

An extended abstract of:
**The learning-networking relationship in international entrepreneurship:
A systematic review and future research agenda**

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Knowledge and networks are important predictors for early internationalization (Jones, Coviello, & Tang, 2011). Knowledge and networks are not separate – they relate to each other. Networks for instance have been found to be not only useful for access to international markets but also as an important source for knowledge about international markets and technology (Coviello & Munro, 1997; Yli-Renko, Autio, & Tontti, 2002). Subsequent studies confirmed the importance of the new venture's international network of contacts as a source for knowledge and opportunity for learning (Fernhaber, McDougall-Covin, & Shepherd, 2009; Musteen, Datta, & Butts, 2014; Oviatt & McDougall, 2005; Yeoh, 2004). Due to the mainly cross-sectional nature of these studies, they merely emphasize the linear causality between a firm's network and the knowledge created but do not elaborate on the dynamics of networking, knowledge creation, and their interactions. From a dynamic view-point, knowledge is thereby acquired through a process of learning and networks are built through activities of networking. Focusing on the dynamics of networking and learning is important in order to understand the actual process of early internationalization and how it plays out over time. The pre-internationalization period from venture foundation to its first international market entry is researched extensively by scholars in the field of international entrepreneurship (Casillas & Acedo, 2013). However, we know less about the internationalization process per se and especially of how it unfolds over time beyond the firms initial entry into global markets (Casillas & Acedo, 2013; Jones et al., 2011; Prashantham & Young, 2011; Sleuwaegen & Onkelinx, 2014; Zahra, 2005).

International entrepreneurship literature increasingly recognizes the dynamics of learning and networking and their interplay (Freeman, Hutchings, Lazaris, & Zyngier, 2010; Fuerst & Zetting, 2015; Prashantham & Dhanaraj, 2010). Learning does not happen in isolation – it happens in relationships. Most international market knowledge is acquired vicariously through interaction with others. Knowledge acquisition through vicarious learning is considered to happen faster than through own experiential learning (Bengtsson, 2004; Bruneel, Yli-Renko, & Clarysse, 2010; Schwens & Kabst, 2009). Hence, the creation and exploitation of an international network of social and business contacts becomes an important element for the learning process of the international entrepreneur.

Despite our understanding about the importance of the interactions between the network and the learning of the entrepreneur, the literature seems to be fragmented and we lack a systematic understanding about the interplay of knowledge and the network from a static perspective and learning and networking from a dynamic perspective. Gaining a systematic understanding about their interplay from both a static and a dynamic perspective would allow us to uncover important gaps of knowledge in order to advance our understanding about the process of entrepreneurial internationalization, that is, the cross-national border behavior of entrepreneurial actors (Jones et al., 2011) during different phases of internationalization. Additionally, these insights would allow to uncover important methodological considerations for studying the phenomenon from a static as well as a dynamic, process perspective.

This literature review aims to contribute to uncovering the gaps and methodological aspects. I therefore analyzed the articles from two different perspectives: Entrepreneurial internationalization as a result of knowledge gained from existing networks (the static perspective) and entrepreneurial internationalization as an ongoing process of the two reciprocally interacting processes of learning and networking (the dynamic perspective). Interestingly, the literature review revealed four different perspectives combining the static and dynamic elements: 1) Knowledge created from an existing network; 2) Knowledge created from an evolving network; 3) Learning from an existing network; 4) Learning from an evolving network. Different theoretical views on knowledge, learning, network and networking underpin each perspective combined with its own methodological approach.

The literature review is able to make an important contribution to international entrepreneurship revealing the current state of research regarding the knowledge-network and learning-networking interactions. Gaining insights into these interactions provides a useful platform for exploring future avenues for researching the process of entrepreneurial internationalization and how it unfolds over time beyond the firm's initial entry into global markets.

Keywords: international entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial internationalization; learning; networking; review