 2016). The recession was evidenced by declining incomes, real GDP, employment, manufacturing and retail sales.

The economic recession in Nigeria, has led to the desperate need and efforts to ensure economic growth which could be achieved mainly through export oriented SMEs. Export oriented SMEs make enormous contribution to an economy thus, export-driven SMEs improves the economy not only by making foreign exchange earnings but also increasing competition, generating knowledge spillovers and increasing diversity, leading to greater economic growth (Hessels & van Stel, 2011). Internationalization encourages competition and product innovation, and therefore innovative

entrepreneurs stimulate an economy and subsequently create additional markets (Castaño, Méndez, & Galindo, 2015). In a related development, Ayanda and Laraba (2011) found that the SME sector is responsible for income disparities, income distribution, wealth creation, poverty reduction and employment generation in Nigeria.

The country's export expansion has significant positive impact on the economy, raising productivity, improving trade balances and providing employment (Okpara, 2012). Non-oil exports have been identified as the solution to the current economic crunch in Nigeria following oil revenues declined from 70 billion United States dollars to 40 billion between 2014 and 2015, making the country lose 30 billion dollars in 12 months (Awolowo, 2011).

Although the performance of internationalized SMEs depends on entry mode choice (Brouthers, 2013), most Nigerian firms move from zero export stage to various export stages with an increase in the knowledge of the market and experience as suggested by the theory of the incremental expansion of international activities of a firm (Ali & Shamsuddoha, 2012).

From the issues discussed above regarding Nigerian SMEs internationalization challenges in accessing international market, there is desperate need to enhance the effective knowledge of internationalization for export development and foreign market skills. SMEs need institutional support in Nigeria to develop innovativeness and network resources in home and foreign markets as interaction forces to achieve efficient internationalization of SMEs (Etemad, 2004).

1.3 Problem Statement

The consequences of depending on oil as the sole foreign exchange earner raised the need to diversify the Nigerian economy especially, the non-oil export by encouraging SMEs to engage in export trade. The changing focus from oil to non-oil and export base economy in Nigeria made it necessary for government to encourage SMEs to adopt internationalization strategy for growth and development of the economy (Okpara & Okpara, 2009a). However, venturing into export is a challenging task for a SMEs due to deficient resources particularly when the institutional incentive is not adequate (Ibeh, & Young, 2001). Furthermore, few SMEs in Nigeria survive after commencing internationalization (NEPC, 2018), many of them de-internationalize (Moreira, da Silva, Mota, & Gadim 2019), mainly due to challenges associated with limited innovation capacity as a result of weak linkages between firms and research and development institutions (Egbetokun, Atta-Ankomah, Jegede & Lorenz, 2016; Nassar and Faloye, 2015). SMEs in Nigeria also encounter difficulties in developing business network and relationships for internationalization (Ajayi, 2016; Gumel, 2017; Mutalemwa, 2015).

Internationalization literature indicates that innovation enable building of firm-specific advantage in SMEs international transactions (D'Angelo 2010; Giovannetti, Ricchiuti & Velucchi 2009) and overcoming foreignness liability, newness and smallness is crucial for successful entry to international market (Nyuur, Brecic & Debrah, 2016). It is also a source of international expansion and organizational stability and long-term survival of firms (Chen, 2018; Chang & Webster, 2019; Hult et al.2004)

Studies have described pre-requisite to innovation to be innovativeness (Castaño, Méndez, & Galindo, 2015; Ismail, Hamid, Senik, Othman & Juhdi, 2018) and consequently, extending studies on innovativeness to different context will enhance the robustness and generalizability of outcome of a study. Networks help firms to generate innovative ideas and inspiration which explains why the position of a firm in the domestic and international network to greater extent defines internationalization of a firm (Ratajczak-Mrozek, Mielcarek, Herbec & Nowacki, 2014).

Consequently, innovation and network are two important resources for firms' growth and thus, firms must understand how to blend innovativeness and network resources for effectiveness in achieving competitive advantage in international market (Zuchella & Siano, 2015). However, both theoretical and empirical researches concentrate on the understanding of determinant factors of internationalization with less attention to domestic market-motivated behaviors (Lamotte & Colovic, 2015). This is also true of innovativeness and network, with much focus on international factors of internationalization (Nyuur, et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2015). Ratajczak-Mrozek, Mielcarek, Herbec and Nowacki (2014) suggest that developing capabilities in innovativeness and network at domestic and international market attract dual advantages that allow firms to be successfully internationalized by accessing cheaper domestic and efficient international resources, and the success of firms' internationalization depends on developing and sustaining network at home and in international market (Rychen & Zimmermann, 2008).

However international business studies mainly focused on networks developed in international market rather than those developed at domestic market, neglecting clustered networks with its potential to develop international relationship (Sanberg, 2014). Montoro-Sanchez, Diez-Vial & Belso-Martinez (2018) believe that domestic relationships configuration increases the chances of foreign market relationship.

Therefore, the suggestion by this study is that there is insufficient attention to the integration of international and domestic resources regarding innovativeness and network by conceptual works in internationalization of SMEs. This is needed to generate more insight into how domestic and international innovativeness and network resources can be complementary or substitute in achieving internationalization success. Realizing these gaps and in line with suggestions made by Ratajczak-Mrozek et al., (2014) & Rychen and Zimmermann (2008), this study focused on innovativeness and network in internationalization of SMEs in domestic and international market perspectives.

International entrepreneurial orientation (IEO) dimensions have crucial role in foreign market entry. This implies that firms that exhibit innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking behaviors have greater capacity to internationalize. Firms penetrate global markets mainly for the advantage of access to resources and the influence CEOs' IEO which plays a significant role (Yoon, Kim & Dedahanov, 2018). Similarly, Martin, Raj, and Javalgi (2016) argue that entry to a foreign market by a firm is determined by the operating philosophy and behaviors of managers which manifest in the managements' entrepreneurial orientation.

Although, studies have considered internationalization of SMEs in a direct relationship with the antecedents (Oparaocha, 2015; Kraus, Mitter, Eggers, & Stieg, 2016; Senik, Isa, & Ayob, 2014), some studies suggest testing the indirect relationship through mediation which is believed to show a presence of a mechanism responsible for transmitting the effect of an antecedents construct on an outcome (Aguinis, Edwards & Bradley, 2016; Etemad, 2004). Furthermore, because IEO is central decision making of a firm, determines entry to foreign market and support internal dynamic of a firm (Etemad, 2004; Martin et al., 2016; Yoo et al., 2018), this study employed IEO to mediate between the antecedents and the outcome to contribute to literature by filling the gap of its limited role in mediation, especially in the international context (Amorós et al., 2015; Coviello, McDougall, & Oviatt, 2011; Keupp & Gassmann, 2009). The current study therefore proposed IEO to mediate the relationship between domestic innovativeness, international innovativeness, domestic network, international network and internationalization of SMEs.

Export Promotion Program (EPP) provides essential information to support internationalization. Internationalizing SMEs suffers impediments, and even in developed countries, there are such obstacles like a selection of export destination and access to market information (Kalafsky, 2016). In developing country like Nigeria, barriers to SMEs' export include fear of competition in the foreign market, inadequate export knowledge, lack of finance, deficiency in infrastructure, bureaucracy and corruption (Okpara & Kabongo, 2010; Okpara & Kumbiadis, 2008). Furthermore, there is lack of incentive for developing nations' SMEs to export because of business environmental factors such as poor conditions of technological infrastructure and unstable government policy framework (Taylor, 2013). EPPs as government policy can enhance IEO dimensions through various activities in the program components to enhance innovativeness through building network, improved attitude and risk taking behaviors to enable firms overcome the barriers to foreign market entry.

Theoretically, innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking could have varied effect on performance among small firms. Kreiser et al. (2013) suggest the IEO dimensions can have varied effects on SME performance. Specifically, Naldi, Nordqvist, Sjöberg, & Wiklund, (2007) found risk taking in a family firms negatively related to performance. Also, another study involving reverse internationalization did not find any link between risk-taking performance relationship, and innovativeness was negatively associated to performance (Chin, Tsai, Fang, Zhu, Yang, Liu, & Tsuei, 2016). EPP has potential to strengthen IEO dimensions with varied effects on SMEs

internationalization by developing managerial capacity to handle export challenges (Ayob & Freixanet, 2014). This study therefore proposed EPP to moderate the relationship between IEO dimensions and Internationalization of SMEs in Nigeria.

In line with the problems stated, the following research questions would guide the study.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Is there a positive and significant relationship between domestic and international innovativeness and internationalization of Nigerian SMEs?
2. Is there a positive and significant relationship between Domestic and international networks and internationalization of Nigerian SMEs?
3. Do international entrepreneurial orientation dimensions mediate the relationship between domestic innovativeness, international innovativeness, domestic network, international network and internationalization of Nigerian SMEs?
4. Do export promotion programs (EPPs) moderate the relationship between international entrepreneurial orientations (IEO) dimensions and internationalization of Nigerian SMEs?

1.5 General Objective

To examine the levels and complementary influences of domestic innovativeness, international innovativeness, domestic networks and international networks on internationalization of Nigerian SMEs

1.6 Specific Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between domestic innovativeness and internationalization of Nigerian SMEs.
2. To investigate the relationship between international innovativeness and internationalization of Nigerian SME.
3. To examine the relationship between domestic networks and internationalization of Nigerian SMEs.
4. To determine the relationship between international networks and internationalization of SMEs.
5. To investigate the mediating role of the dimensions of international entrepreneurial orientation on the relationship between domestic innovativeness, international innovativeness, domestic network, international network and internationalization of Nigerian SMEs.
6. To examine whether export promotion programs (EPPs) moderate the relationship between international entrepreneurial orientations (IEO) dimensions and internationalization of SMEs.

1.7 Significance of the study

This study is expected to make an impact in academia, industry and on policy. This section discussed the importance of the study in two folds; theoretical and practical significance as follows:

1.7.1 Theoretical significance

The development of framework that captures domestic innovativeness, international innovativeness, domestic networks and international networks which were researched separately in previous studies (Ratajczak-mrozek et al., 2014; Montoro-Sanchez et al., 2018; Love & Roper, 2015) is a contribution to the argument that firms success in internationalization depend on their ability to develop and maintain strong network resources at home and in the international market (Lamotte, & Colovic, 2015). The current study is one of the earliest researches that developed a model incorporating domestic innovativeness, international innovativeness, domestic network and international network as distinct constructs to determine their respective levels of complementary effects on internationalization of SMEs. This offers an insight to literature development on innovation and network from domestic and international perspective and internationalization of SMEs.

Another contribution to literature by this study to international entrepreneurship by estimating the effects of firm innovativeness and networks on internationalization of SMEs by broadening an understanding of firms' success related to developing, integrating and sustaining innovativeness and network resources at home and in international market. Moreover, this research reflects the proposition by previous studies on the need to determine the degree of effects of home based and international intangible resources on internationalization of SMEs (Lamotte, & Colovic, 2015).

Testing mediation in the model lends support to the findings in the previous studies which emphasized the importance of continued discussion on IEO as an additional separate strategic orientation (Covin & Miller, 2013). Also with IEO as a mediator in the model gives an interesting insight to explanatory intersections between studies on innovation, network and international entrepreneurship especially in Sub Sahara African countries.

With regards to the moderation in the model, the study was expected to contributes to the literature by showing how competencies and resources of a firm can be enhanced through network building, training and skill development (Shamsuddoha, 2012). EPP components are expected enhance the dimensions of IEO to improve firms' competitiveness in international markets and also to improve internationalized firms by basically providing information that is external to the firm to enable them access vital information and experience that develop their capacity to handle export challenges (Ayob & Freixanet, 2014). The study extends dynamic capability view (DCV) by broadening understanding of how domestic innovativeness and network as

resources to be integrated and reconfigure along other resources to achieve internationalization of SMEs. Integrating firm, managerial and institutional resource base in the framework also reflect the DVC concept.

1.7.2 Practical Implications

This study can enrich firms' ability in establishing network and commitment in innovation at home and abroad to access resources for product and market development to attain successful internationalization. From the viewpoint of entrepreneurs and managers, the current work shows the importance of developing management culture and philosophy within the firm, oriented to involvement in innovativeness and networks by firms at domestic markets and abroad respectively. The study also guides internationalizing firms to make strong policies and commitment to the development of specific resources in domestic and international innovativeness and networks which would make a greater impact on their success in achieving international market competitiveness.

In the same manner, the study encourage risk-taking culture among the decision makers of companies such as executives and professionals to actively explore new business opportunities, take reasonable risks by attending for example national and international conferences and business exhibitions to enable them establish contacts with suppliers, customers, competitors and other stake holders to develop international innovativeness and network for future needs and exploitation of business opportunities in a global value chain.

1.8 Scope of the study

International entrepreneurship is a field of study covering subject matters on internationalization of SMEs, international new ventures and entrepreneurship in multinational enterprises (MNEs) (Mort & Weerawardena, 2006; Oviatt, 2016). Internationalization of SME has been defined as a business relationship with international partners involve in export, import, international technical cooperation, foreign direct investment (FDI) and international subcontracting (Daszkiewicz & Wach, 2012).

However, the focus of this study is on SMEs internationalization, with emphasis on SMEs involved in export activity. The study adopts a cross-sectional study of internationalizing SMEs in all sectors consisting of food and drinks, Agricultural products, solid minerals, petro chemicals and cosmetics, manufacturing and services in Nigeria. The study investigates the levels and complementary effects of domestic innovativeness, international innovativeness, domestic network and international network on the internationalization of SMEs. The study further examines the mediating effect of international entrepreneurial orientation (IEO) and moderating effect of export promotion programs moderate on IEO dimensions and SMEs internationalization in Nigeria.

1.9 Operationalization of key terms and definitions

Small Medium Enterprises: SME in Nigeria refers to enterprises with a yearly income of N100,000,000.00 (USD 277, 777) to N200,000,000.00 (USD 555,555) and having 11 to 200 employees (Etuk, Etuk, & Michael, 2014)

Internationalization: Expansion of firm activities by involving international operations and the commitment of resource in more than one country (Panda & Reddy, 2016). Firm is considered Internationalized when it has above 25% foreign sale to its total sales (Javalgi & Todd, 2011; Ripolles-Melia, Menguzzato-Boulard & Sanchez-Peinado, 2007).

Domestic innovativeness: Firm level perception of innovation regarding doing new things, new ideas, and creativity in methods and process in an organization (Calantone, Cavusgil, & Zhao, 2002)

International innovativeness: Firms' capabilities to develop, produce and present new idea, products, processes and services for international market (Knight & Kim, 2009).

Domestic network: Network involves "*set of two or more connected exchange relationship*" (Hohenthal et al. 2014, p. 7). This definition portrays a market as a social exchange system that involves individuals, groups and industrial relationships involving transaction and agreements between and among suppliers, customers, competitors, friends and families (Felzensztein, Ciravegna, Robson, & Amorós, 2015).

International network: Relationship between management team of a firm and employees with suppliers, customers, competitors, distributors, bankers, government agencies, friends and families or other parties that support a firm to get its business activities internationalized (Pla-Barber & Escribá-Esteve, Szyliowicz & Galvin, 2010b; 2006; Zain & Ng, 2006).

International Entrepreneurial orientation: A set of attributes linked to value creation potentials which can be seen as innovative, proactive ways, risk taking attitude and efforts in outperforming competitors, all targeted at discovery and exploiting business opportunity in international markets (Covin & Slevin, 1989; Kuivalainen et al., 2012).

Export promotion programs: Government support for initial export stages by way of establishing a network and enhancing contact activities such as trade fair in foreign markets, by providing export counseling to support SMEs' inadequate experience on international markets. It is a way of supporting SMEs in arranging visits to enable

managers to connect to other stakeholders (Kal afsky, 2016; Leonidou et al., 2011; Rinallo & Golfetto, 2011).

1.10 Organization of thesis

This thesis is organized in six chapters. Chapter one presents the study background, research gaps and statement of problem, research questions, research objectives, significance and scope of the study together with the definition of key terms. Chapter two discusses background of the industry and the context of the research. Background of Nigerian SMEs, the bilateral economic relations and trade agreements, Nigerian international transactions, export and import commodities in Nigeria have also been discussed in the chapter.

Chapter three is the review of literature and the development of hypothesis. It discussed the framework consisting of the dependent, independent, mediating and moderating variables as well as hypothesis development. The research gaps, internationalization theory and dynamic capability view which provide support for this research was also presented in the chapter. Chapter four describes the methodology applied in the study. This research adopts methodology using quantitative approach based on the assumptions of positivist and their knowledge claim. Chapter five focused on data collected, analysis and the result. It also contained technique for data analysis used in structural equation modeling (SEM) using SPLS graphics. Chapter six is discussion, conclusion and recommendation for future research.

1.11 Chapter summary

This chapter consists of introduction, the background of the study, discussion of the main arguments and justification for the study based on literature and practice. The chapter further explains internationalization of SMEs in Nigeria, and identified major issues and challenges in the development of the sector from both practice and literature. Based on the issues raised, the research gaps and problems identified, six research questions and six research objectives were stated for the study. The significance of study to the literature and practice were highlighted together with the scope of study. Operationalization of key terms and definitions were also discussed in this chapter. The next chapter elaborates on Nigerian industrial development and the international transactions.

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