

TITLE: OPENING THE BLACK BOX – THE ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURS IN CREATION OF SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE DURING THE SMALL FIRM’S INTERNATIONALIZATION

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For all the rich literature on separate areas of entrepreneurship, strategic management and international business, not many studies have explored the dynamism of the managerial /entrepreneurial role in creating value necessary for continued achievement during company’s internationalization process. The way in which the role of the entrepreneur through time shapes these processes has yet to be fully explored. Consequently, the result from early empirical work, together with the fact that there is a lack in previous literature concerning the dynamics involved in the role which the entrepreneur plays in the firm’s internationalization process, motivated this researcher to open the black box by conducting an explorative approach for understanding and describing the entrepreneurial process and the dynamics and conditions under which value is created for the competitiveness of the small and medium-sized firm during the internationalization process. More specifically, this study aims at answering questions such as what a small company’s core competence (and critical resources behind it) is, and more significantly how it has been developed and how it contributes to the sustained competitive advantage of the firm? By focusing on the individual entrepreneur throughout the lifecycle of the smaller firm, this researcher will also be able to answer questions such as what role of the entrepreneur during the internationalization/strategy/entrepreneurial processes has been, and how it has affected the company’s international competitiveness.

METHODOLOGY

This study is using a qualitative case-study approach. With a conceptual model (which is based on early empirical work and literature review of the fields of entrepreneurship, international business and strategic management) and our research purpose in mind, the data used in this study are based on three longitudinal (three years) case studies which are collected by semi-structured personal interviews with most of the individuals involved during the establishment and internationalization of the firm. By using the technique of crystallization this researcher has been able to look for a richer description and deeper understating of the phenomenon under investigation.

POSSIBLE CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At present (November 2003) the final data has just been collected and will be analyzed during the next few months. The result of this study will have both a practical and theoretical

contribution. The final mode and in-depth descriptions will give a better understating of how entrepreneurs in smaller heterogeneous resources into idiosyncratic capabilities to achieve competitiveness during the domestic and international expansion.