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# **Motives to SME Internationalisation: A Comparative Study of export propensity among food and drink SMEs in Wales and Brittany**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study offers a comparative analysis of attitudes to SME internationalisation in two different cultural settings, Wales and Brittany. The aim is to conduct an in-depth investigation of attitudes to internationalisation among food and drink SMEs using mixed methods and focussing on both SMEs that internationalise and those that do not. This leads to a more comprehensive understanding of the issues influencing attitudes to SME internationalisation, which could facilitate policy development for such companies.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Mixed methods are used in this study to provide a richness of data in investigating this complex issue. The majority of research in this field has focussed on quantitative research, however, this study heeds calls for more plurality in research on SME internationalisation to achieve a more detailed understanding of the issues affecting SME internationalisation. This is achieved through an online questionnaire of 169 food producing SMEs in Wales and Brittany, informed by International Entrepreneurship theory. A second phase of semi-structured interviews provides more context to the questionnaire findings, with 37 interviews conducted with respondents from the questionnaire. Each phase was conducted independently, with findings triangulated for further investigation.

**Findings:** Companies of all characteristics have the ability to internationalise, however cultural differences were observed between Wales and Brittany in both attitudes and the conditions for internationalisation. Breton SMEs displayed more proactivity to internationalisation, stemming from more favourable conditions, a greater reputation for food, and more confidence. Conversely, Welsh SMEs were more reactive, relying on government support in encouraging internationalisation. Breton SMEs also benefitted from the strong cultural identity of food products, especially through the *Produit en Bretagne* brand and its network of producers.

**Originality/value:** The study makes both a theoretical and methodological contribution to research on SME internationalisation. The comparative study of Wales and Brittany is significant in understanding cultural influences to internationalisation in two regions where the food and drink industry represents an important part of the economy. The focus on a single industry is significant in understanding the particularities of internationalisation within an industrial context, as findings from studies across multiple industries are considered less generalizable. A methodological contribution is sought through using mixed methods to provide a more comprehensive study.

**Keywords:** SME internationalisation, International Entrepreneurship, food and drink, Wales, Brittany

## Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine cross-cultural comparisons to attitudes towards SME internationalisation in Wales and Brittany. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent a significant part of many national economies, with SMEs representing 99% of all businesses in Europe (European Commission, 2018), supporting a large percentage of jobs. In a globalised world, SMEs are more prone to shocks than larger companies (World Bank, 2018), therefore internationalisation represents an opportunity for small businesses to spread the risk across several markets (Spowart & Wickramasekera, 2012). Although several modes of internationalisation exist, export is the most common among SMEs (Ruzzier & Konečnik, 2006), therefore the focus of this paper is on export propensity. SME internationalisation is an established field of research, with studies covering a wide range of issues on the subject across various research settings. This study responds to the call for industry-specific research by Fillis (2008), focussing on food and drink SMEs, as the focus on specific industries is significant in understanding the particularities of internationalisation within the industry. The close associations that exist between food and their place of origin (Tregear, 2001) underline the unique characteristics of food products derived from local environmental conditions and cultural influences.

Wales and Brittany were selected for comparison in this study as they are both regions that possess a strong cultural identity, of which food is a major element, with regional specialities and traditions evident in both locations. As a predominantly rural and mountainous region, Wales is often known for its lamb, whereas food associations with Brittany relate to Galettes, Crêpes and Breton cider. Both Wales and Brittany are established regions within large global economies, the UK and France respectively, with each region possessing a Celtic cultural identity that differs greatly from the national identity, including their own languages, cultural institutions and administrative bodies. Cultural identity is significant for internationalisation, particularly for food products, which are closely associated with place of origin, as unique cultural markers can achieve competitive advantage through differentiation. Both regions share similar geographical challenges as predominantly rural areas, with limited connectivity in some parts causing isolation. Despite the similarities discussed above, distinct differences are evident in the values of the food and drink industry to each region. Brittany is one of the leading food producing regions in Europe, with a turnover of approximately 20bn€ (£17.63bn) (Invest in Bretagne, 2017) compared to £6.9bn in Wales (Food and Drink Wales, 2019). Similarly, the number of people employed in the industry is significantly higher in Brittany at 70,000 employees, compared to 22,100 in Wales. In terms of exports, Brittany remains far ahead of Wales, with international sales worth 4bn€ (approximately £2.9bn) in 2015 (Baldos, 2016) compared to £337.3m in Wales in 2016 (Welsh Government, 2017). Although lagging behind, the 2014-2020 Action Plan by the Welsh Government sets targets to expand the Welsh food and drink industry to £7bn by 2020 (Welsh Government, 2014).

The comparison between the two regions allows for a suitable investigation of the attitudes to internationalisation in each region based on International Entrepreneurship theory, notably effects of the environment, the company and the entrepreneur on internationalisation. This study seeks to distinguish itself from studies of entrepreneurial

characteristics (such as Baron, 2000; Lee & Tsang, 2001; Zhou *et al.*, 2010; Brandstätter, 2011; Baum *et al.*, 2014) to focus on attitudes to internationalisation, both from an entrepreneur and company perspective. As a study of the motives to internationalisation, an investigation of environmental factors is inevitable in understanding the influences and barriers to internationalisation. The complexities of internationalisation merit a more pluralistic methodological approach (Fillis, 2008), indeed, previous studies on the internationalisation of food and drink SMEs acknowledge limitations of a limited sample and narrow focus on one methodology (such as Ibeh *et al.*, 2006; Testa, 2011; Ismail & Kuivalainen, 2015). The use of mixed methods in this study allows distinctions to be made between SMEs currently involved in internationalisation and those that are not. This allows for a more in-depth investigation of the factors that influence and restrict internationalisation among SMEs, allowing for a more focussed approach in designing support policies in facilitating internationalisation.

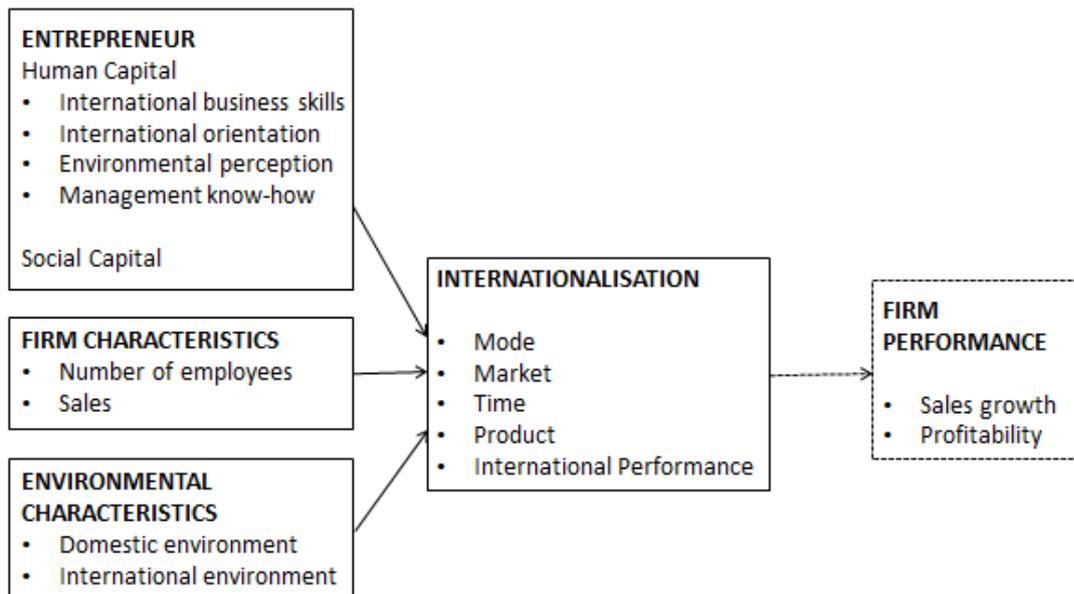
## **Literature Review**

SME internationalisation is not a new phenomenon. Initially inspired by more general marketing theories, such as the Penrosian tradition (Penrose, 1959), numerous studies have investigated a range of issues on the subject since the seminal works of the Uppsala Scholars in the mid-1970s (Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975; Johanson & Vahlne, 1977) on the Stage Approach. Their theory of internationalisation as an incremental process, in which companies first enter culturally-similar markets before gradually expanding further afield (Hollensen, 2014), has been challenged more recently by theories of rapid internationalisation, the notion that companies can internationalise from their inception. This led to the emergence of Born Globals (McKinsey & Co., 1993; Rennie, 1993), International New Ventures (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994) or Instant Internationals (Preece *et al.*, 1999), companies that are able to skip stages in the internationalisation process. Ideas of rapid internationalisation informed the emergence of the Network Approach (Johanson & Mattson, 1988) and the revision of the internationalisation model by the Uppsala Scholars (Johanson & Vahlne, 1990, 2009). Network theory argues that internationalisation occurs rapidly by tapping into the experiences and resources of network partners (Mtigwe, 2006). Theories of the Resource-based View (RBV) (Wernerfelt, 1984, 1995; Barney, 1991) are also significant to SME internationalisation, as it is recognised that very few companies possess sufficient resources to internationalise alone, therefore developing relationships or networks with foreign partners is critical for SMEs (Ford, 2002; Hakansson & Ford, 2002; Wilson, 2006; Wright *et al.*, 2007; Hynes, 2010; Kuhlmeier & Knight, 2010).

International Entrepreneurship has emerged as a relevant field of research to SME internationalisation since the late 1980s, uniting entrepreneurship and international business in looking at cross-border entrepreneurship (Coviello & Jones, 2004; Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). International activities, such as exporting, are a means in which small companies can generate growth, create value and obtain new knowledge and technology from abroad (Yeoh, 2004). International Entrepreneurship is considered “...a courageous managerial value creation process through which an individual engages in innovative, proactive, calculated risk-taking behaviour” in the pursuit of success in international markets (Mtigwe, 2006, p. 17). The International Entrepreneurship conceptual model (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2000) identifies three

influences to internationalisation (see Figure 1), namely factors related to the entrepreneur, the firm and the environment (Ford & Leonidou, 1991; Antoncic & Hisrich, 2000; Ibeh, 2006).

Figure 1: International Entrepreneurship Conceptual Model



Antoncic and Hisrich (2000)

Numerous studies have discussed the role played by characteristics of the entrepreneur as a determinant on the internationalisation of the company (Axinn, 1988; Reuber & Fischer, 1997; Ellis, 2000). Since the decision power within SMEs is concentrated in the hands of one person or a small managerial team, the role of the owner/entrepreneur is extremely influential in the company (Andersson & Evangelista, 2006). The above model identifies human capital, the knowledge and skills of the company personnel (Shepherd & Wiklund, 2005), and social capital, the ability of a firm to build relationships with others, as significant entrepreneur characteristics. Owner-manager characteristics, such as age (Manolova *et al.*, 2002; Andersson & Evangelista, 2006) and international experience (Reuber & Fischer, 1997) play an influential role in internationalisation. Whereas older owner-managers benefit from greater resources, information, know-how and networks (Westhead *et al.*, 2001), younger owner-managers can develop international networks through their experiences of international studies or travel (Andersson & Evangelista, 2006). The international orientation of a company, the vision and ambition of the firm's decision-makers to engage in international activities, is shaped by the experiences of the management, particularly their educational background, language skills, foreign culture awareness, knowledge of foreign markets and contacts (Lloyd-Reason & Mughan, 2002). An OECD report (2009) found that companies in Canada were twice as likely to internationalise when the owner/manager expressed intentions for growing the company. Managers are influenced by the need for the business to grow, to increase market size and strengthen its market position, which in turn reduces its dependence on only one or a few markets.

Firm-specific drivers to internationalisation allude to resources and competencies, entrepreneurial orientation and the characteristics of the firm (Chetty & Wilson, 2003; Jones & Coviello, 2005). Characteristics of the firm's founders are embedded in the company culture and the firm is organised towards channelling the collection and interpretation of knowledge

to facilitate foreign market activities. The firm's philosophy, notably its values, attitudes and perceptions towards internationalisation (Jones & Coviello, 2005), is a driving force towards international expansion. This relates to the how the key personnel of the firm perceive the benefits, risks and cost of internationalisation (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). Entrepreneurial orientation assists company growth (Becherer & Maurer, 1997; Prashantham, 2004), this relates to the way a company aligns its processes, practices and managerial activities towards new markets (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996) and explains their willingness to take risks to reach its targets, adopt new technology and adapt to environmental changes (Miles *et al.*, 2011).

Several firm characteristics act as significant firm-specific drivers to international expansion. The size of the firm affects its international behaviour (Oliveros-Mesa & Suarez-Ortega, 2006), seen in terms of employment and sales (Chetty & Hamilton, 1993; Westhead, 1995; Lefebvre & Lefebvre, 2002). The company age influences the speed at which it internationalises (Zahra & George, 2002) and the products dictate the industry to which it belongs, which is significant since different industries have varying impacts on the internationalisation process (Boter & Lundström, 2005). By pioneering the development of new goods and services, International Entrepreneurship firms are able to capture international markets (Evangelista, 2005; Kumar & Liu, 2005). The location of a firm can be advantageous, if situated close to infrastructure facilities (Walker & Brown, 2004; Boter & Lundström, 2005).

A number of external factors also exist as key drivers to internationalisation, relating to market conditions, government factors, environmental characteristics, and the competitive environment. Market conditions represent a wide range of issues, notably the size, availability, sales potential, quality of infrastructure and facilities in a domestic or foreign market and their effect on the internationalisation process (Root, 1994; Jones & Coviello, 2005). A fall in production costs (Axinn, 1988) and the small size of the domestic market have had a positive impact on internationalisation (Rasmussen *et al.*, 2001). Hollensen (2014) cites a low market potential, such as a saturated domestic market as a reason for exporting, whereas Crick (2004) suggests that some SMEs only export when demand is limited in the domestic market.

Government issues that affect the internationalisation process include regulation, procedural customs, export policy, endowments and incentives (Root, 1994; Mtigwe, 2005). Boter *et al.* (2005) acknowledge that administrative, fiscal and legal regulations can have an effect on a firm's internationalisation decision, particularly for smaller firms. However, support is available through government schemes, which offer incentives to internationalise (Suárez-Ortega & Álamo-Vera, 2005). Governments support international entrepreneurship with the aim of increasing national wealth and improving the international competitiveness of its national economy (OECD, 1997).

Environmental characteristics that can affect the internationalisation of a firm allude to political, economic, social, technical and legal issues in both in the home and target countries (Root, 1994). Lumpkin and Dess (1996) identify four elements of the environment: Dynamism, the amount and speed of change; munificence, the scarcity or abundance of resources needed for internationalisation; complexity, regulations, competition and demand for technology in the foreign environment; and industry characteristics. According to Etemad (2004), the extent of the competitive environment is influenced by cooperation with others; therefore it is essential for SMEs to form relationships with others in order to gain knowledge of competition in both domestic and foreign environments (Karagozoglu & Lindell, 1998;

Rundh, 2003; Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). The speed in which a firm internationalises is influenced by its understanding of the environment (Etemad & Chu, 2004). This includes domestic and foreign market conditions, such as technology, related industries and support from governmental institutions, trade associations and educational institutions.

Literature on the influencers to internationalisation discuss proactive and reactive motives (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2006; Hollensen, 2014) or push and pull factors (Etemad, 2004). Proactive measures focus on how active the company is in seeking internationalisation, whereas reactive measures refer to responses to home market conditions and competition, which act to push companies into international activities (Hollensen, 2014). Table 1 outlines a comparison of proactive and reactive motives discussed by Hollensen (2014) and Czinkota and Ronkainen (2006), this includes advantages and growth opportunities from foreign market operations. Hollensen (2014) states that a company may be pulled into entering a foreign market through fear of losing the market by not entering at the right time, especially since market share is most easily obtained by early mover advantage. An OECD report (2009) highlights the existence of regional and national market drivers, which push companies to internationalise. This was observed in studies in Canada (Orser *et al.*, 2008) and in Sweden (Rundh, 2007). Furthermore, a study in Spain (López, 2007) found significantly different trends in export tendencies, with export propensity greater in regions with less favourable domestic conditions, local incentives to export and good export infrastructure.

Table 1: Comparison of proactive and reactive motives to internationalisation

Authors	Czinkota & Ronkainen (2006)	Hollensen (2014)
Proactive Motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managerial urge</li> <li>Profit advantage</li> <li>Economies of scale</li> <li>Exclusive market information</li> <li>Unique products</li> <li>Technological advantages</li> <li>Foreign market opportunities</li> <li>Market size</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managerial urge</li> <li>Profit and growth goals</li> <li>Economies of scale</li> <li>Market information</li> <li>Unique product</li> <li>Technology competence</li> <li>Foreign market opportunities</li> <li>Tax benefits</li> </ul>
Reactive Motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitive pressures</li> <li>Excess capacity</li> <li>Declining domestic sales</li> <li>Saturated domestic market</li> <li>Overproduction</li> <li>Proximity to customers and ports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competitive pressure</li> <li>Overproduction/ excess capacity</li> <li>Small &amp; saturated domestic market</li> <li>Unsolicited foreign orders</li> <li>Extend sales of seasonal products</li> <li>Proximity to international customers</li> <li>Psychological distance</li> </ul>

Adapted from Czinkota & Ronkainen (2006) and Hollensen (2014)

This study considers the need to analyse critical success factors of internationalisation based on the experiences of both exporting and non-exporting companies in order to gain an in-depth analysis. It is therefore considered necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the barriers that prevent certain companies from internationalising. Environmental barriers exist to internationalisation both on a domestic and foreign level (Leonidou, 1995; Morgan, 1997). This ranges from the limited availability of resources or lack of government support in the domestic market, to cultural differences, logistics problems and unfamiliar

regulations in foreign markets. High costs were identified by the European Commission European Network for SME Research (ENSR) as the most cited barrier to internationalisation (European Commission, 2004). Hollensen (2014) identifies similar insufficiencies, pointing to a lack of finances, knowledge, connections and foreign distribution channels, as well as the company's emphasis on the domestic market. Having sufficient business in the domestic market is seen as a major factor in the decision not to export. Westhead et al. (2002) share this opinion, as companies focus on the local market. Hollensen (2014) categorises the key obstacles as general market risks (market distance, competition, and cultural differences), commercial risks (exchange rates, financing and export delays) and political risks (foreign government restrictions, tax regulations, tariffs and a lack of government assistance in overcoming barriers). Different industries present different challenges to internationalisation (Fillis, 2008), therefore it is necessary to examine barriers according to their context (Crick *et al.*, 1998). Existing theories are not reflective of the barriers to internationalisation for SMEs, who face many challenges against larger more established firms (Etemad, 2004). In this respect, the main obstacles to SME internationalisation are limited resources, the fast pace of the business environment, increasing R&D costs and shorter product and technological life cycles. It is therefore essential for SMEs to develop their own distinctive competences related to assets, capabilities and strategies to overcome the obstacles to market entry, exit and competition (Etemad, 2004).

## **Methodology**

Whereas most studies on SME internationalisation favour a quantitative methodology (Sousa *et al.*, 2008), this study uses mixed methods to conduct an in-depth investigation of the main motives to internationalisation of food and drink SMEs in Wales and Brittany. The wealth of research in the field highlights the complexities of SME internationalisation, as such, this study follows calls for a pluralistic method (Fillis, 2008) and limitations identified in previous research on food SME internationalisation of using a single methodology (Ibeh *et al.*, 2006; Testa, 2011; Ismail & Kuivalainen, 2015). The use of mixed methods allows distinctions to be made between SMEs that currently sell internationally and those that do not, which many previous studies overlook. The aim of this is to evaluate issues that SMEs have experienced in their pursuit of internationalisation and issues that prevent others from selling their products internationally. The focus on the food and drink industry is in line with the need for industry-specific research on internationalisation (Fillis, 2008). Given the close associations that exist between food and its place of origin (Tregear, 2001), culture has the potential to influence the internationalisation of such products.

The research design consists of two independent phases. Firstly, an online questionnaire was sent to 810 food and drink SMEs in Wales (451) and Brittany (359) yielding a total of 169 usable responses (20.9% response rate) through random sampling (Bryman, 2015). This included 107 responses from Welsh SMEs and 62 from Brittany. The questionnaire focussed on factors derived from International Entrepreneurship theory, specifically environmental influencers and obstacles, company characteristics and motivation, as well as owner-manager characteristics, experience and motivation. A logistic regression was conducted to identify significant factors to internationalisation. The questionnaire was used to identify exporting

and non-exporting SMEs in preparation for the second phase, where 37 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 exporting SMEs (7 in Wales, 8 in Brittany) and 22 non-exporting SMEs (13 in Wales, 9 in Brittany). Given a range of company characteristics, maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2005) was used to ensure that interview participants represented the various characteristics, including company age, size (number of employees) and location (rural or urban). The aim of the interview phase was to obtain a holistic view of the experiences of food and drink SMEs to internationalisation, focussing on the company motivations, influences and challenges. Interview transcripts were analysed by the Braun and Clarke (2006) process of thematic analysis.

### Quantitative Findings

The questionnaire phase resulted in 169 responses from food and drink SMEs in Wales and Brittany. The descriptive statistics imply that companies of all types can internationalise, as figures 3 and 4 show that companies of all ages and sizes internationalise. Among the SMEs presently involved in internationalisation, all respondents in each region identified export as their mode of internationalisation, either directly or indirectly. In Wales, 48.6% of respondents were involved in direct export compared to 71.1% in Brittany. Distinct differences are observed between each region, particularly in relation to international activity (Figure 2), with approximately two-thirds (67.3%) of Welsh SMEs not involved in internationalisation compared to 61.3% of Breton SMEs currently selling their products in international markets. Higher levels of internationalisation among Breton SMEs could be explained by the region's reputation for food, as it is a leading food-producing region in Europe (Eurostat, 2018). The industry is valued at approximately 20bn€ (£17.6bn) in Brittany compared to £6.9bn in Wales. Additionally, the use of cultural marketing is more prominent in Brittany than Wales through the *Produit en Bretagne* brand, which acts to increase awareness of Breton produce.

Figure 2: Questionnaire responses by region

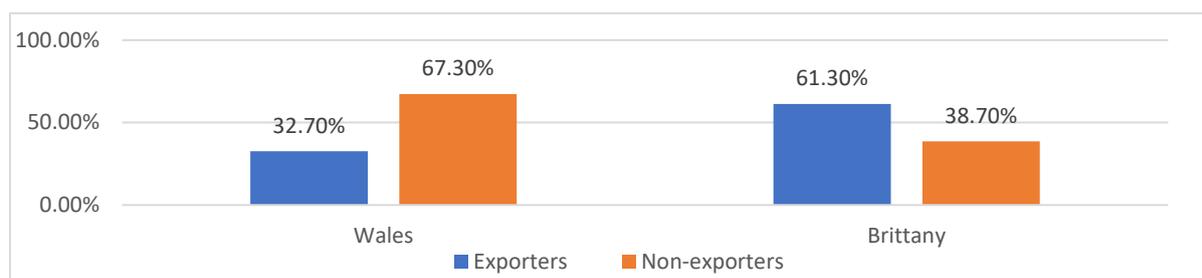
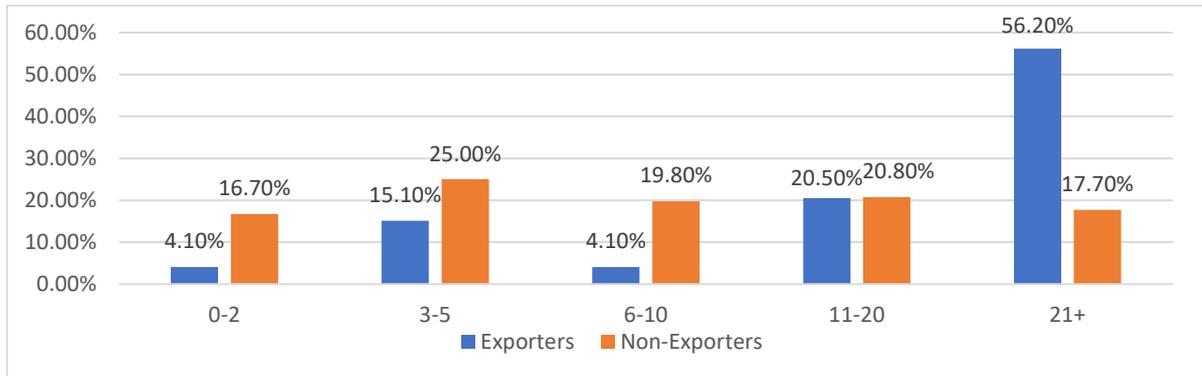


Figure 3 presents differences in company age between exporters and non-exporters. There is relative consistency across all age groups for non-exporting companies, whereas for exporters, the majority of companies are aged 21 years or more (56.2%), implying that experience is important for a company to internationalise. However, with 4.1% of exporting companies aged less than 2 years, internationalisation can occur from a company's inception. Findings from previous empirical studies show varying results, including a positive impact on export performance (Majocchi *et al.*, 2005), a negative impact (Kirpalani & MacIntosh, 1980) and no significance (Reuber & Fischer, 1997; Zahra & George, 2002; D'Angelo *et al.*, 2013). Reuber and Fischer (1997) point to the company age as a surrogate for skills rather than a

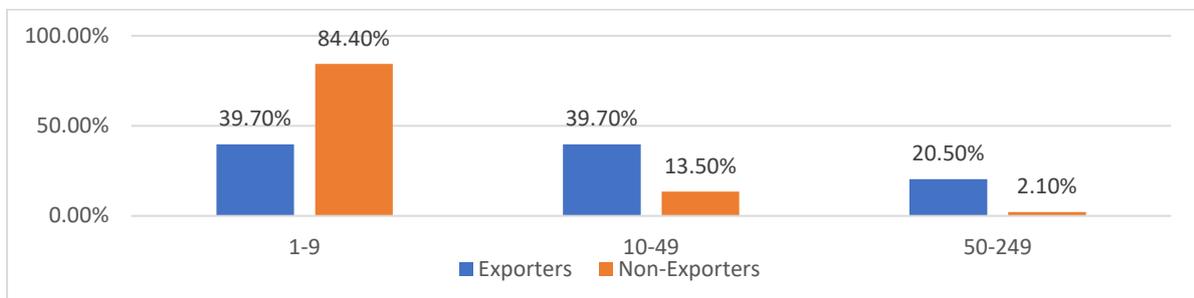
factor for internationalisation. In this case, the findings of this study suggest that companies that possess a greater skills provision are more likely to internationalise. Figure 3 implies that SMEs can internationalise within their first 2 years of operation, but that internationalisation is more evident through incremental development, akin with the Stage Approach (Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975; Johanson & Vahlne, 1977).

Figure 3: Questionnaire responses by company age



Results by company size (Figure 4) show that the majority of non-exporters are microenterprises (84.4%) and very few medium-sized companies are non-exporters (2.1%). However, microenterprises (39.7%) jointly represent the largest group of exporters, along with small enterprises (39.7%), with 20.5% of exporters being medium-sized enterprises. These results suggest that companies of all sizes have the potential to internationalise, but the likelihood of the company internationalising is greater as the size increases. This is in line with previous studies that validate the influence of firm size on internationalisation (such as Orser et al., 2008; D'Angelo *et al.*, 2013). However, numerous studies state that size is not a good predictor of international activity (such as Bonaccorsi, 1992; Calof, 1994; Reuber & Fischer, 1997; Moen, 1999). Both Reuber and Fischer (1997) and Zahra and George (2002) equate firm size with resources. As such, findings from this study imply that an increase in resources would go along with export performance. This supports claims from Jones and Coviello (2005) that international activity evolves incrementally over time as companies increase in size, experience and knowledge.

Figure 4: Questionnaire responses by company size



Having established the possibility for all companies to internationalise from the descriptive statistics, a logistic regression was conducted to evaluate the relationships between the different variables as factors to internationalisation. The various independent variables were assessed by construct against the dependent variable of internationalisation. Table 2 presents

the findings of the logistic regression for the environment constructs. For the environment influencers construct, statistical significance was observed for the *aware of growth opportunities* variable in Wales and the *receipt of unsolicited orders from abroad* variable in Brittany. This implies that as Welsh SMEs become more aware of growth opportunities, internationalisation is more likely to occur. For Breton SMEs, an increase in receiving orders from abroad causes a likely increase in internationalisation. Additionally, Table 2 shows statistically significant variables in the environment obstacles construct. Three statistically significant variables are evident among Welsh SMEs, with negative relationships seen for the *lack of incentive to internationalise*, *internationalisation too big a risk* and *lack of sufficient production capacity* variables. Therefore, as these increase, the likelihood of internationalisation decreases. For Breton SMEs, a negative coefficient for the *lack of financial resources* variable suggests that the possibility of internationalisation decreases as this increases.

Table 2: Logistic Regression of Environment Variables

Variable	Wales			Brittany		
	B	S.E.	Sig.	B	S.E.	Sig.
<b>Environment Influencers</b>						
Domestic market demand shortage	-0.340	0.230	0.140	-0.004	0.363	0.992
Receipt of unsolicited orders from abroad	-0.066	0.241	0.783	0.916*	0.372	0.014
Aware of growth opportunities	1.321**	0.417	0.002	0.354	0.358	0.323
Support to internationalise	-0.633	0.339	0.062	-0.227	0.319	0.476
Access to broadband	0.014	0.222	0.949	0.215	0.312	0.490
Constant	-2.127	1.201	0.077	-3.850*	1.646	0.019
Chi-square	14.046*		0.015	13.573*		0.019
Cox and Snell R square	0.123			0.197		
Nagelkerke R square	0.171			0.267		
% correct predictions	72.00%			69.40%		
<b>Environment Obstacles</b>						
Lack of financial resources	0.150	0.271	0.581	-1.027*	0.521	0.049
Limited foreign market information	-0.225	0.393	0.567	0.743	0.581	0.201
Difficulty with logistics/distribution	-0.015	0.293	0.958	0.217	0.485	0.654
Lack of company personnel	0.060	0.374	0.872	-0.014	0.494	0.977
Lack of time	-0.015	0.350	0.966	-0.171	0.430	0.692
Company not innovative enough	0.332	0.301	0.269	0.532	0.413	0.198
Legal differences	0.063	0.343	0.853	0.109	0.432	0.801
Lack of incentive to internationalise	-0.790*	0.366	0.031	-0.989	0.521	0.058
Strong international competition	0.144	0.333	0.667	-0.319	0.443	0.471
Political differences	-0.004	0.471	0.992	0.199	0.450	0.658
Cultural differences	0.552	0.459	0.229	0.761	0.437	0.081
Internationalisation too big a risk	-1.091**	0.387	0.005	0.363	0.488	0.457
Lack of sufficient production capacity	-0.525*	0.240	0.029	-0.720	0.432	0.095
Product unable to meet customer demand	0.095	0.337	0.778	0.586	0.395	0.138
Constant	3.229*	1.360	0.018	0.220	1.434	0.878
Chi-square	32.088**		0.004	21.290		0.094
Cox and Snell R square	0.259			0.291		
Nagelkerke R square	0.361			0.394		
% correct predictions	80.40%			75.80%		

\*Statistically significant at the 0.05 level

\*\*Statistically significant at the 0.01 level

Findings relating to the company construct in Table 3 point to statistical significance for the *company age* and *international business strategy* variables in Wales and the *company size* variable in Brittany. This suggests that as these increase, the possibility of internationalisation also increases. For the company motivation construct, positive relationships were observed in Wales for variables relating to SMEs actively seeking internationalisation or being encouraged to internationalise by business partners. A negative relationship was shown when companies were encouraged to internationalise by a Government institution. Additionally, a negative coefficient was obtained among Breton SMEs for the *open to taking risks* variable, implying that as this variable increases, internationalisation is less likely.

Table 3: Logistic Regression of Company Variables

Variable	Wales			Brittany		
	B	S.E.	Sig.	B	S.E.	Sig.
<b>Company Characteristics</b>						
Company age	0.448*	0.217	0.039	0.140	0.257	0.586
Company size	0.828	0.430	0.054	2.606**	0.839	0.002
Company location	-0.086	0.456	0.850	-0.155	0.508	0.760
International business strategy	1.003**	0.232	0.000	0.295	0.304	0.332
Constant	-5.963*	1.327	0.000	-4.338**	1.647	0.008
Chi-square	42.741**			27.144**		
Cox and Snell R square	0.329			0.355		
Nagelkerke R square	0.459			0.481		
% correct predictions	78.50%			72.60%		
<b>Company Motivation</b>						
Open to taking risks	-0.429	0.305	0.160	-0.906*	0.431	0.035
Actively seeks internationalisation	1.103**	0.344	0.001	0.517	0.336	0.123
Intention to internationalise from day 1	0.267	0.279	0.339	0.386	0.349	0.268
Internationalisation as a response to international demand	-0.008	0.272	0.976	0.419	0.377	0.266
Encouraged to internationalise by government institution	-0.635*	0.323	0.049	0.262	0.323	0.416
Encouraged to internationalise by business partner	0.724*	0.359	0.044	-0.111	0.313	0.722
Constant	-2.937**	1.109	0.008	-0.817	1.771	0.645
Chi-square	38.970**			20.511**		
Cox and Snell R square	0.305			0.282		
Nagelkerke R square	0.425			0.382		
% correct predictions	79.40%			72.60%		

\*Statistically significant at the 0.05 level

\*\*Statistically significant at the 0.01 level

Findings of the owner-manager characteristics construct show no statistically significant variables among Welsh SMEs, but the *owner-manager age* variable is statistically significant for Breton SMEs. Statistically significant variables for the owner-manager experience construct show a negative relationship for the *lived abroad* variable and a positive relationship for the *business travel abroad* variable in Wales. A positive relationship is also observed for the *business travel abroad* variable in among Breton SMEs, however, negative relationships were observed for the *business qualification* and *worked abroad* variables in

Brittany. For the owner-manager motivation construct, Table 4 also documents a positive relationship between the *internationalise to increase profits* variable among Welsh SMEs. No statistically significant variables were observed among Breton SMEs for this construct.

Table 4: Logistic Regression of Owner-Manager Variables

Variable	Wales			Brittany		
	B	S.E.	Sig.	B	S.E.	Sig.
<b>Owner-Manager Characteristics</b>						
Owner-manager gender	-1.039	0.551	0.059	-0.153	0.825	0.853
Owner-manager age	0.039	0.164	0.810	0.553*	0.273	0.042
Owner-manager qualification	0.096	0.172	0.577	0.125	0.218	0.565
Constant	-0.980	1.006	0.330	-1.821	1.762	0.301
Chi-square	4.426		0.219	4.576		0.206
Cox and Snell R square	0.041			0.071		
Nagelkerke R square	0.056			0.097		
% correct predictions	67.30%			69.40%		
<b>Owner-Manager Experience</b>						
Business qualification	0.039	0.522	0.941	-2.449*	1.157	0.034
Lived abroad	-2.671**	0.957	0.005	0.551	1.242	0.657
Studied abroad	0.241	0.800	0.764	-0.134	1.182	0.910
Worked abroad	1.458	0.746	0.050	-2.236*	1.114	0.045
Business travel abroad	1.668**	0.629	0.008	3.170*	1.362	0.020
Worked for a foreign company	0.999	0.686	0.146	-0.357	0.971	0.713
Worked with international partner	0.440	0.568	0.438	0.484	0.780	0.535
Constant	-2.231**	0.525	0.000	0.344	0.669	0.607
Chi-square	31.710**		0.000	21.067**		0.004
Cox and Snell R square	0.256			0.288		
Nagelkerke R square	0.357			0.391		
% correct predictions	72.90%			75.80%		
<b>Owner-Manager Motivation</b>						
Internationalise to grow company	0.192	0.424	0.651	1.321	0.690	0.055
Internationalise to increase profits	0.964*	0.477	0.043	-0.498	0.615	0.418
Take advantage of international opportunities	-0.181	0.605	0.765	-0.384	0.681	0.573
Domestic market too competitive	-0.108	0.237	0.648	0.452	0.386	0.241
Constant	-3.953**	0.987	0.000	-2.423*	1.004	0.016
Chi-square	22.279**		0.000	14.557**		0.006
Cox and Snell R square	0.188			0.209		
Nagelkerke R square	0.262			0.284		
% correct predictions	69.20%			72.60%		

\*Statistically significant at the 0.05 level

\*\*Statistically significant at the 0.01 level

Quantitative results from this study point to a mixture of proactive and reactive motives to internationalisation. Findings suggest that taking a proactive approach increases the likelihood of internationalising, however not all companies are open to taking risks, therefore internationalisation is seen as a more reactive process for many. Among Welsh SMEs, findings imply that taking a more proactive approach is more likely to lead to internationalisation, with significant variables in Table 3 pointing to possessing an international strategy and actively

seeking international opportunities. Differences between Wales and Brittany are particularly evident in relation to barriers to internationalisation, with only one significant variable in Brittany related to a lack of financial resources, but a lack of knowledge resources, capacity and desire to take a risk were significant obstacles for Welsh SMEs. These observations merit further investigation in the interview phase.

### Qualitative Findings

The identification of exporting and non-exporting SMEs from the questionnaire phase allowed for interview respondents to be approached with the appropriate interview guide. Maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2005) ensured that interviewees were representative of the different characteristics of SMEs participating in the study, with an equal representation of characteristics of company age, size, location and international sales (exporters only) in both Wales and Brittany. A total of 29 exporting SMEs were invited to participate in the interview phase, leading to 15 semi-structured interviews with owner-managers of SMEs, as documented in Table 5. The interview guide for exporters focussed on the companies' experiences with internationalisation, how it began and how it has progressed.

Table 5: Profile of exporter interviewees

Respondent	Region	Company Age (years)	Size (employees)	Location	Sales Abroad
E1	Wales	0-2	1-9	Small Town	0-5%
E2	Wales	11-20	10-49	Rural	11-20%
E3	Wales	3-5	1-9	Rural	0-5%
E4	Wales	21+	10-49	Small Town	11-20%
E5	Wales	11-20	10-49	Rural	21-50%
E6	Wales	21+	10-49	Small Town	0-5%
E7	Wales	11-20	1-9	Rural	0-5%
E8	Brittany	21+	50-249	City	21-50%
E9	Brittany	21+	1-9	Rural	0-5%
E10	Brittany	3-5	1-9	Rural	0-5%
E11	Brittany	21+	1-9	Rural	0-5%
E12	Brittany	21+	10-49	Rural	0-5%
E13	Brittany	0-2	1-9	City	6-10%
E14	Brittany	11-20	1-9	Small town	6-10%
E15	Brittany	21+	50-249	Small town	11-20%

Interview data with exporters centred on three main themes: motivation, facilitators and the conditions for internationalisation. Figure 5 presents a thematic map indicating these themes, including sub-themes and their corresponding codes, derived from a process of first and second cycle coding (Miles *et al.*, 2014).

Figure 5: Thematic map of exporter interviews



The thematic map shows that motivation to internationalise was expressed by companies taking a reactive or proactive approach in seeking international opportunities. For some companies it was not a priority to actively seek international opportunities, whereas other companies actively pursued an internationalisation strategy. In other cases, internationalisation was a mixture of the two approaches, pursuing both unsolicited orders from abroad and actively seeking ways to internationalise. Table 6 below outlines the details for the motivation theme.

Table 6: Analysis of the Motivation Theme

Level	Description	Experienced by
Reactive approach	Internationalisation occurs as a reaction to opportunities in international markets	E3, E6, E10, E11, E12
Proactive approach	Internationalisation occurs through the company actively seeking international opportunities	E2, E8, E15
Mixed approach	Internationalisation occurs as a mixture of both reactive and proactive approaches	E1, E4, E5, E7, E9, E13, E14

The above table highlights that internationalisation was not a particularly proactive process for respondents, with only respondent E2 from Wales and E8 and E15 from Brittany pursuing a purely proactive approach. Given the small nature of SMEs, particularly that just over half the exporter respondents were micro-enterprises, such companies lack the resources (particularly time, personnel and experience) to engage proactively in seeking international opportunities.

We don't try to export our products. Export for us is something completely opportunistic. People come to us...and if people come to us, we're not going to say no. We try to accommodate them. (Respondent E6)

The respondents who indicated a proactive approach to internationalisation represented some of the most experienced exporters of all respondents, with each company exporting to 5 different regions of the world. In addition, each company has a larger number of employees and percentage of international sales compared to most respondents.

Export for many SMEs, especially in Brittany, has become vital, that means that we need to get out of the mind-set of that sort of clientele and have a mix of clientele, so export is really an important strategy, clearly defined in order for us to develop. (Respondent E15)

Almost half of respondents indicated that internationalisation was a mixture of both proactive and reactive measures, with unsolicited orders being received from abroad as awareness grows of the company and its products, often heightened through attendance at trade shows.

It started out relatively small scale and it was predominantly to Ireland. We're really close to Dublin, I mean it's so easy to send stuff up there... then we decided to do a trade show called Anuga, and then following on from that it kind of became our platform... (Respondent E5)

In fact, respondents E1, E2, E4, E6 and E14 pointed to the fact that they had been encouraged to internationalise through attending international trade shows by different organisations. This was particularly true in Wales, where the Welsh Government was identified as the source of encouragement.

Additional themes derived from the interviews with exporters included the conditions in which internationalisation could occur. Sub-themes relating to this theme included challenges, awareness, resources and company issues. Challenges to internationalisation reflect those seen in the questionnaire, including limited knowledge of foreign markets, legislation, risk, cost and logistics. As food and drink SMEs, the product shelf life was an issue for many whose products could not be kept for a long period. Additionally, Brexit was recognised as a challenge for Welsh SMEs as this could bring major changes to the ways in which these companies internationalise. As exporters, these issues could be considered as challenges rather than barriers to internationalisation, as they could be overcome. Indeed, limited resources were a challenge for respondents, however this could be overcome when opportunities presented themselves. The third theme pointed to facilitators to internationalisation, with sub-themes highlighting the importance of marketing the products and engaging with networks and support opportunities. With limited resources, support is essential in helping SMEs internationalise. A major source of support expressed in the interviews was from the local government, with Welsh respondents particularly praising their help in identifying international network contacts, providing funding and organising stands at international trade shows.

I think what the Welsh Government is doing at the moment is fantastic. They're organising networking events for us where you get to meet all these people and you build relationships naturally, which is fantastic. They have money available for whatever you would like to do, so we're going to the Speciality & Fine Food Fair at a discounted rate thanks to the government. (Respondent E3)

Networks are also important in helping SMEs overcome limited resources, with respondents acknowledging network connections on different levels- at the company level, as well as local, national and international levels. Companies E4, E6, E8, and E15 possessed international employees within the company that could provide access to international markets through contacts. On a local level, companies alluded to engagement with other food companies as a

means for sharing resources or providing support. The same is true on a national level, through the development of cluster groups. In Brittany, the Produit en Bretagne association acted as an effective network group for its members, bringing producers together with the ability to share resources and experiences in international markets. This also included the possibility to engage with the Breton diaspora, as links with expatriates opened opportunities in international markets. On an international level, the use of distributors is significant in facilitating internationalisation for SMEs that lack foreign market knowledge and logistics capabilities.

One of the keys for food export is not only finding someone that can import your products, but especially distributing them. The supply chain is so important...The key to success for SMEs is to find in each country, one or two partners that can take care of the distribution of products. (Respondent E15)

Interviews with non-exporting SMEs included 13 interviews with Welsh SMEs and 9 with Breton SMEs, aimed at understanding why such companies were not involved in internationalisation. Respondents were also selected through maximum variation to be fully representative of the various characteristics of the questionnaire respondents (Table 7).

Table 7: Profile of Non-Exporters Respondents

Respondent	Region	Company Age (Years)	Company Size (Employees)	Company Location
N1	Wales	11-20	10-49	Urban
N2	Wales	11-20	1-9	Rural
N3	Wales	3-5	1-9	Urban
N4	Wales	11-20	1-9	Rural
N5	Wales	11-20	10-49	Urban
N6	Wales	11-20	10-49	Urban
N7	Wales	3-5	1-9	Rural
N8	Wales	3-5	1-9	Rural
N9	Wales	3-5	1-9	Rural
N10	Wales	3-5	1-9	Rural
N11	Wales	21+	1-9	Rural
N12	Wales	3-5	1-9	Rural
N13	Wales	6-10	1-9	Rural
N14	Brittany	0-2	1-9	Urban
N15	Brittany	6-10	1-9	Rural
N16	Brittany	21+	10-49	Urban
N17	Brittany	6-10	1-9	Rural
N18	Brittany	21+	1-9	Rural
N19	Brittany	21+	1-9	Rural
N20	Brittany	21+	10-49	Urban
N21	Brittany	11-20	1-9	Urban
N22	Brittany	11-20	1-9	Urban

Two main themes derived from the thematic analysis for non-exporters (Figure 6) point to active and passive attitudes to internationalisation. A third theme acknowledged that some companies had no desire to internationalise, for differing reasons.

Figure 6: Thematic map of non-exporter interviews

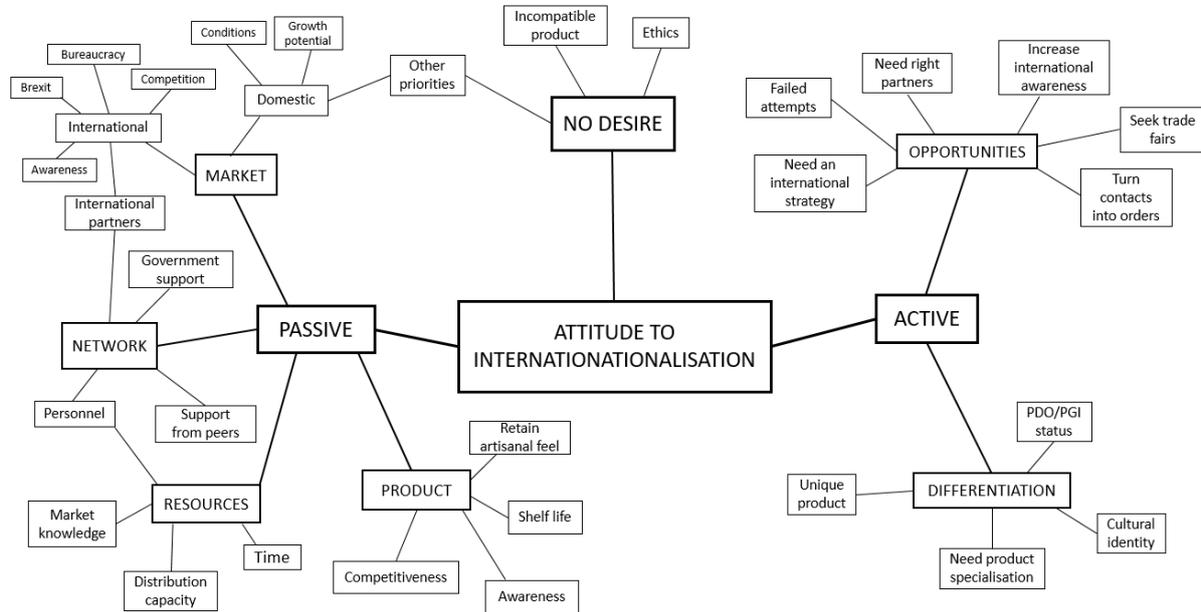


Table 8 shows that 9 of the 22 respondents had no desire to internationalise. One reason was the incompatibility of the product for export sales (N6, N10, N11, N12, N18, N20). For others, internationalisation was considered to be against the companies’ ethos. This was underlined by respondents N7, N9 and N18.

We are a small company and part of our ethos is to be sustainable and the highest quality, and always relevant. Therefore, export or international trade are not a priority for our products at all. We recently attended the Food Hotel China trade mission to explore the opportunities, and whilst there are certainly opportunities to make a lot of money from exporting to this growing and wealthy market, we felt it would not be an ethical decision for us to be shipping our products across the world. (Respondent N7)

Table 8: Analysis of the Motivation Theme

Level	Description	Experienced by
No desire	The company has no desire to explore internationalisation	N6, N7, N9, N10, N11, N12, N18, N19
Passive	The company’s focus is currently on the domestic market	N5, N8, N13, N14, N17, N22
Active	The company is seeking to internationalise, but not yet succeeded	N1, N2, N3, N4, N15, N16, N20, N21

However, 7 respondents confirmed that the company was active in seeking to internationalise. Figure 6 outlines that opportunities were identified for internationalisation, with differentiation significant for SMEs in developing a competitive advantage for internationalisation. Although a natural progression for some companies in expanding abroad

once they had established themselves in the domestic market, it was recognised that internationalisation takes time to turn interest into orders, and that despite some attempts to initiate international sales, some companies were yet to achieve this.

I have spent a long time developing the products and the brand in the home market and have also began developing contacts in international markets. I have been out to visit them, but as yet we have not managed to secure any sales. For internationalisation to occur you must be patient and keep faith. (Respondent N20)

It was also recognised that the ability to turn interest into sales was dependent upon meeting the right criteria for the different markets, as in the case on respondent N1, where product issues were curtailing the ability to internationalise. Indeed, a number of challenges were identified as reasons for a passive attitude to internationalisation, with 6 respondents taking this approach. The thematic map in Figure 6 describes these in 4 sub themes: market, network, resources and product issues. Market issues relate to domestic conditions and a focus on the domestic market, as well as challenging international conditions, such as bureaucracy, a lack of awareness of the product or limited access to international partners, vital players in a company's network for internationalisation.

The biggest challenge is to find the right local partner in the export market, and to get an idea of how much cider they could sell. It is necessary to find someone who would have the knowledge of the necessary steps that need to be taken in order to import the goods. (Respondent N17)

As with exporters, networks were identified as an important source of *support* for many companies, particularly with a view to internationalisation. Many Breton respondents spoke of the support received through their membership of the *Produit en Bretagne* brand, a network of cultural businesses united under the Breton brand, with resources and information being shared among members. Welsh respondents pointed to support from the Welsh Government in encouraging food and drink SMEs to attend major international trade shows, with financial support available to facilitate their presence. This was seen as a significant means of engaging with international partners and increasing awareness of the products.

I know there are initiatives through the Welsh government to the food and drink banner that are helping bring people together on export. I'm aware of it and I've spoken to people but I've not actually pressed the button. (Respondent N4)

Support for businesses and network contacts are a way for SMEs to overcome limited resources, which was another major barrier to internationalisation, this was manifested in a lack of personnel, time, distribution capacity and market knowledge. As food businesses the product was also a barrier to internationalisation for many, as the product was not recognised as being suitable for export, either due to a lack of awareness of the product, a lack of competitiveness, a limited shelf life or the company's desire to retain an artisan feel for the product rather than adapt it to accommodate international sales: "The other thing is that the life of our cake is on average 7-8 weeks because we don't use artificial preservatives, only natural products. That won't do because they want 4-6 months" (Respondent N5).

Findings from both exporters and non-exporters recognise that culture is an important aspect that relates to several sub-themes. This is especially evident among exporting SMEs, as seen in Figure 5, as culture is evident in the identity of the product, the company and the way that the products are marketed. The heritage and resources of place associated with food products, as discussed by Tregear (2001) are underlined by protected food names. Interview respondents pointed to the use of cultural marketing as an important means of promoting food products, especially emphasising the unique narrative of the company and its product, engagement with Tourism and the use of regional identity. The most notable example of this is the *Produit en Bretagne* brand used to promote Breton products, which was lauded by Breton respondents for its role in promoting Breton products and developing a strong network within Brittany and with international contacts and the Breton diaspora. Although cultural marketing is evident in the promotion of food products in Wales, this is done at the discretion of food producers as no national brand exists.

## Discussion

Findings from the study highlight the complexities of internationalisation, with small businesses facing many challenges. However, companies of all characteristics have the ability to overcome these challenges and successfully internationalise. Whereas these challenges appear to be a barrier to some SMEs, the desire to internationalise is greater among others. The overriding themes from both phases of the study point to internationalisation as a proactive or reactive process and the attitude a company takes to international growth. Where companies take a proactive attitude to internationalisation this was more likely to be achieved (OECD, 2009). Successful internationalisation can be achieved through reactive measures, notably by receiving orders from international buyers, but this is dependent on the existence of demand from abroad. Such findings align with notions of proactive and reactive motives to internationalisation (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2006; Hollensen, 2014) and push and pull factors (Etemad, 2004). As these factors relate to market conditions, it is necessary to investigate the conditions in which internationalisation can occur, as supported by International Entrepreneurship theory (Antoncic & Hisrich, 2000).

Distinct differences are evident between Wales and Brittany in the environmental conditions in which internationalisation occurs. Quantitative findings identified statistical significance only with a lack of financial resources in Brittany, whereas in Wales statistically significant barriers included limited production capacity or incentives for internationalisation (Morgan & Katsikeas, 1997; OECD, 2009). Significantly, Welsh companies identified internationalisation as too big a risk for the company (Leonidou *et al.*, 1998; OECD, 2009). This was supported by qualitative findings as more Welsh non-exporting SMEs showed no desire to internationalise for ethical reasons (respondent N7, N11) or underlined their focus on maintaining small scale operations (respondents N4, N6, N9, N10, N12). Of the 9 Breton non-exporters, only 3 showed no intention to seek internationalisation, as they considered their product unsuitable for international markets (respondents N18, N19, N20). Product issues are inevitable for some food and drink SMEs as the shelf life of certain food products is not conducive to internationalisation. Overall, findings suggest that conditions for internationalisation are more favourable in Brittany, with less barriers evident, as well as a greater desire for companies to internationalise, since only 3 respondents expressed no intention to internationalise. This could also explain the higher levels of exporting companies in Brittany, as seen in Figure 2. For Welsh SMEs it appears that there is less appetite to actively pursue

international growth, with only one exporter displaying a proactive approach and only 4 of the 13 non-exporters actively seeking opportunities to internationalise. This could be explained by the barriers to internationalisation, particularly the aversion to risk and the lack of incentives to internationalise. The latter is significant, as findings in Table 3 show that the possibility for internationalisation is increased where Welsh SMEs are encouraged to internationalise, when they actively seek opportunities and when they possess an international strategy.

Mtigwe's (2006, p. 17) definition of International Entrepreneurship points to companies engaging in "innovative, proactive, calculated risk-taking behaviour". Findings of this study support this notion, with differences in attitudes to proactivity and risk-taking evident between Wales and Brittany. Whereas Welsh SMEs displayed more reluctance to engage in such activities, Breton SMEs were more likely to follow this approach and ultimately see higher levels of internationalisation than their Welsh counterparts. Quantitative results highlighted that Welsh SMEs were more likely to internationalise when they were aware of international opportunities (Morgan & Katsikeas, 1997). Additionally internationalisation was statistically significant when the company was encouraged to do so by a partner (Capello & Faggian, 2005; Caiazza, 2016), pointing to a less proactive approach to internationalisation among Welsh SMEs. Interview responses emphasised the role played by the Welsh Government in encouraging SMEs to internationalise, particularly by helping companies attend international trade shows (OECD, 2009). Support is essential in facilitating internationalisation (Suárez-Ortega & Álamo-Vera, 2005) and Breton respondents identified the network of Breton SMEs as significant in supporting internationalisation, particularly evident among members of the *Produit en Bretagne* association. The *Produit en Bretagne* brand has become a significant symbol of Breton produce in recent decades, bringing greater awareness to Breton products, but also encouraging solidarity among members (respondents E9, E11, E12, E13, E15), as well as opening opportunities to engage with the Breton diaspora and develop international opportunities. Such regional and national programmes for internationalisation have previously been recognised as significant drivers to SME internationalisation (López, 2007; OECD, 2009). The Breton brand could act as a model for the development of a Welsh brand, which could enhance the reputation and awareness of Wales as a nation of food. Indeed, Kneafsey et al. (2001) posited that the development of a Welsh provenance brand would be beneficial to Welsh food producers.

It can be deduced from interview data that the reputation of Brittany is more widely acknowledged than that of Wales in relation to food products, especially considering France's reputation as the land of gastronomy, compared to the UK's lesser reputation for food, which has been affected by issues such as BSE and Foot and Mouth Disease in the early 2000s and the 2013 horsemeat scandal (McEvoy, 2016; McElwee *et al.*, 2017). It could be deduced that Brittany possesses a greater culture for food, with many recognisable products. Indeed, the value of the Breton food industry is nearly three times as big as in Wales, with export levels considerably higher than in Wales. With a greater reputation for food and a greater awareness of its products, Breton SMEs are better placed than their Welsh counterparts to seek international growth. The more favourable conditions make it easier for Breton SMEs to pursue internationalisation, both through a greater confidence in proactively seeking international markets, and benefitting from greater awareness to attract unsolicited orders from abroad. Such confidence is supported by the strength of the *Produit en Bretagne* brand, which not only increases awareness of Breton products, but also provides producers with

access to an established network of producers, distributors, support institutions and expatriates. Such networks can facilitate internationalisation by helping smaller businesses overcome limited resources (Ford, 2002; Hakansson & Ford, 2002; Wilson, 2006; Wright *et al.*, 2007; Hynes, 2010; Kuhlmeier & Knight, 2010). Whereas Welsh SMEs were more passive to internationalisation and more risk-averse, Breton respondents showed a greater awareness of the need to internationalise, particularly E15, who saw it as a vital growth strategy, as recognised by Spowart and Wickramasekera (2012), who identified internationalisation as an important means for food and drink SMEs to spread the risk across several markets. Given the differences in environmental conditions, it is unsurprising that motivation to internationalise is greater in Brittany.

## **Conclusions**

The study underlines the complexities of SME internationalisation, that there are a vast array of factors that influence the decision to internationalise within the context of the research setting. The two thematic maps derived from interview responses with exporting and non-exporting SMEs document this, as the main themes point to internationalisation as being influenced by motivation, the conditions in which the company operates and any facilitators that support internationalisation. It is widely accepted that very few companies, whether large or small, have the ability to internationalise alone, with network theorists emphasising the need to engage with a range of actors who can facilitate the process (Ford, 2002; Hakansson & Ford, 2002; Wilson, 2006; Wright *et al.*, 2007; Hynes, 2010; Kuhlmeier & Knight, 2010). Different industries have different impacts on internationalisation (Boter & Lundström, 2005; Fillis, 2008), and food and drink SMEs have their own particular challenges and opportunities to internationalise, therefore motivation to achieve this is dependent on how favourable companies and their owner-managers perceive the opportunities to internationalise within their market.

This study provides a distinct contribution in understanding cross-cultural attitudes to internationalisation, comparing Wales and Brittany. Based on International Entrepreneurship theory, the three elements of the Antoncic and Hisrich (2000) model play a significant role in shaping attitudes to internationalisation. Environmental conditions lay the foundations for many companies' attitudes to internationalisation, which is also influenced by the attitudes of the entrepreneur, who, as the main decision-maker within the company, has a significant influence of the direction of the company. The study finds that companies of all characteristics have the ability to internationalise, but this is more likely to occur when the company adopts a more proactive attitude to internationalisation. This can be influenced when environmental conditions are deemed favourable to pursuing international growth. The study showed that Breton SMEs are more proactive in pursuing international strategies, and that Welsh SMEs have developed considerable international growth in recent years through a clear strategy from the Welsh Government in pulling Welsh food companies into foreign markets. Findings suggest that national or regional strategies are significant in facilitating internationalisation for SMEs (López, 2007; OECD, 2009), therefore it is essential that policies are appropriately developed towards SMEs according to their industry and activity.

A further contribution of the study is the comparative analysis, as Wales and Brittany are two regions that share cultural and geographic similarities where the food and drink industry represents a significant part of the local economy, yet distinct differences are evident in the

value of the industry in each region. Brittany is one of Europe's leading food producing regions with the value of the industry and levels of export considerably higher than that in Wales. The study has shown that the conditions for export are more favourable in Brittany with lower levels of barriers helping to develop confidence among producers, who displayed greater proactivity in seeking export. This contrasts the more reactive attitudes to export among Welsh SMEs, where the Government plays a significant role in encouraging internationalisation. Culture was observed as an important factor in the success in Brittany, particularly through the *Produit en Bretagne* brand, which has developed a network of Breton producers and international contacts, as well as provided a strong cultural identity with its food products. As a result, Brittany has developed a strong reputation for food. Although Wales can be seen as a region that has a strong culture and an increasing reputation for food, it has not achieved the same levels of success as Brittany, especially in international sales. Brittany could be considered a leading example of a region that is able to use its cultural identity to leverage international sales of food. Wales could consider adopting similar practice as a means of further developing the reputation of the region for food, but also in creating more favourable conditions where producers would have confidence to pursue internationalisation.

Especially significant in this study is the comparison between exporting SMEs and non-exporting SMEs, which has largely been ignored in the literature. This is more evident in the methodology, with mixed methods also rare in research on SME internationalisation (Sousa *et al.*, 2008; Testa, 2011). This pluralistic approach is a means of overcoming the limitations of a single methodology and developing depth to a complex research area (Fillis, 2008). The cross-cultural comparisons between Wales and Brittany provide an additional scope for the study in examining specific issues to internationalisation across similar research settings. The contributions of this study have underlined key areas of future research within this field. The author echoes calls by Fillis (2008) for more industry-specific research, as internationalisation is a complex process that differs according to the company's industry and country, as such, findings from previous studies are not always generalizable across numerous fields. Future research should seek to focus on and conceptualise the main issues that exist in specific industries in relation to internationalisation. This would allow for more appropriate outcomes to be derived from studies, which in turn could better inform policies towards supporting SME internationalisation across different industries. Additionally, more research within the field should focus on understanding issues relating to non-exporters as well as exporters in providing a wider picture to how internationalisation does and doesn't occur. This could be aided by adopting mixed methods. The exploration of particular company typographies would be a useful exercise in conceptualising the characteristics of company types in relation to internationalisation, which could facilitate the development of tailored support for such companies. Finally, the investigation of specific research settings in greater depth could enhance knowledge on the effects of environmental factors to internationalisation. Studies could focus on identifying the optimum conditions in which internationalisation can develop, according to specific industries.

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