Understanding Internationalisation Approaches and Mechanisms Of Diaspora Entrepreneurs In Emerging Economies As A Learning Process

Abstract

Purpose - This paper presents an exploration into the internationalisation approaches and mechanisms of diaspora entrepreneurs in emerging economies. It seeks to conceptualise the strategies as a learning process.

Design/methodology/approach - The research is qualitative using a case study approach involving in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted longitudinally.

Findings - The findings suggest that diaspora entrepreneurs adopt mostly the network or, in some cases, the international new venture (born-global) market entry approach rather than the traditional stage by stage approach. The findings also suggest that diaspora entrepreneurs have perceived advantages over domestic small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) because of their foreign exposure which has influenced their entrepreneurial behaviour in exploiting business opportunities.

Research implications – The main implication of the study is that entrepreneurs who are beginning to internationalise their activities should seek to exploit potential first-mover advantages in emerging economies by realising an approach of internationalisation at high speed.

Originality - The paper contributes to better understanding of the diaspora entrepreneurship and its dynamics.

Keywords: Diaspora entrepreneurship, Internationalisation, Globalisation, Emerging economies.

Introduction

Diaspora entrepreneurship is an emerging field of study (Jones, 2011; Newland and Tanaka, 2010). Diaspora entrepreneurs are migrants and their descendants who are engaged in entrepreneurial activities that span the national business environments of their countries of origin (COO) and countries of residence (COR) (Riddle et al., 2010). Diaspora entrepreneurs are uniquely positioned to recognise opportunities in their countries of origin, to exploit such opportunities as ‘first movers’ and contribute to job creation and economic growth (Newland and Tanaka, 2010). This is echoed by Dana and Morris (2007) who argue that circular migration and transnational knowledge and social networks that it fosters create very specific opportunities for diaspora entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs often leverage unique cultural resources or market knowledge in their new ventures (Portes et al., 2002; Liu and Almor, 2016).

Diaspora entrepreneurs play a role in supporting the development of their countries of origin via remittances, but also as investors and institutional change agents, not just in ethnic enclaves but globally (Riddle and Brinkerhoff, 2011; Vaaler, 2013). However, the entrepreneurial and societal roles of diaspora entrepreneurs are often intertwined and blurred. Consequently, the discussion on these roles in the global context is mainly without a clear-cut conceptualization, in comparison to other concepts like social entrepreneurship (Jokela and Elo, 2015).

Diaspora entrepreneurship represents the most significant global trends in the 21st century (Dana and Morris, 2007). Dana and Morris (2007) also argue that research over the past 40 years has demonstrated that diaspora entrepreneurs create new ventures at a high rate and the trend is stronger than ever. However, current knowledge of the ways in which they create ventures, the types of ventures they create and the outcomes of those ventures remains limited.

Although very little research has been completed on the contribution of diaspora entrepreneurs to the economic development of their country of origin, Newland and Tanaka (2010) argue that there is reason to believe diaspora entrepreneurs have the potential to do so. Whilst, the understanding of diaspora entrepreneurship entry approaches is important in terms of speed of entry and first mover advantage (Hilmersson, 2014), diaspora entrepreneurs face some problems in attempting to expand into or invest in their homelands. Such problems include institutional environment (e.g. inadequate laws and regulations, unfavourable tax regime, import barriers), corruption and lack of good governance and lack of access to financial capital (Newland and Tanaka, 2010). Consequently, internationalisation has been seen as an uncertain and risky undertaking for small firms in the face of an unknown environment (Figueira-de-Lemos et al., 2011).

Despite the above challenges, Dana and Morris (2007) suggest that there may be a common set of key variables that explain diaspora entrepreneurship. Such variables include host country factors, the venture, ethnic networks, and co-ethnic dependence over time. Dana and Morris (2007) explain that countries differ in terms of their overall entrepreneurial orientation, where the basic cultural values and norms of society are more consistent with individual initiative, personal responsibility, wealth creation, reward for hard work, competiveness and innovation. Consequently, not only does diaspora entrepreneurship flourish in environments such as above, but they also make major contributions to economic development. With respect to the venture which, often times, are in low entry barrier industries, where differentiation of the business is difficult, and competition is price-based, ethnic network can serve to offset these challenges and create a workable competitive space for the entrepreneur by acting as a source of resources and legitimisation.

The study seeks to answer the question: How do diaspora entrepreneurs bridge international contexts and mobilise diverse entrepreneurial resources to foster internationalisation in emerging economies? Specifically, the objectives of this research are two-fold:

- To investigate the internationalisation approaches used by diaspora entrepreneurs.
- To examine how diaspora entrepreneurs are uniquely positioned over domestic SMEs.

It explores these objectives by using empirical data of diaspora entrepreneurs from different industries namely, food manufacturing, retail, publishing, education, agriculture, petro-chemical and information technology. The entrepreneurs are all originally from Nigeria, a new emerging market (Euromonitor International, 2015), but resident in the UK and engaged in international activities in the country of origin (Nigeria). Euromonitor International (2015) argue that the five new emerging markets: Nigeria, Indonesia, Mexico, Philippines and Turkey offer a wealth of opportunities for marketers facing stagnant demand in developed markets.

The study employs a qualitative methodology involving in-depth semi-structured interviews of the entrepreneurs. By focusing on the behaviour of these entrepreneurs with respect to their internationalisation mechanisms, the paper is concerned with how and why diaspora entrepreneurs actually enter international markets, rather than what the traditional theories of internationalisation suggest. This is because researchers have sought to document the frequency with which new ventures use different mechanisms to penetrate new foreign markets (Zahra, et al., 2004).

The main body of literature on internationalisation has focussed on multinational corporations, thus our knowledge remains limited with regards to diaspora entrepreneurs (Hilmersson, 2014). However, so far, studies on internationalisation that are based on SMEs are from developed economies (Crick, 2009). The neglect of diaspora entrepreneurs from emerging economies has hampered understanding of the phenomenon of these firms' internationalisation and represents an important gap in the literature (Zhang et al., 2014). This is interesting as, compared to their larger counterparts, diaspora entrepreneurs have to be more conscious, careful and selective when making decisions concerning internationalisation (Hilmersson, 2014). This is because diaspora entrepreneurs are constrained by resources and limited pool of international experience even more than other SMEs (Riddle et al., 2010).

This article offers the following important contributions. First, the study contributes to knowledge regarding sustainable and successful internationalisation approaches of diaspora entrepreneurs in emerging economies. Second, it advances this stream of research by challenging the conventional assumption that internationalisation is a risky venture for small businesses (Figueira-de-Lemos et al., 2011). Third, it contributes to the literature by examining how diaspora entrepreneurs are uniquely positioned to recognise opportunities in countries of origin.

The paper is structured as follows. After a brief summary of the theoretical framework and methodology employed in the study, the findings of the case studies are presented and discussed using a learning framework. The paper concludes with the implications and limitations of the study and suggests avenues for future research.

The Theoretical Framework

Bricolage theory of entrepreneurship

Bricolage theory was originally introduced by the anthropologist Levi-Strauss (1967) to distinguish between the actions of an engineer and that of a handyman or 'bricoleur'. Levi-Strauss (1967) posits that unlike the engineer, the 'bricoleur' would 'make-do' with the material at hand to accomplish a particular project as it develops. By contrast, the engineer plans ahead, gains access to all that is needed to complete a task before starting. In this respect, the bricoleur's approach is regarded as irrational as the projects are accomplished by solving problems as they occur, with whatever is available rather than whatever is actually needed. This is radical experimentation rather than planning ahead (Levi-Strauss, 1967).

Therefore, bricolage has been loosely defined as making-do with whatever is at hand (Miner et al, 2002); using whatever resources and repertoire one has to perform whatever task one faces (Weick, 1993); tinkering through the combination of resources at hand and the invention of resources from available materials to solve unanticipated problems (Cunha, 2005). The common themes across these definitions are (i) active problem solving and /or opportunity-seeking; (ii) reliance on pre-existing materials at hand; (iii) resource re-combination for novel use (Vanenvenhoven et al., 2011).

The theory focuses mainly on how entrepreneurship emerges in economically depressed, or resource-poor areas and working under resource constraints (Davidsson et al., 2017. It is driven by the concept of making something out of nothing. The word "nothing" refers to under-utilised resources that can be coalesced into productive resources.

This theory has implications for diaspora entrepreneurs who 'make-do' with the resources at hand such as business and personal networks to overcome institutional and cultural barriers as well as financial and human resource constraints. For an entrepreneur, the resources at hand are those that are readily available in his/her environment, such that their acquisition and use does not require great effort or extensive capital. These types of entrepreneurs refuse to accept the limitation of their environment; instead they take action despite such limitations and pay no regard to generally accepted standards (Davidsson et al. 2017). The economic conditions and limited financial resources in Nigeria are examples of the conditions diaspora entrepreneurs might experience.

Resource-based theory of internationalisation

The resource-based theory is concerned with using different types of resources to start-up entrepreneurial activities (Barney, 1991). These resources include access to capital which is usually limited in supply (Newbert, 2007). Resource –based theory also focuses on leveraging social networks and the information they provide to build social relationships which promotes trust (Reynold, 1991). The theory is based on Penrose's (1980) work, which views the entrepreneurial firm as a collection of resources which include financial, physical, technological and human resources.

The theory attributes the decision of the entrepreneur to go international to the availability of resources or lack them (Ibrahim, 2004). Therefore, the more resources the entrepreneurial firm has, the more likely it will engage in international activities and the entry mode is driven by the availability of resources (Ibrahim, 2004). For example, a small firm with limited resources may choose an export mode rather than a establishing a foreign manufacturing base.

The alternative argument in favour of the resource-based theory is that entrepreneurs go international because of their limited resources. In other words, entrepreneurs go international in search of critical resources, which is consistent with entrepreneurs' behaviour and characteristics as opportunity-driven (Ibrahim and McGuire, 2001). Within the resource-based theory is the concept of core competencies or entrepreneurial capabilities which are the collective learning in organisation (Obrecht, 2004).

Experiential learning theory

The theory was developed by Kolb (1984), building upon earlier work by Dewey and Lewin. The key concept of the theory is that learning is the process which involves experience, emotion, cognition as well as external environmental factors (Kolb, 1984). It infers that learning is more holistic with knowledge created through the transformation of experience. Simply put knowledge is created by combining, grasping and transforming experience (Kolb et al, 2001.

The theory presents a model of learning, consisting of four stages:

(i) Concrete experience (or "do"): This is a stage where the learner actively experiences an activity such as a lab session or field work.

(ii) Reflective observation: At this stage the learner consciously reflects back on that experience.

(iii) Abstract conceptualisation (or "think"): This is a stage where the learner attempts to conceptualise a theory or model of what is observed.

(iv) Active experimentation (or "Plan"): The learner is at this stage trying to plan how to test a model or theory or plan for a forthcoming experience.

Kolb and Fry (1975) argue that the learning cycle can begin at any stage of the four points, but must follow each in the sequence. Although Dewey (1933) critiques that a number of processes can occur at once and stages can be jumped, it is suggested that the learning process often begins with a person carrying out a particular action and then seeing the effect of the action in this situation.

The implication of this theory for the internationalisation behaviour of diaspora entrepreneurs is that this group of entrepreneurs construct new meaning in the process of recognising and acting on opportunities and of organising and managing new ventures. They learn experientially based on their activities. The learning process starts as a result of critical incidents, triggers and/or unusual events and these events are qualified as having either positive or negative connotations but the outcomes are generally of the positive nature (Cope, 2003). Cope (2003) indicates that critical incidents accelerate the process of learning and growing self-awareness and therefore often prove to be seminal moments within the process of change. As a consequence of these incidents, diaspora entrepreneurs tend to be reflective, learn from their experiences and from their social and business networks. They look back on their actions; this increases their self-awareness prompting a personal change which impacts their business and their internationalisation approach (Cartwright, 2002; Johanson and Vahlne, 2003; Liu and Almor, 2016).

The Network theory of internationalisation

The network approach suggests that internationalisation depends on the set of network relationships (comprising customers, suppliers, competitors, support agencies, family and friends) rather than a firm's specific advantage (Ibrahim, 2004). In other words, knowledge gained from an organisation's network influences the internationalisation approaches and facilitates market entry by facilitating the learning experience, helping in overcoming financial and human resources constraints and providing information to compensate for limited knowledge (Coviello and Munro, 1995).

The network theory draws attention to how the business and social network relationships of a firm impact its learning (Johanson and Vahlne, 2003). This is because relational sensitivity denotes people's attention to relational concerns in social interactions (Liu and Almor, 2016). Johansson and Vahlne (2003) argue that business and social networks are a set of interconnected relationships in which the exchange relation between firms is conceptualised as collective actors. Two key words in this definition are ‘interconnected’ and ‘exchange’. It points out that firms do not exist in isolation but are part of networks that are industry, market, location or customer related as well as a kind of give-and-take process that occurs in networks. It has been recognised that links with customers that are necessary to complete a sale may also involve value added if, for instance, the firm receives market information from the customer that goes beyond that necessary to complete an individual transaction (Fadahunsi et al, 2000).

Networks become especially important if there are entry barriers such as unknown cultural practices such as tax breaks, close substitutes and competition (Baum et al., 2013). Liu and Almor (2016) argue that cultural assumptions and their underlying influences largely resonate with variations in relational focus across cultures. When a new venture perceives these barriers to be high, international network contacts may be vitally important to expand international activities and successfully overcome such barriers (Baum et al., 2013) as well as reduce the risk and uncertainty level involved in foreign markets (Ibrahim, 2004) because the way entrepreneurs cope with uncertainty is influenced by culture and it is therefore important for entrepreneurs to understand how culture affects these relationships (Liu and Almor, 2016).

The International New Venture Theory

An increasing number of firms are engaging in international activities and establishing themselves in foreign markets from the outset. These organisations do not follow the traditional stage by stage theories due to their unique capabilities (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005). They are often referred to as International New Ventures (INVs) or ‘Born Global’ (BG). These are business organizations that, from inception or within eight years, seek to derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and the sale of outputs in multiple countries

(Andersson, 2011). Hashai (2011) argues that, in fact, the term 'born global' is somewhat misleading as these firms are not genuinely "born" globally dispersed, but rather increase their level of internationalization rapidly from inception.

INVs do not follow the sequential path of internationalisation, that is, their market entry is not on the premise of knowledge accumulation. These firms are usually niche-oriented and their market choices are based on specialisation of their products as well as their collaborative efforts (Knight, 2015). In addition, a combination of factors contribute to this rapid process and these are the founder/entrepreneur, international competencies resulting from an international orientation and a hybrid organisational structure that promotes the maximum use of limited resources (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004).

Born global SMEs are characterized by limited tangible and financial resources. Consequently, an interesting research question is how such firms succeed in international business despite limited resources (Knight, 2015). The literature suggests that, unlike large multinational enterprises (MNEs), smaller firms are often more adaptable, more innovative, and have quicker response times for implementing new ideas and meeting customer needs.

The literature has also offered multiple explanations for the early and rapid internationalisation of young and resource-constrained firms that exhibit much less risk aversion than gradually internationalising firms. These explanations mostly focus on the ability and need of born global firms to leverage the competitive advantage, international connections and bicultural advantages conferred by their unique technological knowledge to internationalise rapidly via multiple collaborative modes while simultaneously leveraging their international presence to supplement this technological knowledge (Liu, 2017).

The need to focus on the individual who creates a new venture is emphasised by Shaver and Scott (1991). They indicate that it is this person in 'whose mind all possibilities come together, who believes that innovation is possible and who has the motivation to persist until the job is done' (p. 39). That means, without the vision, willingness, tenacity and creativity of such individuals, these ventures will not exist. This has implication for learning. It therefore follows that at any given point in time the managers of born global firms need to make crucial decisions in relation to the utilisation of their limited resources to expand their foreign operations *and/or* their geographic scope (Hashai, 2011). Kyvik et al. (2013) suggest that the mind-set, attitudes, global orientation of the decision makers, market conditions as well as their ability to develop resources to compete internationally are elements that allow BGs enter international markets. However, Glaister et al. (2014) ague that born-global firms are able to shift away from externalised, market-based approaches towards more internalised, commitment-based approaches in order to survive, adapt and grow.

Gaps in the literature

While the significant liabilities in start-ups are common problems in the internationalisation literature there is a clear gap with respect to knowledge of these issues for diaspora internationalisation process. For example, because of their small size, they experience significantly more costs during internationalisation than both developed countries SMEs and large firms from the same emerging economies (Hilmersson, 2012). Such costs are primarily efficiency costs including interpretation-based costs due to market ambiguity (Crick, 2009). In addition, diaspora entrepreneurs may have difficulties in maximising economies of scale which is a key benefit of internationalisation due to internal constraints of resource, capability and managerial skills (Zhang et al., 2014). The question now remains: how do diaspora entrepreneurs mobilise the limited resources available for internationalisation?

Research Methodology

A qualitative research was chosen due to the nature of the research question which is to understand how diaspora entrepreneurs mobilise diverse entrepreneurial resources to foster internationalisation approaches in emerging economies. The qualitative method involved semi-structured interviews conducted longitudinally which involved visiting the companies twice over a period of one year (Buckley and Chapman, 1997; Andersson, 2002). The advantages of a qualitative research include the ability to learn directly from research subjects, thereby reducing measurement errors common in survey studies which often need to make assumptions (Dana and Dana, 2005). Dana and Dana (2005) also posits that a qualitative research enables a detailed study of the environment, culture and the context of entrepreneurial behaviour.

The research participants were identified through the assistance of a gatekeeper (Stockport and Kakabadse, 1992), who was provided with clear selection criteria (such as business sectors, origin of owner-managers and business characteristics). A sample of 10 case study firms was decided upon, drawn from different sectors (i.e. IT, food, retail, publishing, education, petro-chemical and agriculture). The owner-managers of these companies were all of Nigerian origin and resident in London (see Table 1). In other words, they were return-migrant enterprises whose companies were UK based with operations in Nigeria. To be included in the study, the firms had to be small and medium sized (SMEs)[1] and independently owned by the entrepreneur.

[1] There is no universally accepted definition of SMEs; definitions/classifications vary by country. In Nigeria, for example, the National Council of Industry, 2003 categorised enterprises based on three criteria - Micro: 1-10 employees; Small: 11-35 employees; Medium: 36-100 employees; Large: 101 employees and above (Etuk et al., 2014). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, an SME is one with less than 100 employees.

The ten firms were decided upon based on Eisenhardt (1989: 545) which argues that '*...while there is no ideal number of cases to include in the sample, a number between 4 and 10 usually works well. With fewer than 4 cases it is often difficult to generate theory..., with more than 10 cases it quickly becomes difficult to cope with the complexity and volume of the data.'*

The strategy of using case studies in this research enabled a thorough study, in-depth and detailed, of a limited number of objects, individuals and environment (Dana and Dana, 2005). Although business owners were the primary respondents as key decision makers, sale managers/representatives were also interviewed where possible to help in checking and stabilising any conflicting evidence.

All of the interviews were face-to-face with the exception of one which was a telephone interview. The interviews followed an interview protocol which comprised a schedule or a list of how the interview was conducted (Creswell, 2014). Since the research is conceptualised as a learning process, it was conducted longitudinally during which owner-managers and senior managers were interviewed twice over a period of one year (once in 2015 and once in 2016). The respondents were not informed beforehand of the second interviews. The longitudinal element enabled the researcher to identify when the learning actually took place (Ekanem, 2015).

Prior to the beginning of the first interview, the participants were reminded of the purpose of the research and presented with the consent form. They were advised that the interview would be semi-structured because this interview method provided them an opportunity to speak freely, tell their story and expand on particular points of interest (Boyatiz, 1998). During the interview, in addition to tape recording, appropriate notes were taken whilst listening attentively and interruptions were only for probing, clarification and/or confirmation of points.

The first interviews in 2015 were exploratory in nature (Jarvis *et al.,* 1996). They took the form of a personal open-ended reflective interview where each participant was asked to narrate their life history in business from start-up to present (Cope 2003). They established the initial boundaries for the research as well as providing details of the owner-managers' background and personal biographies such as age, education and training, and experience (Ekanem, 2007). They also focused on the motivations for starting the business and their internationalisation mechanisms as well as issues faced in terms of resources and reliance on pre-existing materials at hand. This helped to highlight the major issues of the study and was also useful in building rapport (Gill and Johnson, 2010).

The second part of the interviews in 2016 was more in-depth. In this part of the interview, participants discussed their internationalisation approaches/mechanisms in greater depth and were probed to discuss in detail the emerging themes from the first part of the interviews. These included the significance of knowledge and learning in the internationalisation process; how the knowledge and learning was acquired and how the entrepreneurs overcome market entry barriers such as limited resources and making something out of nothing. Participants were also asked during the second interviews about their perceived uniqueness over domestic SMEs in the development of enterprises.

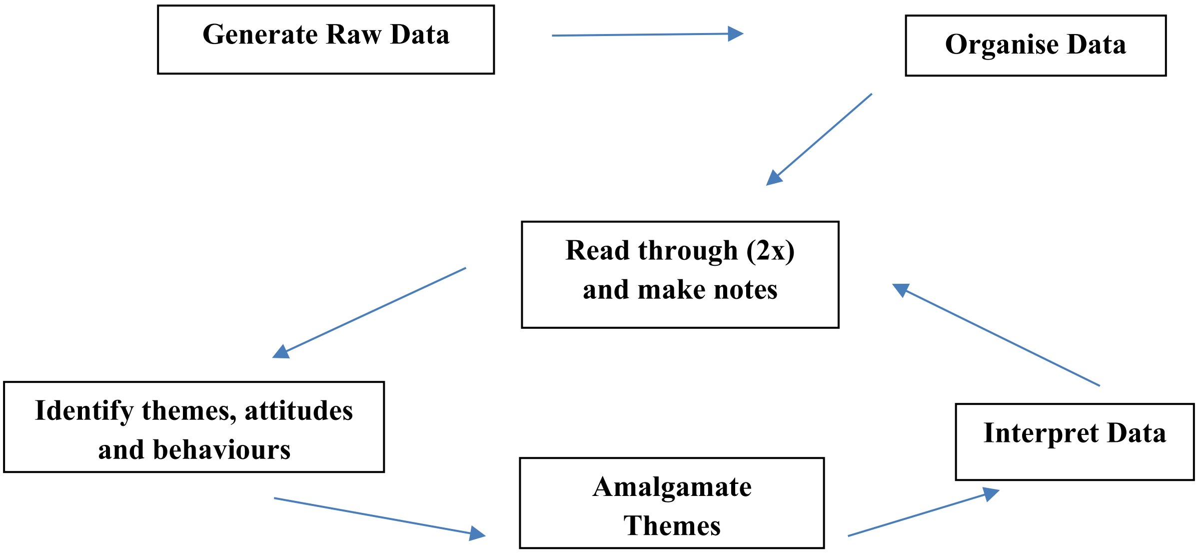
The first interviews lasted for about an hour, but the second lasted considerably longer than this as matters were dealt with in detail. With the agreement of the participant all the interviews were tape recorded, on the understanding that the material provided would be treated as confidential. During this part of the interview, the interviewer took the opportunity to review meanings of what was heard (for example, ‘Did I hear you emphasise that...’, ‘Would this be a fair interpretation ...?’, ‘Is my understanding correct that …?’). Upon conclusion of an interview session, a recap of the interview was done; interviewees were reminded of their rights (to withdraw at any time, anonymity and confidential) as well as how the data will be used.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was inductive which involved recording, tabulating and coding the data and comparing the emerging codes and categories until it became meaningful and sensible. The categories emerged from the emphasis placed on each topic by the respondents as far as their learning and perceptions of internationalisation mechanisms were concerned. In the analysis, content analysis, pattern-matching and explanation-building techniques were used (Yin, 2014).

Content analysis consisted of listening to the interview tapes and transcribing the interviews and reading over the transcripts. It allowed for the data to be properly organised which made it easier to go through each topic and pick out concepts, themes and features associated the learning behaviour of the respondents and their internationalisation approaches (as shown in figure 1 below). Examples of these features include the circumstances and rationale leading to internationalisation. They also included critical incidents which triggered the learning process, what was learned, how it was learned and from whom (Ekanem, 2015). Categories were then established and developed into typology.

Figure 1: Content analysis



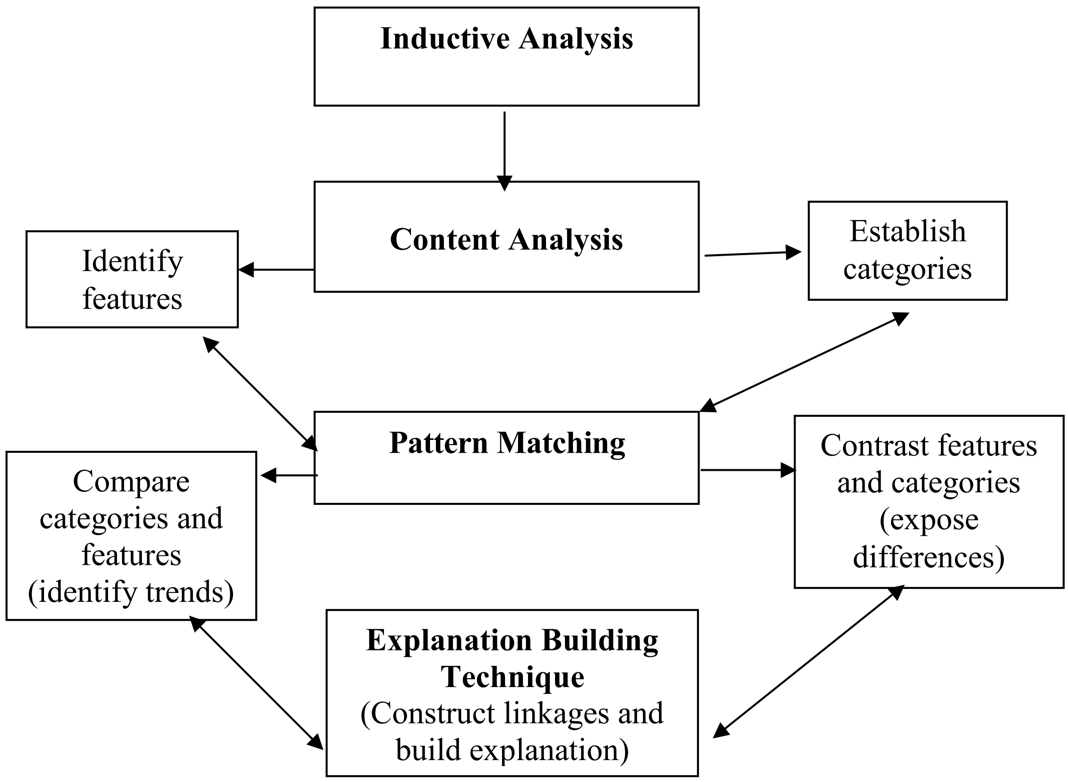
Source: Adapted from Creswell (2014)

Pattern-matching technique involved identifying salient themes, recording ideas or language and patterns of belief that link people and settings together. It involved looking for frequently used words/phrases and making note of them and examining whether there were any interesting patterns and how the data related to what was expected on the basis of common sense or previous theory (Yin, 2014). For example, the use of gut-feeling, judgement, experiences, resources, reliance on pre-existing materials at hand, families and friends by owner-managers with respect to internationalisation behaviour emerged from field notes and transcriptions. It also involved examining whether there were inconsistencies or contradictions between owner-managers' beliefs or attitudes and what they do (Ekanem, 2015).

Explanation-building technique allowed series of linkages to be made and interpreted in the light of the explanations provided by each respondent. The aim was to build a general explanation based on cross-case analysis (Yin, 2014). This technique allowed explanation of the findings to be built around business owners individual experiences, which means that body language and tone of voice on certain answers were put into consideration when analysing the information gathered from the interviews.

Being inductive, the data analysis utilised a data coding approach, which involved continuing revision and refinement of category, searching for sub-topics, including contradictory points of view and new insights and selecting appropriate quotations that convey the core themes or essence of a category (Fisher, 2004). The codes took the form of 'code domains' which highlighted key contexts, actions, meanings and relationships, based on themes and processes identified from the transcribed interviews, whilst informed by the guiding frame of reference identified in the initial literature review, underpinning the study (Fisher, 2004).

Fig. 2: The inter-relatedness of the techniques



Findings

The main characteristics of the business owners are summarised in table 1 below including age, gender, education, migration history (length of residence in the UK) and the frequency of visits to COO. The study consisted principally of ten case study firms as illustrated in the profiles in Table 2, showing the size, number of employees, the year founded, turnover and sector. The oldest firm is a petrol chemical company founded in 2004 and the youngest is an information technology firm founded in 2013.

The ten firms fit into the category of SME as defined in this study. Extracts from the interviews with the interviewees are presented in this section. Some firms used a combination of approaches.

Tables 1, 2 and 3 here

This study has been developed from the premise that we know little about how diaspora entrepreneurs deal with the constraints facing all internationalizing firms, with the expectation they feel them worse, although the results show that being diaspora entrepreneurs also offers potential benefits. The findings in this study indicate that diaspora entrepreneurs adopt the network and sometimes the international new venture approaches which are conceptualised as a learning process as demonstrated in the findings from the ten case study firms.

International New Venture approach

Company 1, 2 and 8 adopted the international new venture or ‘born global’ approach as a result of what they have learned through their experiences since the companies served the Nigerian market from its inception, which is consistent with Liu (2017) and Andersson (2011). The owners of these businesses indicated during the second interview that in the last year they had learned from their experiences as well as from their personal and business networks, starting from “thinking” through and “reflecting” on what was learn and “doing” what was learned (Kolb and Fry, 1975). When the owner of Company 1, an IT company, was asked about their international market entry approach, how he came to adopt the approach and the critical event that necessitated his international venture, he explained that he lost his job in his country of origin:

> ‘*I used to work for a company called Monitise. They created an arm called Emerging Markets and what we were supposed to do was to try and conquer Africa. So we went to Nigeria. Unfortunately, due to the way things were at the time, we were not allowed to go and offer services to banks, you know B2B [business to business]; it had to be customer facing. Even though we had the licence and local partners, the challenge was that for Monitise it was not their core business function, so they pulled out and I was out of a job. But, that experience opened my eyes to something- an opportunity in Nigeria’* (First interview, 10 June 2015).

The above quote challenges the traditional theory of internationalisation since the opportunity in Nigeria led the owner of Company 1 to set up his IT Company in Nigeria right from day one. The owner-manager of this company went on to state that as a Nigerian he had already understood the culture of the country and so, did not perceive any issues with conducting business there (Baum et al., 2013). During this interview the owner-manager of this company seemed hesitant to reveal the role of his experience in the Nigerian market, perhaps because he was not immediately conscious of it. However, when asked during the second interview of 15 July 2016 to reflect on how his knowledge of the culture has helped in the internationalisation mechanism, he admitted that he has only learned a lot in the last year through experience, judgement and gut-feeling which he described as “self-learned approach” (Kolb 1984’s learning theory). He emphasised that being a Nigerian made it easy for him to recognise the opportunity in Nigeria since he knows his way around the business environment, but it was the learning experience that has really helped him. This admission was probably because at this stage the relationship between him and the researcher had developed significantly.

Personal or social network approach

Personal network can be defined as part of an individual’s overall social network which includes contacts from previous work experience as well as family, friends (Tang, 2011). Consistent with Tang (2011), the internationalisation approach in Companies 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7 were based on personal or social networks usually entailing the use of family and friends. Companies 2 and 7 developed their personal network through community gatherings in country of residence, while in Companies 3, 5 and 6 the entrepreneurs had established networks in the COO prior to immigrating. For these companies, the critical events in the learning process were the lack of self-confidence, resources and market knowledge. The lack of tangible and intangible assets presented a barrier to the entrepreneurs in accomplishing their goals and the entrepreneurs tend to use their personal network ties to overcome these barriers. For example, the owner of Company 3 revealed, when asked about how he established his business venture in Nigeria, that it was propelled by his personal network:

> *'I worked with a guy for ten years when I was in the dough business. He used to sell my pastries in Nigeria when I was in General Mills. So now he works for another company but he does some consultancy for a small agent out there. He took it [the business] into Nigeria for me. Now, I am in about 104 store courts in Nigeria. I am in most petrol stations in Nigeria and he's done all that* (First Interview, 10 June 2015).

The above quote demonstrates the use of a personal network to facilitate the entry into the Nigerian market and to boost self-confidence. During the second interview, this business owner boasted of having a broad scope of international activities which enhances his opportunities to learn from diverse circumstances and environments. He indicated that the relationship established with his co-worker during his time at General Mills became a personal relationship and yielded returns. The sales manager, in support of the business owner, pointed out the significance of this type of relationship in terms of learning from the personal network which is vital not only for survival but also for being able to develop confidence and compete with other firms.

The owner of Company 6, a textile/fashion business, indicated that it was her cousin and family members who were instrumental to her market entry mechanism. The quote below explains the approach:

> *'Initially, opening my own store in Nigeria was not possible due to my inexperience of the market. However after attending an innovative forum with my cousin who kept on encouraging me and supporting me, I realised I could start my clothing outfit. He provided me with business contacts and information. This has*

> *tremendously helped me in gaining traction for investment for my business'* (First Interview, 12 June 2015).

The case of the textile business also demonstrates the importance of using personal networks as an entry mechanism in terms of the encouragements and support as well as business contacts. During this first interview, the owner-manager denied learning from anybody despite acknowledging the importance of personal networks. However, during the second interview as the relationship between her and the researcher developed, it emerged that personal relationships with her networks had considerable influence on the internationalisation approach. Probed about what she learned from the relationship with her cousin and family members, she referred to confidence to explore the Nigerian market. She also emphasised the benefit of the relationship in terms of the knowledge accumulation and "reflection" through learning from her cousin and other family members which has helped in the growth of her business. The owner of Company 7, a catering business, who learned from a friend as well as customers, also emphasised on confidence: "*Confident to do what I love!"* (Second Interview, 19 July 16). During the second interview she also referred to the trust embedded in personal relationships, which she was reluctant to discuss during the first interview. She described it as "an enabler for transferring and receiving resources".

Business network approach

The use of business networks as an entry mechanism was evident in Companies 2, 4, 8, 9 and 10, which is consistent with the findings in Jeong (2016). The owners of these businesses indicated that the approach was adopted through a learning process which was triggered by the culture of stiff competition (Company 2), lack of innovation (Company4), lack of resources and flexibility (Companies 6 and 8) in the country of origin. For Company 4, it was the customers who determined the internationalisation approach. The following account from the respondent explains the process:

> *'We don't select the customers, but it is the customers who select their own supplier. So, the customers normally select us because the total distance to transfer the product to their packing house seems shorter and they have to pay less transport fee'* (First Interview, 11 June 2015)

The case of the agriculturist is a demonstration of where the relationship with customers enhanced the internationalisation approach due to the type of products, proximity and less transportation cost. This is also a clear support for Madsen et al. (2000) which argue that market choices are not only based on cultural similarities but also on relationships and/or specialisation of their products as well as collaborative efforts.

During the second interview, when asked about their ability to interpret the environment, it became known that the company was learning from customers. For example, the owner-manager of Company 4 explained his learning experience in terms of knowledge acquired from customers to be able to deal with quality and price:

> '*I try to get useful knowledge regarding technology, machinery, seeds, and all these things because we have to work on a permanent combination of quality and price. For me this is the way to be differentiated. It is the only weapon we have to build and keep permanent relations with customers otherwise you are just a typical watermelon producer having nothing to be differentiated from the massive farmers and competition'* (Second Interview, 18 July 2016).

The above quote illustrates how the owner-manager was able to learn about quality and price differentiation by being sensitive to customers' requirements; by thinking, reflecting and putting into action what was learned previously. It is through quality and price differentiation that this company was able to add value which gives them the competitive edge. Learning from customers also provided this company with the ability to spot indications of uncertainty in the international business environment through information provide by customers which enabled the company to be alert and flexible. This offers the flexibility to adapt its activities to be able to handle sales fluctuations and decreases in demand.

For the owner of a publishing company (Company 9), it was a business colleague who introduced him to a networking event and encouraged him to establish a publishing business in Nigeria. Apart from setting up an E-publishing business, he also set up a children's literature publishing business in Nigeria one year after setting up a similar venture in London:

> *'I was at an event when a colleague of mine showed me a journal on his I-pad. That technology was just foreign to me but the concept of people reading books and magazines on a device dawn on me. I also set up a children's book publishing in that same year. This enabled the exploitation of economies of scale'* (First Interview, 15 June 2015).

The business colleague helped the owner of the publishing company to widen the scale of his international operations which enabled him to exploit both economies of scope (reduced average total cost of production) and economies of scale (cost advantage from increased output) and also balance sales fluctuations between London and Nigeria. This was possible through the willingness of the business colleague to share and transfer knowledge and resources. During the first interview, the owner-manager of Company 10 identified lack of financial resources as a trigger for the learning process and by the second interview he had learned fund raising skills from a venture capitalist.

Perceived uniqueness over domestic SMEs

(insert table 4 about here)

Greater willingness to take risk

The owner manager of Company 1 indicated that the uniqueness of his business over domestic SMEs is his greater willingness to take risk. The sales person interviewed also made the point that the entrepreneurs' experiential knowledge base of the environment reduces uncertainty and perceived costs regarding the international operations as well as contributes to greater risk taking. The owner of the company explained the advantage his business has over domestic businesses as follows:

> *'I am able to excel over local enterprises because I don't live in the system. I am outside the system, as it were. I am not under the turbulent political and economic conditions that stifle local enterprises and I can take risk'* (Second Interview 15 July 2016).

Foreign exposure and diversity

The owner-manager of Company 10 emphasised on foreign exposure as being his unique position over domestic SMEs. He explained:

'The advantage of having developed a business in the UK for so many years has made it possible to work with a diverse range of workers and entrepreneurs. This has definitely helped to shape and sharpen my approach to businesses in the industry better than if perhaps, I do not have a foreign exposure. The importance of diversity in business cannot be overemphasised. The majority of domestic SMEs lack the flavour of diversity' (Second Interview, 20 July 2016)

These quotes are representative of the advantages reported by the other participants. It suggests that diaspora entrepreneurs have the cultural, social and a slightly greater financial capital and resources to facilitate starting up a business. Above all, because of their exposure, they have a higher risk-taking propensity and are often more willing to engage in business activities in high-risk or emerging markets.

Ability to effect a change

The owner-manager of Company 6, a textile business, explained that the advantages he has over domestic enterprises include the ability to effect a change:

'The majority of SMEs in my home country are run by locals and as expected they are strongly rooted in the way they believe things are done. As a diaspora entrepreneur, I find it easier to effect or propose changes when required than domestic SMEs. Moreover, it is easier from my experience to introduce changes to the local workforce than entrepreneurs without foreign exposure; locals tend to resist the idea of learning something different' (Second Interview, 19 July 2016).

The business international outlook

Other respondents (such as Companies 1, 3, 4, 7 and 10) enlisted increase in the scope of international operation, expansion of the business's international outlook and the ability to understand and interpret business environment more easily as their uniqueness over domestic businesses. The expansion of the business outlook increased the firm's general experience base which transformed into experiential knowledge, allowing the owner to understand and interpret the business environment.

Knowledge and awareness of funding sources

Commenting on the uniqueness of his business over domestic enterprises, the owner of Company 5 remarked on how his exposure has brought to the table the awareness and knowledge of various sources of funding available to small businesses:

> *Exposure to different ways of raising funds quickly (bank over draft, bank loan, equity from mortgage, credit card) is an advantage compared to domestic SMEs. Finance is difficult to access and when available it is quite complex and expensive in my home country* (Second Interview, 18 July 2016).

Dealing with investors, fragile economy and political instability

The owner of Company 7, a catering business, commented on the ease with which she involves investors and also has access to raw materials and suppliers better than domestic businesses. She stressed the lack of trust prevalent in domestic businesses due to the perception of corruption in home countries. By the same token, the owner of Company 8 mentioned foreign exchange, currency fluctuation, fragile economy and political instability as factors which act as a disadvantage to domestic businesses, whilst they give him an edge over those enterprises. On the same issue, the owner of Company 10 indicated:

> *'I am able to think outside the box without pressure from family, culture or politics. Besides, I have strong desire for economic development in my homeland'* (Second Interview, 20 July 2016)

This means that the advantage diaspora entrepreneurs have over domestic enterprises is their freedom to think and act without the shackles of family, culture or political backlash. The above response was representative of other companies in the study. The desire to see their homeland develop to the level they have seen in the UK is a great uniqueness of diaspora entrepreneurs over their domestic counterparts (Newland and Tanaka, 2010).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to investigate how diaspora entrepreneurs mobilise diverse entrepreneurial resources to foster internationalisation approaches in emerging economies and the advantage they have over domestic enterprises in the development of business enterprises. The study shows that they were learning through their experiences and those of their social or business networks. These learning opportunities were leveraged to enhance their international entry approaches. Hilmersson (2014) argues that firms with a broad scope of international networks will be better equipped to diagnose market development and recognise warning signals in countries where symptoms of the recession are revealed at an early stage. This approach is conceptualised in this study as an experiential learning approach.

The study also demonstrated how bricolage and resource-based theories have been used by the firms to innovate in the face of constraints (Linna, 2013; Gurca and Ravishankar, 2015). The data presented in the previous section reveals that what the owner-managers were doing was finding solutions to problems, using an approach that can be characterised as 'making do' based mainly on experience and information gathered in an informal way.

The case study firms understood internationalisation in terms of interactions and networks in foreign markets which led to increased knowledge and trust between various market actors and such relationships were of mutual benefit to the participants. The role of trust and reliability was identified in the study as a major area of social capital within the business and social network process, promoting productivity and facilitating the development of knowledge and innovation (Hakanen et al., 2016). With the presence of trust, the partners were willing to take a risk and transfer available strategic resources (DeWever, 2005).

Typically, the various players within the business networks included customers, suppliers, competitors, consultants and supports agencies; while those in the social networks included family, friends and acquaintances. The case study firms relied on their networks to learn about new markets and how to overcome institutional and cultural barriers to conduct business there which was a way of overcoming their financial and human resource constraints. They used the network approach as a springboard to fulfil their resource void and deficiencies in technologies and management skills (Zhang et al., 2014). The network was initially the most critical source of information and the more dynamic the networks, the more they developed new capabilities and assets (Dana and Morris, 2007). In this context, the bricolage and experiential learning theories offer explanation.

The views expressed by the owners of Companies 1 and 3 suggest that their entry into their chosen markets was easy. A general explanation could be that for both firms there was no market entry barrier to overcome. Therefore, the need to acquire market knowledge was not necessary. Networks also enhanced the speed of market entry (Hilmersson, 2014). Fadahunsi et al. (2000) argue that although contacts within the networks may not necessarily be continuous for business purposes, such networks are often viewed as vital element in the development of ethnic businesses in that their closed nature offers members access to the networks in ways that are otherwise denied to non-members of that group.

In examining the internationalisation mechanisms of these firms, it could be noticed that market entry barriers did not represent a real issue per se. The prior international experience of Company 1's owner was an enabler for international new venturing because it contained the specific experience of the owner manager in the Nigerian market thus complying with Kolb's 1984 stages of learning. Another way of explaining it is that unemployment sparked a search for opportunities, the entrepreneur uses their previous experiences and networks to recognize the opportunity and build both tangible and intangible resource bases. This in turn allows them to begin their market entry, which took the form of INVs and then they subsequently entered into Nigeria within one year demonstrating that they are born global.

This is consistent with Baum et al. (2013) who posit that prior international experience is positively related to international new venturing as managers who have lived abroad are more likely to sell internationally. Also prior international experience has been found to enhance awareness of opportunities as well as the pace and degree of internationalisation (Baum et al., (2013). However, in the case of Companies 3, 9, and 10, having a trusted contact, colleague or venture capitalist (as in the case of Company 10) enhanced the learning process. In Company

4's case, it appears that due to the nature of the business as a supplier of fruits and vegetables, their market was determined by their potential customers (Johanson and Vahlne, 2003). This is also a network approach with different experiential knowledge profiles (Hilmersson, 2012).

In view of the findings in this study, the most commonly used mechanism was the network approach (both personal and business) which was also the most effective. This is because the networks did not only facilitate the learning experience, they also helped in overcoming financial and human resources constraints. They also facilitated start-up and short-term growth and the more learning achieved by the entrepreneurs, the more confident they acquired (Dana and Morries, 2007).

The uniqueness of diaspora entrepreneurship over domestic SMEs were identified as foreign exposure to vibrant business environment, technology and know-how in the host country which influenced their entrepreneurial behaviour in exploiting business opportunities. These advantages are consistent with the findings in Woodruff (2018), Business Sweden (2016) and Henard et al. (2012), respectively. Consequently, diaspora entrepreneurs were able to bring about change or influence change in their country of origin (Riddle and Brinkerhoff, 2011). They also appeared to be in a better position to access finance and easily liaise with investors and suppliers which are crucial in the development of successful enterprises. Although consistent with the literature, it is important to note that these findings are perceived advantages reported by the diaspora entrepreneurs themselves rather than measurable advantages. In the context of Nigeria, diaspora businesses could be seen as complementary to domestic businesses rather than substitutes/alternatives; contributing to the economy by way of transferring remittances and goods between the COR and the COO and establishing businesses in the COO.

Conclusions

The evidence in this research reveals that diaspora entrepreneurs adopt mostly the network approach and, in some cases, the international new venture approach (or a combination of the two) for their international activities rather than the stage by stage approach as suggested in the literature (Coviello and Munro, 1995; Chetty and Campbell – Hunt, 2004). Thus, the network and INV approaches enhance the speed with which these businesses enter their foreign markets and are thus uniquely positioned in these emerging economies. This, in turn, enables them as born-globals and rapidly internationalising firms to be alert and flexible and better equipped to deal with sales fluctuations and changes in the developing environment (Hilmersson, 2014).

Entry into a market did not only result from the business owners having explicit knowledge of the markets that they are in. Instead, market entry was also achieved through alternative means such as having a trusted partner. It is this trusted ally who possesses the necessary knowledge. Further, the nature of the business's product or service can determine what markets it will enter due to the demand of customers within those markets (Madsen et al., 2000). In essence, these alternative methods to overcoming market entry barriers remove the responsibility from the business owner. What this means is that the entrepreneur does not have to personally acquire or seek the required knowledge about a particular market before proceeding into it. Thus, it conforms to the network theory and the experiential learning theory to inform social capital.

The findings in this study suggest that the case study firms adopted a learning process in their internationalisation approaches. The findings suggest that their knowledge of the international market is acquired through a learning process and their actions and decisions are based on what they have learned through their experiences and the experiences of others such as personal and business networks which include customers, funders, business associates, competitors, family and friends. The findings confirm both bricolage and resource-based theories and also suggest that conceptualising internationalisation approaches of diaspora entrepreneurs within the context of experiential learning holds promise as an explanatory framework.

The study makes some important contributions to knowledge: Firstly, The 'learning process' approach taken in this study makes a useful and novel contribution with regard to diaspora entrepreneurship. This contribution is significant as it advances the argument in the mainstream literature on international entrepreneurship regarding how knowledge gained from organisation's networks and the learning experience influence the internationalisation approaches (Coviello and Munro, 1995; Johanson and Vahlne, 2003; Liu and Almor, 2016).

Secondly, it contributes to knowledge regarding sustainable and successful internationalisation process of diaspora entrepreneurs in emerging economies by providing examples of entrepreneurs who engage in business activities between two countries and the process through which these ventures are carried out. Thus, it contributes with formal analysis to the rather dominant asymmetrical views that flow between developed and developing counties as diaspora entrepreneurship in emerging economies represents an increasingly active force in internationalisation (Zhang et al., 2014; Newland and Tanaka, 2010).

Thirdly, the paper contributes to the understanding of the unique international behaviours exhibited by diaspora entrepreneurs that can help to extend extant international business theory. Understanding the internationalisation approaches and mechanisms of diaspora entrepreneurs illuminates novel aspects for international entrepreneurship. Thus, it contributes to the advancement of international entrepreneurship research on migrant and diaspora entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial internationalisation and on the respective opportunity risk management, directions, motivations, location choices, processes, participants, and critical events.

Fourthly, the research contributes to the argument that diaspora entrepreneurs may play a significant complementary role to domestic firms in terms of the development or upgrade of numerous enterprises and enhancement of competiveness (Lin, 2010). It demonstrates that diaspora entrepreneurship can generate opportunities for diasporans and the societies in which they operate in terms of ideas, resources, employment opportunities, stimulating innovation and creating financial and social capital across borders.

Fifthly, since the trend towards small business' internationalisation can only intensify and diminishing proportion of small businesses can be expected to be insulated from its pressures, the study challenges the conventional assumption that internationalisation is risky for small businesses (Figueira-de-Lemos et al., 2011). This study suggests that in an emerging economy, it might be even more risky not to internationalise. Hilmersson (2014) argues that firms that do not internationalise may lose competiveness as over-dependence on a single market might increase income stream uncertainty.

Although the growing body of the literature has explored the antecedents that lead to emerging market SME internationalisation, how diaspora entrepreneurs can overcome the challenges and capture the benefits presented by growth opportunities in international markets has been neglected in the small business literature (Zhang et al., 2014). This article contributes to addressing this gap in the diaspora entrepreneurship literature. The findings and analysis and the quotations in this paper point towards how the networks addressed many of the intangibles with respect to gathering information/conducting business in a unique environment.

Finally, the methodology used makes an important contribution due to its uniqueness in terms of the combination of the different threads such as in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and the longitudinal nature. The longitudinal element provided greater insight into the experiential learning behaviour of the participants by allowing different shades of meaning to be captured (Ekanem, 2007). The longitudinal element also enabled trust to develop between the researcher and the participants, thus allowing the investigation to be deepened as well as allowing the learning process to be investigated as it was taking place or as it has recently taken place.

The implications of the research

The findings have implications for policy makers and practitioners who are involved in management development and training. Instead of focusing on formalised training courses, training activities should be geared toward practical problems, which are tailor-made and specific to participating businesses. There is evidence in the study that successful diaspora entrepreneurs utilised networks to obtain key information that underpins learning to facilitate their internationalisation mechanisms. There is evidence also that the use of networks also facilitate the development of trust and rapport, facilitating the development of knowledge and innovation (Hakenen et al., 2016) and transfer of available resources (DeWever, 2005). Therefore, business support policy and mentoring should be directed toward creating awareness and understanding of the benefits of networks and eliminating perceived or real barriers to network inclusion.

Another implication for policy is that relevant policies such as investment, tax breaks, lowering import barriers and providing information about business regulations and laws should be put in place to aid market entry of diaspora entrepreneurs in emerging economies. Moreover, diaspora entrepreneurs would prefer their homeland to have good governance with relatively little corruption, well-functioning institutional environment and adequate access to financial capital (Newland and Tanaka, 2010).

Limitations

The study has several limitations which suggest the implications for further research. The major limitation of the study is the extent to which the study can be generalised to wider population of small firms since it was based on only ten case studies drawn from different sectors, which were not randomly selected. It will be interesting to see if the results of the research hold true amongst other diaspora entrepreneurs from other emerging economies. Therefore, further studies on larger diaspora businesses and a larger sample size and preferably a more specified sector is necessary.

The findings about the uniqueness/advantages over domestic SMEs are based only on the perception of the diaspora entrepreneurs. Therefore, further research is necessary where these claims can be critically examined and tested. Finally, while the longitudinal element of the study enables trust, it can also create bias through familiarity between the respondent and the investigator that may lead to desirable answers.

References

Andersson, S. (2011), "International entrepreneurship, born globals and the theory of effectuation", Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, Vol. 18 Issue 3, pp.627-643.

Andersson, S. (2002), "Suppliers' international strategies", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 36 No. ½, pp. 86-110.

Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*. 17(1), 99–120.

Baum, M., Schwens, C. & Kabst, R. (2013), "International as opposed to domestic new venturing: The moderating role of perceived barriers to internationalization", *International Small Business Journal,* Vol. 31 No. 5, pp. 536-562.

Boyatzis, R. (1998), *Transforming Qualitative Information –thematic analysis and code development,* Sage Publications, London.

Buckley, P. J. and Chapman, M. (1997), "A longitudinal study of the internationalisation process in a small sample of pharmaceutical and scientific instrument companies", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 13 Issue 1-3, pp. 43-55.

Business Sweden (2016), *Internationalisation through digitalisation*, The Swedish Trade and Invest Council.

Cartwright, S. (2002). "Double loop learning: A concept and Process for leadership educators", *Journal of leadership Education,* Vol. 1, pp. 68 – 71.

Chetty, S. and Campbell- Hunt, C. (2004), "A strategic Approach to Internationalization: A Traditional versus a 'Born-Global' approach", *Journal of International Marketing,* Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 57 -81.

Cope, J. (2003), "Entrepreneurial learning and Critical reflection: Discontinuous events as triggers for 'higher-level' learning", *Management learning,* Vol. 34 No.4, pp. 429 -450.

Coviello and Munro (1995), "Growing the entrepreneurial firm: Networking for international market development", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol 29 No. 7, pp 49-61.

Cunha, M. P. (2005), "Bricolage in organisations", FEUNL Working paper No. 474.

Crick, D. (2009), "The internationalisation of born global and international new venture SMEs", *International Marketing Review,* Vol. 26 No. 4/5, pp. 453 – 476.

Creswell, J.W. (2014), *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Method Approaches* (4th ed), Sage Publications, London.

Dana, L. P. and Morris, M. (2007), "Towards a synthesis: a model of immigrant and ethnic entrepreneurship", in Dana, L. P. (Ed.) *Handbook of Research on Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship: A Co-evolutionary View on Resource Management*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, United Kingdom, pp. 803-811.

Dana, L. P. and Dana, T. E. (2005), "Expanding the scope of methodologies used in entrepreneurship research", *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 79-88.

Davidsson, P., Baker, T. and Senyard, J. M. (2017), "A measure of entrepreneurial bricolage behaviour", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, Vol. 23 No. 1, pp. 114-135.

DeWever, S., Martens, R. and Vandenbempt, K. (2005), "The impact of trust on strategic resource acquisition through inter-organisational networks: Towards a conceptual model", *Human Relations*, Vol. 58 No. 12, pp. 1523-1543.

Dewey, J. (1933), *How We Think*, Heath, New York.

Eisenhardt, K .M. (1989), "Building Theories from Case Study Research", *Academy of Management Review,* Vol.14 No. 4 , pp. 532 - 550.

Ekanem, I. (2015), "Entrepreneurial Learning: Gender differences", *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, Vol. 21 No.4, pp. 557-577.

Ekanem, I. (2007), "Insider accounts: a qualitative research method for small firms", *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development,* Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 105 -117.

Euromonitor International (2015), *New Emerging Markets: Nigeria, Indonesia, Mexico, The Philippines and Turkey*, Strategy Briefing.

Etuk, R. U., Etuk, G. R. and Baghebo, M. (2014), “Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) and Nigeria’s Economic Development, *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences,* Vol. 5 No.7, pp. 656-662.

Fadahunsi, A., Smallbone, D. & Supri, S. (2000), “Networking and ethnic minority enterprise development: Insights from a North London study”, *Journal of Small Business and enterprise Development*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 228-240.

Figueira-de-Lemos, F, Johnson, J. and Vahlne, J. E. (2011), “Risk management in the internationalisation process of the firm: A note on the Uppsala model”, *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 46 No.2, pp. 143-153.

Fisher, C. (2004), *Researching and Writing a Dissertation*, FT Prentice Hall, Harlow.

Gill, J. & Johnson, P. (2010), *Research Methods for Managers*, Paul Chapman Publishing, London.

Glaister, A.J., Liu, Y., Sahadev, S. and Gomes, E., (2014), “Externalizing, internalizing and fostering commitment: The case of born-global firms in emerging economies”, *Management International Review*, Vol. 54 No. 4, pp.473-496.

Gurca, A. and Ravishankar, M. N. (2015), “A bricolage perspective on technological Innovation in emerging markets”, *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, Vol. 63 No. 1, pp.53-66.

Hakanen, M., Kossou, L. and Takala, T. (2016), “Building Interpersonal Trust in Business Networks: Enablers and Roadblocks”, *Journal of Business Models*, Vol. 4 No.1, pp. 45-62.

Hashai, N. (2011), “Sequencing the expansion of geographic scope and foreign operations by “born global” firms”, *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 42 No.8, pp. 995-1015.

Henard, F., Diamond, L. and Roseveare, D. (2012), *Approaches to internationalisation and their implications for strategic management and institutional practice,* OECD Higher Education Programme, IMHE.

Hilmersson, M. (2014), “Small and medium-sized enterprise internationalisation strategy and performance in times of market turbulence”, *International Small Business Journal,* Vol. 32 No. 4, pp. 386-400.

Hilmersson, M. (2012), “Experiential knowledge types and profiles of internationalising small and medium-sized enterprises”, *International Small Business Journal*, Epub ahead of print, 30 November 2012. DOI: 10.1177/0266242612458443.

Ibrahim, A. B. (2004) “Internationalization: motive and process” in Dana, L. P. (ed.) *Handbook of Research on International Entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, United Kingdom, pp. 129-136.

Ibrahim, A. B. and McGuire, J. (2001), “Technology transfer strategies for international entrepreneurs”, International Management, Vol. 6 No.1, pp.75-83.

Jarvis, R., Kitching, J., Curran, J. & Lightfoot, G. (1996), *The Financial Management of Small Firms: An Alternative Perspective*, Research Report, No.49. ACCA, London.

Jeong, S. W. (2016), "Types of foreign networks and internationalization performance of Korean SMEs", *Multinational Business Review*, Vol. 24 Issue 1, pp.47-6.

Jokela, P. and Elo, M. (2015), “Developing Innovative Business Models in Social Ventures”, *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Innovation*, Vol.11 No.1, pp. 103-118.

Johanson, J., and Vahlne, J. E. (2003), “Business relationship learning and commitment in the internationalization process”, *Journal of International Entrepreneurship,* Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 83–101.

Jones, M. V., Coviello, N., and Tang, Y. K. (2011), “International entrepreneurship research (1989–2009): a domain ontology and thematic analysis”, *Journal of Business Venturing,* Vol.26 No. 6, pp. 632-659.

Knight, G. (2015), “Born Global Firms: Evolution of a Contemporary Phenomenon”, in Zou, S., Xu, H., and Hui L. S. (eds.) *Entrepreneurship in International Marketing (Advances in International Marketing, Volume 25)* Emerald Group Publishing Limited, pp.3 – 19.

Knight G. A. and Cavusgil, S. T. (2004), “Innovation, Organisational capabilities, and the born-global firm”, *Journal of International Business Studies,* Vol. 35 No.2, pp. 124-141.

Kolb, D.A. (1984), *Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

Kolb, D.A., Boyatzis, R. E., and Mainemelis, C. (2001), “Experiential learning theory: Previous research and new directions”, in Sternberg, R.J. and Zhang, L. F, (Eds.), *Perspectives on thinking, learning and cognitive styles*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, New Jersey, pp. 227 – 247.

Kolb, D. A. and Fry, R. (1975), *Toward an applied theory of experiential learning, in Cooper, C (ed.) Theories of Group Process*, Wiley, London.

Kyvik, O., Saris, W., Bonet, E., & Felico, J.A. (2013), “The internationalization of small firms: the relationship between global mindset and firms’ internationalization behaviour”, *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 11 No.2, pp. 172 – 195.

Levi-Strauss, C. (1967), *The Savage Mind*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Lin, X. (2010), “The diaspora solution to innovation capacity development: immigrant entrepreneurs in the contemporary world”, *Thunderbird International Business Review*, Vol. 52 No. 2, pp. 123–136.

Linna, P. (2013), “Bricolage as a means of innovating in a resource-scarce environment: a study of innovator-entrepreneurs at the BOP”, *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 18 No. 3, pp. 1-23.

Liu, Y. (2017). "Born global firms’ growth and collaborative entry mode: the role of transnational entrepreneurs", *International Marketing Review*, Vol. 34 Issue 1, pp.46-67.

Liu, Y. and Almor, T. (2016), “How culture influences the way entrepreneurs deal with uncertainty in inter-organizational relationships: The case of returnee versus local entrepreneurs in China”, *International Business Review*, Vol. 25 No.1, pp.4-14.

Madsen, T.K., Ramussen, E., & Servais, P. (2000), “Differences and similarities between born globals and other types of exporter”, *Globalisation, the Multinational Firm, and Emerging Economies,* Vol. 1 No.10, pp. 247- 265.

Miner, A. S., Bassoff, P., and Moorman, C. (2002), “Organizational improvisation and learning: A field study”, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 46 No.1, pp. 304–337.

Newbert, S. L. (2007). Empirical research on the resource-based view of the firm: an assessment and suggestions for future research. *Strategic Management Journal*, 28(2), 121–146.

Newland, K. & Tanaka, H. (2010), *Mobilizing Diaspora Entrepreneurship for Development.* Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC.

Obrecht, J. (2004), “Entrepreneurial capabilities: a resource-based systematic approach to international entrepreneurship”, in Dana, L. P (Ed.) *Handbook of Research on International Entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, United Kingdom pp. 248-264.

Oviatt, B.M., & McDougall, P. P. (2005), “Defining International Entrepreneurship and Modelling the speed of internationalization”, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice,* Vol. 29 No. 5, pp. 537 – 553.

Penrose, E. (1980), *The Growth of the Firm,* Basil Blackwell Publishers, Oxford.

Portes, A., Guarnizo, L.E., & Haller, W. J. (2002), “Transnational entrepreneurs: An alternative form of immigrant economic adaptation”, *American Sociological Review,* Vol. 67 No. 2, pp. 278-298.

Reynolds, P. D. (1991). Sociology and entrepreneurship: concepts and contributions”, *Entrepreneurship: Theory & Practice. 16*(2), 47-70.

Riddle, L., and Brinkerhoff, J. (2011), “Diaspora entrepreneurs as institutional change agents: The case of Thamel. Com”, *International Business Review*, Vol. 20 No.6, pp. 670-680.

Riddle, L., Hrivnak, G. A. & Nielsen, T. M. (2010), "Transnational diaspora entrepreneurship in emerging markets: Bridging institutional divides", *Journal of International Management* Vol. 16 No.4, pp. 398-411.

Shaver, K.G., & Scott, L.R. (1991), "Person, Process, Choice: The psychology of new venture creation", *Entrepreneurship, Theory and Practice,* Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 23 – 45.

Stockport, G and A. Kakabadse, A. (1992), "Using Ethnography in Small Firms Research", in Caley, K. Chell, E. Chittenden, F, and Mason, C. (eds) *Small Enterprise Development Policy and Practice in Action,* Paul Chapman Publishing, London, pp. 178-191.

Tang, Y. K. (2011), "The Influence of networking on the internationalization of SMEs: Evidence from internationalized Chinese firms", *International Small Business Journal*, Vol. 29 No. 4, pp. 1-15

Vaaler, P. M. (2013), "Diaspora concentration and the venture investment impact of remittances", *Journal of International Management*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 26-46.

Vanevenhoven, J., Winkel, D., Malewicki, D., Dougan, W. L. and Bronson, J. (2011), "Varieties of Bricolage and the Process of Entrepreneurship", *New England Journal of Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 53-66.

Weick, K. E. (1993), "Organisational redesign as improvisation", in Huber, G. P. and Glick, W. H. (eds), *Organisational change and redesign*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 346-379.

Woodruff, J. (2018) "The importance of the international business environment, https://bizfluent.com (accessed 23/04/19).

Yin, R. K. (2014), *Case study research: Design and Methods,* Sage Publications, London.

Zahra, S. A., Cloninger, P., Yu, J. F. and Choi, Y. (2004), "Emerging research issues in international entrepreneurship", in Dana, L. P. (Ed.) *Handbook of Research on International Entrepreneurship*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, United Kingdom, pp. 732-747.

Zhang, X., Ma, X., Wang, Y. & Wang, Y. (2014), “How can emerging market small and medium-sized enterprises maximise internationalisation benefits? The moderating effect of organisational flexibility”, *International Small Business Journal,* Vol. 32 No. 6, pp. 667-692.

Table 1: Characteristics of business owners

Business owner	Com 1	Com 2	Com 3	Com 4	Com 5	Com 6	Com 7	Com 8	Com 9	Com 10
Age	40	46	50	30	50	36	37	42	43	41
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Male	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Male
Length of residence in the UK	24 years	28 years	30 years	10 years	28 years	19 years	17 years	23 years	25 years	20 years
Level of education	BSc	ACMA	BA	MSc	HND	BA	MA	HND	BSc	BSc
Frequency of visits to COO *	3	2	4	3	5	6	5	4	3	6

*Frequency of yearly visits before company formation and more frequently thereafter.

Table 2: Profile of case study companies

Firm	No. of employees	Year founded	Turnover	Sector	Main activities	Internationalisation mechanisms/approaches
1	5	2013	£1m	Information Technology	Digital payment services; Value added services to agent distribution networks	International new venture (born-global)
2	10	2012	£500k	Food Manufacturer	Ready-to-eat meals; Meal compliments (sides)	Personal network/born global

3	20	2012	£1m	Food Manufacturer	Health products: **Uslim:** nutritious weight loss shakes; **Ufit:** Milk with added muscle that supports active life style; **Ufit Breakfast:** Breakfast drink; **UfitPro:** Supersize protein shake that contributes to the growth and maintenance of healthy muscles; **Collagen + beauty milk:** Nutritious beauty milk; **Gohealth Balance:** Daily immune defence shake; **Gohealth Joint protect:** For healthy flexible joints.	Personal network
4	45	2008	£2m	Agriculturist	Third generation family business that specialises in the production, packaging and sales of wholesale fruits and vegetables.	Business network

5	11	2010	£7m	Information Technology	Retail of electronic products	Personal network
6	30	2006	£3.5m	Textile	Fashion/clothing	Personal network
7	8	2010	£500k	Catering	Food manufacturing	Business and personal networks
8	3	2011	£2.6m	Web design and development	Web applications and software	Business network/born global
9	7	2000	£3m	Publishing	Books E-Books Children literature	Business network
10	35	2004	£5m	Petro chemical	Oil and gas	Business network

Table 3: The Learning perspective

Company	Critical incidents	What was learned	From Whom
1	Job loss in country of origin	Learn to take opportunity	Experience; judgement and gut-feeling
2	Culture of stiff competition in country of origin	Learn different strategies for competition; confidence	Cousin; Competitors
3	Lack of market knowledge; lack of resources	Survival; Ability to compete	Former colleague who became a personal friend
4	Lack of innovation	Quality and price differentiation; Ability to handle sales fluctuations and decreases in demand.	Customers
5	Rapid changes in technology	Good customer service	Brother
6	Lack of confidence; Lack of flexibility	Confidence; Knowledge	Cousin/family member
7	Lack of self-confidence; Lack of flexibility	Confidence; Ability to interpret business environment	Customer; Family
8	Lack of resources	Trust and opportunity taking	Experience; judgement and gut-feeling; Consultant
9	Economic downturn; Lack of flexibility	Ability to exploit economies of scale; Balance sales fluctuation	Business colleague; Networking event
10	Lack of financial resources	Fund raising ability	Networking events; Venture capitalist

Table 4: Perceived Uniqueness over domestic SMEs

Company	Perceived Uniqueness
1	Greater willingness to take risk; Ability to deal with uncertainty; Not living under turbulent political and economic conditions; Greater scope of international operations
2	Greater willingness to take risk; Ability to evaluate the effect of cultural and social norms; Foreign exposure/experience; Greater experience in funding opportunities.
3	Broader scope of operation; Greater experience, Greater willingness to take risk
4	Greater diversity; Greater international outlook Useful knowledge of technology; Greater managerial skills
5	Knowledge and awareness of funding sources; Greater exposure; Ability to understand and interpret business environment; Stronger desire to see the development of homeland
6	Foreign exposure/experience Ability to effect changes; Scope of international operation; Ability to understand and interpret business environment more easily
7	Greater ability to deal with investors, Expansion of business outlook; Greater access to raw materials/suppliers; Trust – lacking in domestic businesses due to corruption
8	Greater ability to understand the effect of cultural and social norms on business; Ability to factor in distinct business culture; Advantage over foreign exchange, currency fluctuation, fragile economy and political instability.
9	Greater financial capital; Foreign exposure; Ability to understand and interpret business environment.
10	Foreign exposure and diversity; Higher risk taking propensity; Stronger desire to see homeland develop; Ability to think outside the box.