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A study of the enablers of non-sequential internationalization process among small and medium-sized firms

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The question addressed in this paper is: Is non-sequential internationalization process solely technology enabled or a product of mutually interdependent forces? It is shown in this paper that even though the sequential approach in the process model is intuitively appealing, not all firms follow such a path. This void is filled by explaining how the international market entry process has changed with respect to the sequential approach. Data collection entails 60 Swedish SMEs operating in other countries and foreign SMEs operating in Sweden that tends not to develop in incremental stages with respect to their international. Findings include: that the sequential model is by no means reflective of, or appropriate for all firms' approaches to international business; the usefulness gained by using an international relationship approach to study the international activity of a firm; and the interplay between the identified driving forces behind a non-sequential internationalization process. Knowledge acquired from the empirical study is used to develop an integrated framework which aptly depicts that non-sequential internationalization process is not solely enabled by technology, as commonly envisaged in literature, but a product of mutually interdependent forces. Implications include: all firms are exposed to irrecoverable transaction costs that hamper their behaviours and complicate export supply responses in international markets. However, the magnitude of the costs and speed of internationalization is dependent on the ability of the firms to take advantage of the enablers of non-sequential internationalization pattern. This is particularly important for firms to and from developing countries and emerging markets and their propensities to succeed in their internationalization endeavours.

Keywords: non-sequential, Born globals, Uppsala internationalization model, transaction costs, relationships and networks

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