

A network perspective of international entrepreneurship within small and medium-sized firms: A review and research agenda*

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Abstract

Given a rising tendency on international entrepreneurship among researchers and practitioners, a wealth of previous studies has evolved into a rich and fragmented body of knowledge over time. In that vein, this study is aimed to critically assess and synthesize all research studies on international entrepreneurship from the perspective of network theory with respect to the research design, conceptual approaches, and empirical issues, consisting of emergent research themes. Within the scope of this systematic and comprehensive review, a content analysis was employed with an intent to examine 112 studies on international entrepreneurship published between 1996 and 2020. The results demonstrate eight emergent research themes that reveal how the conversation among researchers expanded the network perspective of international entrepreneurship by extending the intellectual knowledge gradually. Apart from revealing emergent research streams, this study also offers promising research agenda for small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms operating internationally in order to advance the current knowledge within the specific field of subject.

Key words: International entrepreneurship, Network, International new ventures, SMEs.

1. Introduction

International entrepreneurship (IE) is a young and rapidly emerging field which takes the increased attention of researchers and accordingly the body of

* Submitted/Geliş: 04.02.2020, Accepted/Kabul: 06.12.2020

¹ The author acknowledges the support of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK- 2219-International Postdoctoral Research Fellowship Program) for this research.

accumulated knowledge is growing continuously in the domain of IE with the increasing globalization of markets. Oviatt and McDougall (2005: 540) have recently defined the international entrepreneurship as “the discovery, enactment, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities across national borders to create future goods and services”. Since it has a multidisciplinary nature, the field of IE has widely broadened from different insightful arenas such as new venture internationalization (e.g., Coviello, 2006; Riddle and Gillespie, 2003), opportunity recognition (e.g., Kontinen and Ojala, 2011a), entrepreneurial cultures (e.g., Dimitratos et al., 2012), small medium-sized company internationalization (e.g., Musteen et al., 2010), foreign market entry modes (e.g., Ellis, 2000), effectuation (e.g., Galkina and Chetty, 2015), knowledge acquisition (e.g., Presutti et al., 2007; Fletcher and Harris, 2012), technological learning (e.g., Glavas and Mathews, 2014) and export orientation and performance (e.g., Filatotchev et al., 2009).

One of the mostly used theoretical lenses to provide explanations for international entrepreneurship phenomena is the network theory in the pertinent literature. In the early literature, the materiality of networks in the internationalization is well established especially among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) which have scarce resources for their international activities. In fact, the need for network research and its link with international new ventures was firstly emphasized by Andersson and Wictor (2003), Sharma and Blomstermo (2003) and Autio (2005), advocating the trigger role of network relationships in accessing to new international opportunities and resources, recognizing opportunities, and improving performance measures such as speed and scope of the internationalization activities of companies. Hence, this is also conforming to the network model of internationalization that the network ties companies' function as a bridge to their international operations (Johanson and Mattsson, 1988).

In that vein, even though there exist earlier review studies related to international entrepreneurship in the extant literature, some have focused on the historical evolution of international entrepreneurship knowledge structure (e.g., Jones et al., 2011) and knowledge network stages of international entrepreneurship (e.g., Etemad and Lee, 2003) via reviewing all publications within the field of subject in specific time periods. On the other hand, others have confined the scope of previous studies to the emerging markets (e.g., Kiss et al., 2012), whereas some has addressed to the specific concepts in the internationalization of IE such as risk and uncertainty issues (e.g., Liesch et al., 2011). Further, some scholarly attention has been paid to the network's impacts on the internationalization of international entrepreneurs (e.g., Sedzinauskiene et al., 2019). Therefore, no research approaches the field from the perspective of network theory via concentrating on knowledge network stages, and network's impacts of small and medium-sized

entrepreneurial firms operating internationally, consolidating its all antecedents and outcomes within the field of subject.

In that vein, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a major role in most of the economies all around the world, drawing widespread in the pertinent literature, with the existence of more than 95% of companies contributing 60% of job creation and 40% of GDP across the world (Bell, 2015; Dabić et al., 2019; Fletcher, 2004). Given the considerable advances in the areas of technology and regulatory climate, easing international trade in terms of transportation, exchange of information, and financing beyond the boundaries of nations, small and medium enterprises are increasingly contributing to the global economic development (WTO, 2016). Nevertheless, small, and medium-sized enterprises struggle to operate in international markets, as they face substantial challenges in foreign arena such as liabilities of smallness (e.g., Lefebvre, 2020), scarce resources (e.g., Tang et al., 2017), and insufficient international knowledge and experience (e.g., Galkina and Chetty, 2015). In this regard, examination on international entrepreneurial behaviours of SMEs, dispersed within a fragmented body of research, are of critical importance for scholars, practitioners, and public policy makers.

In the light of these considerations, the main objective of this study is to review and set the trends of the existent state of international entrepreneurship research from the perspective of network theory within the context of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms operating internationally. In this sense, this study seeks to address the following research questions: (1) What research designs have been employed by previous empirical publications within the field, in terms of countries involved, regions, sample sizes, data collection methods, and analytical approaches? (2) What conceptual approaches and fundamental research themes have been emerged in terms of empirical assessments by scholars in the knowledge structure? (3) What future research areas can be suggested with respect to the thematic subjects of this academic inquiry?

The current study presents a promising field of research area via contributing to the pertinent literature in several ways. First, it covers a lot of grounds for the examination of networks' impacts in international entrepreneurship by concentrating merely on small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms operating internationally and unveiling the existent trends about the evolution of the specific field of subject. Second, it sheds light on the research inclinations in the extant literature regarding the research design and conceptual approaches in the reviewed articles over the two-time frames. Third, it examines different approaches with an intent to conceptualize network connections of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms in international settings. Fourth, it unpacks the research gaps about the diverse research streams via offering voluminous and insightful further

directions for future research scholars and enhancing the knowledge of the subject in the extant literature.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. *International entrepreneurship*

Given the heightened importance of international business, entrepreneurship is an area, receiving growing attention of scholars, practitioners, and public policy makers worldwide (McDougall and Oviatt, 2000). In that sense, these two critical subjects are rapidly converging, resulting in a new topic of interest, *international entrepreneurship*, with the effect of globalization and advances in the information technologies over the past two decades (Zahra and George, 2002). Notwithstanding the fact that a wealth of international business scholars has concentrated on established and larger multinational companies, entrepreneurship researchers considered the increasing role of young entrepreneurial new ventures, which can be defined by Oviatt and McDougall (1994) as “a business organization that, from inception, seeks to derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources from and the sale of outputs to multiple countries” (Autio, 2005).

In a parallel vein, international new ventures, operating less than six years, and emerging as the new engines of today’s world economy, grow rapidly via internationalization and innovative activities, all of which has drawn the attention of researchers to explore the drivers, patterns, and the speed of these new ventures’ internationalization within the domain of international entrepreneurship (Zahra et al., 2003; Zahra and Garvis, 2000). This is evident in the multidisciplinary nature of both entrepreneurship and international business research, providing a rich and broad conversation on entrepreneurs conducting their business in international arena (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005).

The phenomenon of international entrepreneurship has dated back to the Morrow (1988)’s article, which provides insights on how distant foreign markets are convenient for new ventures with the effect of advances in technology and cultural awareness. Thereby, an early definition of international entrepreneurship has emerged in the study of McDougall (1989), setting straight records on the differences between domestic and international new ventures and defining the international entrepreneurship as “the development of international new ventures or start-ups that, from their inception, engage in international business, thus viewing their operating domain as international from the initial stages of the firm’s operation”. Afterwards, Oviatt and McDougall (1994) has put special emphasis on ‘born global’ new ventures, differentiating those organizations from the ones acquiring resources and capabilities when going international over time.

Nevertheless, several researchers have indicated the need for broadening the definition of international entrepreneurship via encompassing established internationalizing firms (Giamartino, McDougall, and Bird 1993; Wright and Ricks 1994; Zahra, 1993; Zahra and Schulte, 1994; Zahra and Covin, 1995).

In response to these calls, McDougall and Oviatt (2000) have acknowledged the inclusion of established companies and cross-national analyses and suggested a broader definition of international entrepreneurship, referring to “a combination of innovative, proactive, and risk-seeking behavior that crosses or is compared across national borders and is intended to create value in business organizations”. Nonetheless, this definition has been revised again in the early 2000s with an intent to put emphasis on recognition and exploitation of opportunities in international markets. In that vein, McDougall and Oviatt (2003) redefines international entrepreneurship as “the discovery, enactment, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities—across national borders—to create future goods and services”. In the light of these considerations, there exist a set of different definitions with an aim of clarifying the international entrepreneurship over past decades. Table 1 summarizes the historical evolution of its definitions. Hence, it is widely observed that different names are interchangeably using to describe international entrepreneurship such as international new ventures, born globals, born internationals (Sedziniauskiene, Sekliuckiene, and Zucchella, 2019).

2.2. *Network theory*

Network theory has been asserted to the idea that entire economy is formed by a network of organizations (Thorelli, 1986). Besides, those relationships help companies to acquire and utilize the resources of other entities and build ties with their activities together, which results in enhanced performance depending upon the number of the networks hold in the environment (Hakansson and Snehota, 2006). The network model is the result of a large extensive research, which was a collection of different studies and conducted in the mid-1970s at the University of Uppsala (Ford et al., 1986; Hakansson, 1989; Thorelli, 1986). Hakansson (1989) has declared the importance of three characteristics of network model; (a) *actors*, which consist of organizations or people who are involved in the network; (b) *resources*, which are carried into the network by different parties such as input goods, financial capital, technology and personnel; and (c) *activities*, which are being implemented in the network itself. In this context, networks involve a complex set of interdependencies among different entities within the framework of actors, resources, and activities (Hakansson and Snehota, 2006).

Table 1
 Historical Evolution of International Entrepreneurship Definitions

Author(s)	Definition(s)
McDougall (1989)	<i>"the development of international new ventures or start-ups that, from their inception, engage in international business, thus viewing their operating domain as international from the initial stages of the firm's operation"</i>
Zahra (1993)	<i>"the study of the nature and consequences of a firm's risk-taking behavior as it ventures into international markets"</i>
Oviatt and McDougall (1994)	<i>"a business organization that, from inception, seeks to derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and sale of outputs in multiple countries"</i>
Wright and Ricks (1994)	<i>"a firm-level activity that crosses national borders and focuses on the relationship between businesses and the international environments in which they operate"</i>
McDougall and Oviatt (1996)	<i>"new and innovative activities that have the goal of value creation and growth in business organization across national borders"</i>
McDougall and Oviatt (2000)	<i>"a combination of innovative, proactive, and risk-seeking behavior that crosses or is compared across national borders and is intended to create value in business organizations"</i>
McDougall and Oviatt (2003)	<i>"the discovery, enactment, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities—across national borders—to create future goods and services"</i>

Organizational networking is a rapidly growing field, achieving a prominent position with stocks of ideas and broad coverage of topics in the pertinent literature (Kilduff and Brass, 2010). Nonetheless, the core tenets of organizational network research comprise four important aspects: (i) *social relations*, referring to the sets of actors and their connections in each other (Freeman, 2004); (ii) *embeddedness*, implying to the extent how actors exchange ideas among other members in the network (Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1996), (iii) *structural patterning*, indicating how dyadic relationships evolve depending upon the complex levels of connectivity and clustering (Wellman and Berkowitz, 1988), and (iv) *utility of network connections*,

elaborating how social network relationships provide beneficial outcomes to both parties (Burt, 1992).

The underlying consideration in network theory is to maximize firm performance by the aid of relationships among different parties in the environment which firm operates (Granovetter, 1973; Thorelli, 1986). Ford et al. (2007) have emphasized a set of notions: (1) network approach requires organization to have a look at outside the company with an attempt to recognize encompassing network of other parties in which all businesses are involved; (2) it is indeed the place where a company find their customers, competitors, suppliers and other companies with which it makes collaborations; and (3) understanding the nature of networks is essential with an intent of achieving success in these marketplaces. The value of a company performance through relationships for an individual party is intrinsically determined by the position of this organization in that network (Johanson and Mattsson, 1985).

2.3. Networks and international entrepreneurship

Networks are effective instruments for an entrepreneur and can be defined as the total number of relationships that an entrepreneur maintain with others such as friends, relatives, or companions (Ellis, 2011; McDougall and Oviatt, 2003). It refers to “the sets of two or more connected exchange relationships” (Easton, 1992, p. 365). Further, several scholars elaborate its substantial role in making collaborations, building reputative connections, and reciprocal exchanges, setting grounds on communication and connecting unattached people or organizations together (Christopher and Cameron, 2007; Powell, 1990). Nevertheless, it has long been discussed among sociologists and anthropologists that economic behavior was strongly embedded in social relationships in premarket communities and dates to the historical and structural embeddedness of economic behavior in the pertinent literature (Beckert, 2003; Granovetter, 1985; Hagedoorn, 2006). Furthermore, a broad spectrum of previous work has highlighted how embeddedness and network structures are influential on economic actions and financial performance of organizations (Uzzi, 1996; Uzzi and Lanchester, 2004).

An important insight into the network and international entrepreneurship backgrounds is that social ties act as an intermediary role in spreading information with an aim of exploiting from new foreign market opportunities, eliminating knowledge barriers and thereby facilitating successful operations in foreign markets (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986; Granovetter, 1973). The tendency of opportunity recognition in foreign markets is ruled by the access and excess of organization’s existing ties with other parties (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986). Further, the pertinent literature acknowledges the idea of how entrepreneurs learn about international opportunities, gain access to foreign markets, and develop competitive advantages

by means of their accumulation of international knowledge through their existing ties with other parties (Chandra et al, 2012; Crick and Spence, 2005; Sharma and Blomstermo, 2003).

An accumulated body of knowledge on networks within the area of international entrepreneurship concentrated on network ties from different approaches, considering diverse facets of network relationships in the pertinent literature (Kontinen and Ojala, 2011a). On the one side, scholarly attention has been paid to examine the different types of network ties, which have been grouped under three categories: (a) *formal ties*, referring to a current tie between company and its stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, competitors, business partners, distributors and other stakeholders; (b) *informal ties*, implying to an existing tie which are embedded within social relationships such as friends, family, colleagues, employees, and other acquaintances and; (c) *intermediary ties*, meaning to the relationships with third parties such as government agencies, R&D centers, chambers of commerce, NGOs, development centers, business incubators, and universities (Coviello, 2006; Oparaocha, 2015; Oviatt and McDougall, 2005).

On the other side, various scholars have adopted the notion that the structure of networks involves different characteristics and differs regarding to these characteristics such as network size, network density, and network strength, all which influences the behaviors of network actors (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1974; Wassermann and Faust, 1994). In that vein, *network size*, referring to the number of direct ties embedded with other actors in a network, helps determining for the accuracy and credibility of the knowledge received (Patzelt et al., 2011; Schmidt and Calantone, 2002). Further, *network density*, meaning to the extent to which network members have interconnectivity, increases the flow of information among the network actors (Coleman, 1988; Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1974). Also, *network strength*, which imply to an existing tie among the members in terms of its power such as weak or strong relationships, results in higher or lesser motivation to share richer information and discuss the important insights with other actors in a network depending on a degree of relationship bonds (Brüderl and Preisendörfer, 1998; Granovetter, 1983; Mehra et al., 2006). However, it should be noted that network types and characteristics provide two complementary perspectives via examining the size, density, and strength of different types of networks within a small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firm (e.g., Cannone and Ughetto, 2014; Perksa and Hughes, 2008).

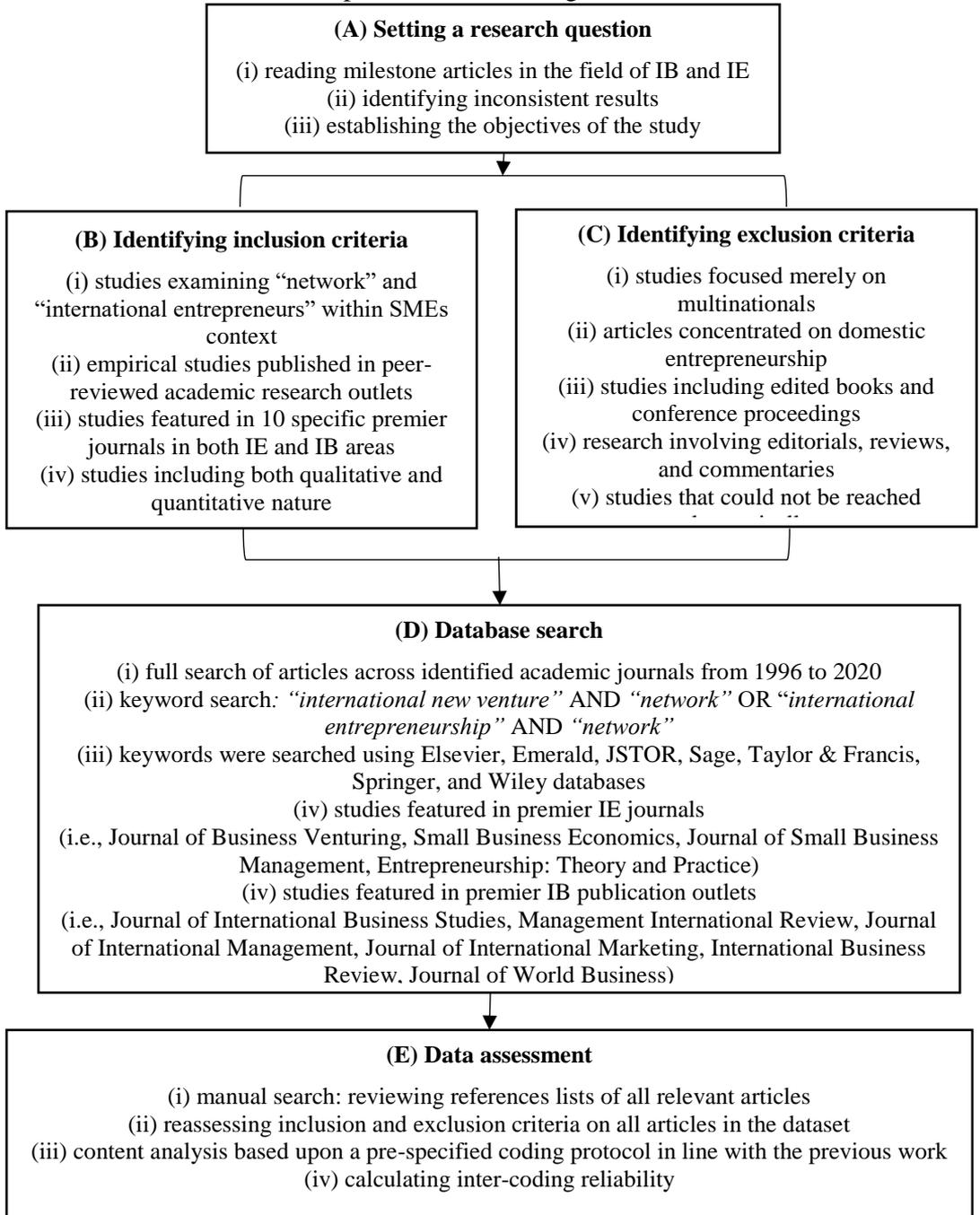
Nevertheless, another stream of research has approached to *network resources* and *network capabilities* as an asset and coordinating activities embedded in processes within a firm, respectively (Vesalainen and Hakala, 2014). While the former is directly akin to the social capital phenomenon of Coleman (1988) (Gulati, 2007), referring to a crucial firm-level network resource, the latter implies to the

ability to develop, manage, and take advantage of these relationships, which undertakes prominent roles in building competitive advantage over rivals (Capaldo and Petruzzelli, 2011; Håkansson, 1987). In that vein, a wealth of scholars has benefited from network theory with an intent of investigating exploitative and explorative activities in foreign markets within the context of international entrepreneurship, as networks assist entrepreneurs capture opportunities, gain credibility, and drive collaborative partnerships (McDougall and Oviatt, 2003).

3. Research method

The present research focuses on published work examining network perspective on the international entrepreneurship within the context of small and medium sized firms. Further, this research involves the empirical studies published in English and between 1996 and 2020, consisting of all research conducted on the related field of subject in extant literature. In the light of these considerations, the inclusion criteria covers: (a) studies investigating network perspective of international entrepreneurs within SMEs context; (b) empirical studies published in peer-reviewed academic research outlets; (c) studies featured in 10 specific journals that are predominantly considered as premier journals in their respective fields (international business and international entrepreneurship); and (d) studies designed with both qualitative and quantitative nature and conducted through either primary or secondary data. In this sense, all steps in the research design of the present study are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Steps of Research Design



This search identified relevant titles and abstracts from the Elsevier, Emerald, JSTOR, Sage, Taylor & Francis, Springer and Wiley search engines. Books, book chapters, reports and conference proceedings were excluded due to the variability in peer review processes and more restricted availability. In contrast, journal articles are selected as validated knowledge (Podsakoff et al., 2005). To select articles to be reviewed, a number of keywords in line with the focus on international entrepreneurship under the context of SMEs and network theory were used. The list of the keywords consists of “*international new venture*” and “*international entrepreneurship*” in combination with the search term of “*network*”. In addition, the references list of the articles was reviewed by the help of manual search with an intent of ensuring that all relevant published work was included in the total dataset.

The final list includes 112 empirical research studies, appeared in 10 different journals in line with the inclusion criteria of the present research, gathered through the determination of specific journals and consolidation of two main research fields; those are “International Business (IB)” and “International Entrepreneurship (IE)”. While the former includes six top international business journals that are known as leading in their respective fields based upon the work of Griffith et al. (2008), the latter comprises four top-tier entrepreneurship outlets regarding the framework of Katz and Boal (2002) (see Appendix).

With the aim of conducting a systematic literature review and setting the trends on small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms, the relevant articles were divided into two decades which is in line with previous work in the field of international marketing (e.g., Kahiya, 2018; Leonidou and Katsikeas, 2010). In that vein, this review reveals that there is no equal distribution of articles by time-period, since 36.6% of the articles were published between the years of 1996-2010 and over than 60% were appeared during the years of 2010-2020. Also, the distribution of the articles across various journals has a skewed pattern, as 73.2% of them appeared in IB journals, while 26.8% appeared in entrepreneurship journals. IBR published the most IE articles from the perspective of network theory and within the context of SMEs with the number of 32, followed by JWB (20), MIR (12) and JIBS (11). In addition, a vast majority of the articles (i.e., 71.4%) were published in the last decade (see Appendix).

In that vein, all eligible articles were content analyzed with an aim of making the analysis in an accurate manner (Leonidou and Katsikeas, 2010). In line with the content analysis, a pre-specified coding protocol was designed based upon the works of Tan and Sousa (2011) and Zou and Stan (1998). After following the phases of open and axial coding (e.g., Strauss and Corbin, 1998), the framework of coding categories involved three groups: (1) research design, comprising country/region of the study and the unit of analysis, sample size, data collection method, and analytical approach; (2) empirical issues, dealing with the conceptual approaches

to network perspectives within the specific field of subject (i.e., network characteristics, network types, and networks as resources and capabilities); (3) emergent research themes, focusing on the scholarly stimulated most research interest in the related topic (i.e., external/internal determinants of IE, internationalization, international opportunity recognition, strategic aspects of IE, performance implications of IE, foreign market entry mode, and multifaceted issues).

Besides, the coding process was performed by two independent coders who have enough competence on the related subject. After the coders completed the process, working separately from each other, the knowledge extracted from the coding protocol was subsequently compared with an aim of solving the disagreements among the scholars. Consequently, inter-coder reliability revealed a satisfactory result with a high degree of consensus between two independent coders, varying from 95% to 100% (Kassarjian, 1977).

4. Findings

This section presents the results of the study aligned with the research questions set in the present study. Further, the distribution of the time-period is also provided with an intent to follow scholarly trends on the specific field of subject over time.

4.1. Research design

Regarding the countries involved, the characteristics of research context unveil that a large amount of the publications (66.1%) collected data from solely one country, which stands for both time frames in the present study. Besides, 10.7% of the studies employed a multi-country perspective with a small portion of articles examining cross-cultural comparisons (e.g., Chung and Tung, 2013), while remaining percentage of the publications (16.0%) do not concentrate on any countries due to the studies' conceptual and theoretical natures (Table 2).

Table 2
Research Design

Research design	<u>Total</u> (n=112) (%)	<u>1996-2009</u> (n=32) (%)	<u>2010-2020</u> (n=80) (%)
<i>Countries involved</i>			
One	66.1	18.8	47.3
Two	7.1	-	7.1
Three or more	10.7	3.6	7.1
None	16.0	6.3	9.8
<i>Region</i>			
Europe	87.5	18.8	68.8
Asia	16.1	4.5	11.6
North America	10.7	0.9	9.8
Africa	31.3	-	31.3
Pacific	22.3	7.1	15.2
Latin America	15.2	0.9	14.3
Middle East	1.8	-	1.8
<i>Methodology</i>			
Qualitative	37.5	10.7	26.8
Conceptual	13.4	6.3	7.1
Quantitative	39.3	9.8	29.5
Mixed	6.3	1.8	4.5
Other	3.6	-	3.6
<i>Sample size</i>			
99 or less	38.4	11.6	26.8
100-249	24.1	5.4	18.8
250-499	9.8	2.7	7.1
500 or more	11.6	2.7	8.9
<i>Unit of analysis</i>			
Firm	71.4	18.7	52.7
Entrepreneur	9.8	2.6	7.1
Other	8.0	3.6	7.1
Nonempirical	10.7	3.6	4.5
<i>Data collection method</i>			
Survey	42.9	9.8	33.0
Interview	29.5	15.2	14.3
Second-hand data	25.0	1.8	23.2
Experiment	0.9	-	0.9
<i>Analytical approach</i>			
Structural equation modeling	9.8	1.8	8.0
Regression	29.5	5.4	24.1
Content analysis	40.2	12.5	27.7
Other	8.9	5.4	3.6

In respect of geographical dispersion, Europe (87.5%) appears to be the most frequently investigated region in line of the research, followed by Africa (31.3%), and Pacific (22.3%). On the other hand, Middle East (1.8%) has received the least scholarly attention in both two frames in this research settings. In addition, last decade (i.e., between the years of 2010 and 2020) has recognized the increased tendency towards the examination of African (e.g., Sub-Saharan African), Latin American (e.g., Brazil, Mexico), and Pacific (e.g., Australia, New Zealand) countries, respectively. However, an exponential growth in African region cannot be generalized across the studies, since it is the result of the investigation based upon 33 Sub-Saharan African countries in one study fieldwork (e.g., Tajeddin and Carney, 2019).

In terms of methodological design, while 39.3% of the articles adopted quantitative research design with an aim of explaining the variables with statistical results, 37.5% of the studies employed qualitative inquiries with an intent to explore the concepts and issues in the respected field of study, probably because of the infant nature of the intellectual knowledge on international entrepreneurship through the perspective of networks. This dominance remained in the recent decade; however, increasing the number of studies adopted a mixed method approach with the support of quantitative techniques.

The sample sizes adopted in all publications range between 1 and 40,000, with a mean of approximately 1085, and a median point of 110. More than one-third of the articles (38.4%) embarked on sample sizes lesser than 99 units, while relatively little work (9.8%) employed sample sizes ranging from 250 to 499. This unfolds the fact that a considerable amount of the articles examining the settings in the present study has qualitative nature, which emphasizes the meanings and descriptions rather than counts and measures in quantitative studies, demanding relatively small number of observations (Lune and Berg, 2017).

In terms of unit of analysis, almost three-quarters (71.4%) of the articles had their unit of analysis as firm, while 9.8% of them dealt with entrepreneurs as their unit of analysis. On the other hand, a slight number of papers concentrated on others such as export venture, strategic business units, networks, and senior management perspectives in their studies.

Almost half of the studies (42.9%) gathered data through survey with an incremental increase in the exploitation of survey over time. The main premise of the extensive usage of surveys is relied upon several factors such as being less costly, more convenient, and improving the effectiveness of data collection process (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Further, in-depth and face to face interviews (29.5%) provided the second most popular data collection approach, as it allows researchers to develop unexplored theoretical perspectives and reveal new insights (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Nevertheless, there exists a growing inclination in the usage of

second-hand data (e.g., company financial statements, internal company records, and environmental reports) from 1.8% between the years of 1996-2009 to 23.2% between the years of 2010-2020.

Empirical studies exploited from a wide variety of statistical tools to examine the data gathered. More than two-fifths of the articles (40.2%) employed content analysis as their primary analytical technique, which is underlined due to the qualitative research designs of the reviewed articles. Content analysis was followed by regression (29.5%), structural equation modeling (9.8%) and other (8.9%), which involves cluster analysis, analysis of variance, multivariate analysis of variance, and independent t-tests. In addition, there appears a fast-growing tendency towards the usage of regression analysis in the last decade with the increased effect of second-hand data collection methods.

4.2. Empirical assessment

Empirical issues were analyzed based upon two main premises in this review study: (a) conceptual approaches to networks in international entrepreneurship, and (b) emergent thematic areas that reflects the most stimulated research interests within the specific field of subject over time.

4.2.1. Conceptual approaches to networks in international entrepreneurship

Setting grounds on previous works, the results of this review study demonstrate that network types have received the most scholarly interest in the pertinent literature, which is followed by informal networks (38.3%), and intermediary networks (15.1%), all of which indicating a growing tendency throughout time (see Table 3). In this sense, formal networks (69.6%) is the most frequently examined network types, indicating that a vast majority of the scholars investigate the network relationships between the firm and its business partners such as suppliers, customers, and competitors (e.g., Ojala, 2015). For example, formal networks are considered as the most essential ties in identifying the opportunities in international markets for family SMEs (Kontinen and Ojala, 2011a). Also, small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms operating internationally exploit from formal ties (i.e., customers, business partners) in an attempt to diminish the effects of psychic distance when entering into new international markets (Ojala, 2015). On the other hand, only a few studies focused on intermediary networks within the context of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms operating internationally (e.g., Oparaocha, 2015). For instance, industry group membership established in home country context significantly influences international performance of small and medium-sized

entrepreneurial firms operating internationally (Prashantham and Birkinshaw, 2015).

Apart from the findings akin to network types, some scholars have concentrated on network characteristics (i.e., network density, size, and strength) within the context of international entrepreneurship research. In line with the research on network characteristics, network density (12.5%) has received the highest attention from scholars in the extant literature, which is pursued identically by network size (11.6%) and network strength (11.6). In a parallel vein, pertinent literature reveals contradictory and inconsistent findings related to the characteristics of networks on the related field of subject (e.g., Musteen et al., 2013; Perks and Hughes, 2008; Prijcker et al., 2012). For instance, Musteen et al. (2013) have supported the positive and significant impacts of diverse and strong network ties on acquiring knowledge and improving performance in international markets, whereas knowledge gathered through foreign network range and foreign network intensity does not have an influential role in enhancing international activities of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms (Prijcker et al., 2012). Besides, the strength of network ties constitutes a crucial place in affecting entrepreneurial decision-making process when entering new international markets (Perks and Hughes, 2008).

Furthermore, the remaining studies examined the network concept with respect to its role as an asset or activity within a firm (e.g., Gabriellsson et al., 2014; Presutti et al., 2007; Sigfusson and Harris, 2013). Along with this line of research, most of the scholars addressed to the networks as firm assets/resources and examined social capital (7.1%), demonstrating the prominent place of acquiring knowledge through network resources with an intent to identify opportunities in foreign markets and enhance international performance (e.g., Nowiński and Rialp, 2015). Nonetheless, a small portion of studies (2.6%) has examined the networks as capabilities that are considered as embedded coordinating activities within a firm (Vesalainen and Hakala, 2014). For instance, international networking capability has a substantial impact on each phases of internationalization process, because the managers necessitate to have contacts from governmental institutions or community group members in foreign markets with an intent to increase the pace of internationalization (e.g., Cheng and Lin, 2009; Sigfusson and Harris, 2013).

Table 3
 Conceptual Approaches to Networks in International Entrepreneurship

Conceptual approaches to networks	Total (n=112) (%)	1996-2009 (n=32) (%)	2010-2020 (n=80) (%)
<i>Network types</i>			
Formal networks	69.6	23.2	46.4
Informal networks	38.3	13.3	25.0
Intermediary networks	15.1	4.4	10.7
<i>Network characteristics</i>			
Network density	12.5	26.7	8.9
Network size	11.6	2.6	8.9
Network strength	11.6	3.5	8.0
<i>Network assets/activities</i>			
International networking orientation	6.2	0.8	5.3
International networking capability	2.6	-	2.6
Social capital	7.1	2.6	4.5

4.2.2. Emergent thematic areas

Table 4 presents an outlook of the main research streams emerged in the pertinent literature examining network perspective on the international entrepreneurship within the context of small and medium sized firms. Depending upon the open and axial coding of content analysis, identified research groups were classified into eight distinct categories, which are (1) external/internal determinants of international entrepreneurship, (2) performance implications of international entrepreneurship, (3) entrepreneurial networks and internationalization, (4) entrepreneurial networks and knowledge acquisition, (5) entrepreneurial networks and foreign market entry modes, (6) networks and entrepreneurial opportunities, (7) strategic aspects of international entrepreneurship, and (8) multifaceted issues. In this sense, while entrepreneurial networks and internationalization has received the greatest scholarly interest (37.5%), strategic aspects of international entrepreneurship (11.6%) were assigned to a less significant amount of previous accumulated body of knowledge on international entrepreneurship from the network perspective.

The bulk of prior research has investigated the *external/internal determinants of international entrepreneurship* (22.3%), encompassing relational, organizational, managerial and institutional drivers that stimulate the international

entrepreneurial activities in small and medium-sized firms which embody different network relationships with formal, informal, and intermediary actors. Organizational drivers of international entrepreneurship constitute a considerable portion of the articles (8.0%), covering various firm-level determinants of international entrepreneurship such as asset specificity (e.g., Maekelburger et al., 2012), inward and outward internationalization orientation (e.g., Zhou et al., 2007), organizational learning (e.g., Johanson and Vahlne, 2009), firm size (e.g., Chung and Tung, 2013), and firm-level strategies and competencies (e.g. Ibeh, 2003; Kacker, 2015). In the same manner, research on relational drivers of international entrepreneurship includes 8.0% of the articles and fundamentally concentrated on previous contacts consisting of both informal and formal networks (e.g., Chandra and Coviello, 2010; Ibeh, 2003), and relational trust (e.g., Freeman et al., 2010; Johanson and Vahlne, 2009). In general, early internationalizing and smaller firms endeavors to build relational trust accessed through partners with an attempt to enhance inter-firm relationships and strengthen their network position in international markets (Freeman et al., 2010).

On the other hand, managerial drivers of international entrepreneurship have a crucial influence in fostering international entrepreneurial activities within the firm, as reported in 5.4% of the articles in the extant literature. In this vein, research on managerial determinants mainly focused on international business experience, as international experience of top management team helps firms to enhance network relationships and attain a competitive advantage in foreign marketplaces (Freeman and Cavusgil, 2007; Oviatt and McDougal, 2005). Furthermore, a small number of studies have investigated how environmental drivers (i.e., economic, cultural, political/legal, and competitive) encourage small and medium-sized firms to build network relationships in international markets (0.9%), since the degree of environmental divergence between home and host countries increase the likelihood of developing networks with an intent to reduce business uncertainties in foreign markets (Zhao and Hsu, 2007). However, Chung and Tung (2013) revealed that legal and competitive environment had influential effect on developed countries in pursuing social networks in opposition to developing regions of the world.

Issues pertaining to *performance implications of international entrepreneurship* were emerged as another prominent research cluster (16.1%), particularly distinguished in the last decade. Within the context of this theme, reviewed articles concentrate on performance implications of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms operating internationally, mostly capturing three facets of performance: (a) firm performance, (b) international performance, and (c) innovative performance. Since prior research put a notable emphasis on how home and host country network ties help entrepreneurial firms to expand their international operations (Coviello, 2006; Jones et al., 2011), the preponderance of

the studies has investigated the effects of network ties on international performance of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms operating internationally (13.4%). International performance is a multifaceted construct which helps to measure international operations and international success of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms by the help of both objective and subjective indicators (Jantunen et al., 2005). In this sense, some studies found a strong and positive association between network relationships and international performance (e.g., Filatotchev et al., 2009), whereas others reported no support for the link between network relationships and international performance (e.g., Gerschewski et al., 2015). Furthermore, some researchers have concentrated on network concept as a mediator/moderator in the assessment of performance implications within the context of international entrepreneurship (e.g., Zhou et al., 2010). Besides, most of the scholars demonstrated that different types of network relationships have diverse impacts on international performance, indicating specifically the favorable effects of intermediary network ties (i.e., industry group membership) on international performance (e.g., Prashantham and Birkinshaw, 2015). On the other side, a few articles examined the effect of network ties on innovative performance (e.g., Tan et al., 2013), constituting 1.8% of the articles, whereas another small number of articles (0.9%) focused on firm performance as a performance implication of international entrepreneurship (e.g., Zhou et al., 2007).

In relation with *entrepreneurial networks and internationalization*, international entrepreneurship research has long recognized that network relationships enable knowledge accumulation and resource development, which results in exploiting new market opportunities and enhancing internationalization process, particularly for entrepreneurs (Harris and Wheeler, 2005). In that vein, a wealth number of the reviewed articles (37.5%) examined the consecutive impacts of network relationships embedded within entrepreneurial firms on both internationalization patterns (26.8%) and the pace of internationalization process (10.7%). Regarding the former, all empirical studies unveiled the importance of network relationships which enable international new ventures various opportunities such as providing market access, financing, distribution channels, all of which significantly contributes to the internationalization patterns in terms of stages and time of internationalization (Coviello, 2006). For instance, Musteen et al. (2010) indicated that informal ties are negatively associated with the stage of internationalization, which implies that firms depending upon principally personal ties rather than business or industrial demonstrate an ineffective performance in the initial stages of internationalization. However, a large variety of the studies put a special emphasis on network relationships as a main determinant of early internationalization (e.g., Cannone and Ughetto, 2014). With respect to the latter, a large majority of the studies uncovered the crucial impact of network relationships

on rapid internationalization, since entrepreneurs pursuing international connections have a chance to know what kind of information are necessary in specific foreign markets, which in turn accelerates the pace of internationalization (e.g., Bangara et al., 2012).

With respect to *entrepreneurial networks and knowledge acquisition*, a small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firm exploit from both intra- and inter-organizational network ties in creating a learning hub for the focal firm and establishing firm's knowledge foundation through information exchange structures across network ties (Dyer and Singh, 1998; Yli-Renko et al., 2002). In this sense, a great scholarly interest has been devoted to examining the effect of entrepreneurial networks on knowledge development and acquisition (11.6%) (e.g., Freeman et al., 2012; Presutti et al., 2007). Specifically, Fletcher and Harris (2012) have emphasized both roles of formal and informal network ties in developing market and technological knowledge, whereas internationalization knowledge is derived from intermediary network relationships. However, empirical evidence demonstrates differences depending on the network characteristics (i.e., network density, network strength, and network size), revealing positive relationships with the effect of network size and strength and negative signs with network density (e.g., Musteen et al., 2014). On the other hand, despite the little attention on leveraging learning utilization (3.6%), some scholars unpacked the profound impacts of entrepreneurial networks on utilization of learning via gathering information about host country environment and mitigating the effect of liability of foreignness (e.g., Stoyanov et al., 2018; Yli-Renko et al., 2002).

In terms of *entrepreneurial networks and foreign market entry modes* (12.5%), a rich body of knowledge was interested in examining how small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms employ network relationships with an intent to exploit knowledge and make foreign market entry decisions in the pertinent literature (Laufs and Schwens, 2014; Zain and Ng, 2006). In this sense, this theme aggregates reviewed articles concentrating on the direct and contingency roles of networks in the choice of foreign market entry modes. A great majority of the studies was concentrated on investigating the effect of networks in the choice of foreign market entry modes (9.8%), indicating positive impacts of social network connections on acquiring resources and resorting to a foreign direct investment mode (e.g., Ellis, 2000). In particular, empirical evidence put special emphasis on specific knowledge stemmed from immigrants, since it helps to reduce entry barriers and costs via promoting smaller entrepreneurial firms to engage in foreign market entry modes associating with higher risks and resources (e.g., Chung and Tung, 2013). On the other side, some scholars investigated the contingency role of networks in influencing foreign market entry decisions (2.7%). For instance, Maekelburger et al. (2012) have revealed that host country network ties help small

and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms in mitigating the effect of asset specificity on the selection of an equity foreign market entry mode.

Networks and entrepreneurial opportunities were one of the most dominant field of research, constituting 17.0 percent of the reviewed articles in the extant literature. In relation with this theme, networks and their connection with two important aspects of opportunity-based view are elaborated: (i) exploration/exploitation of opportunities, and (ii) international opportunity recognition. Depending upon the opportunity-based perspective, an accumulated body of knowledge on international entrepreneurship research has evolved through three phases of opportunity research in terms of recognition, development, and exploitation, respectively (Mainela et al. 2014; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). In this sense, it must be acknowledged that opportunity recognition covers merely the initial phase that aims to identify and possess idiosyncratic information regardless of its actual evaluation and feasibility (Kontinen and Ojala, 2011b), while opportunity exploitation deals with activities that target economic outcomes from these identified entrepreneurial opportunities (Foss et al., 2013; Zahra et al., 2005). In a parallel vein, prior work highlights the critical importance of information in opportunity recognition, which entrepreneurs get access through network contacts (Ozgen and Baron, 2007; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). In this context, a large extent of studies put central focus on examining the effects of networks in attaining international opportunity recognition (14.3%). This bulk of research reveals diverse findings with regard to the types of networks (i.e., formal, informal, and intermediary networks) and study contexts (i.e., cultural, economic, and institutional settings) (e.g., Casillas et al., 2010; Ellis, 2011; Kontinen and Ojala, 2011a). For example, intermediary network connections were emphasized as more prominent than others in international opportunity recognition in the pertinent literature (e.g., Kontinen and Ojala, 2011b; Kwon and Arenius, 2010). Furthermore, a few studies have concentrated on exploring the network's effect in the exploitation of opportunities (2.7%) via investigating how small and medium-sized new ventures put actual effort to understand its value for further business (e.g., Dimitratos et al., 2010; Nordman and Melen, 2008).

Research on *strategic aspects of international entrepreneurship* was the least investigated topic within the specific field of subject in the extant literature (11.6%). In this regard, a few numbers of studies concentrated on two substantial strategic aspects of international entrepreneurship: (i) strategic orientation, and (ii) strategic decision-making process. First, relevant studies reflected this by examining how networks play a profound role in shaping strategic orientation within a small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firm via concentrating on various strategic orientations such as export orientation (e.g., Filatotchev et al., 2009), entrepreneurial orientation (e.g., Dimitratos et al., 2010, Ibeh, 2003), first mover

orientation (e.g., Tuppara et al., 2008), international growth orientation (e.g., Tuppara et al., 2008). On the other hand, this stream of research draws more attention on investigating how network relationships help small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firm's decision-making process in terms of developing new marketing strategies (e.g., Harris and Wheeler, 2005), planning and formulating strategies for internationalization (e.g., Crick and Spence, 2005), international market selection and development (e.g., Crick et al., 2001; Dimitratos et al., 2012), investment decisions (e.g., Prijcker et al., 2012), making entrepreneurial decisions (e.g., Elston and Weidinger, 2019).

Multifaceted topics constituted 25.0 percent of the reviewed articles with diverse research directions in the pertinent literature. The first was resource acquisition (7.1%), in which the concentration was on how networks influence small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms in accessing to various resources such as internal and external resources (i.e., physical, human, reputational, organizational, technical, financial, and knowledge-based resources) (e.g., Deligianni et al., 2014; Semrau and Werner, 2014). The second field comprised the studies examining the effect of networks on mitigating the negativity of psychic, cultural and geographical distances in international operations (e.g., Ellis, 2011). Further, some scholars focused on the role of networks in developing firm capabilities (e.g., Glavas and Mathews, 2014), leveraging assets of foreignness (e.g., Bangara et al., 2012), exploring the dark side of international entrepreneurship (e.g., Fischer and Reuber, 2003), and understanding the dynamics of institutional environment (e.g., Liesch et al., 2011).

Table 4
Emergent Research Themes

Research themes	Total (n=112) (%)	1996-2009 (n=32) (%)	2010-2020 (n=80) (%)
<i>External/internal determinants of international entrepreneurship</i>	22.3	8.9	13.4
Relational drivers of IE	8.0	3.5	4.5
Managerial drivers of IE	5.4	2.6	2.7
Organizational drivers of IE	8.0	2.6	5.4
Environmental drivers of IE	0.9	-	0.9
<i>Performance implications of international entrepreneurship</i>	16.1	3.5	12.5
Firm performance	0.9	0.8	-
International performance	13.4	2.6	10.7
Innovative performance	1.8	-	1.8
<i>Entrepreneurial networks and internationalization</i>	37.5	10.7	26.8
	26.8	7.1	19.6

Networks and internationalization pattern	10.7	3.6	7.1
Pace of internationalization process	15.2	5.4	9.8
<i>Entrepreneurial networks and knowledge acquisition</i>	11.6	3.6	8.0
Knowledge development and acquisition	3.6	1.8	1.8
Leveraging learning utilization	12.5	1.8	10.7
<i>Entrepreneurial networks and foreign market entry modes</i>	9.8	1.8	8.0
Networks' impacts in the choice of foreign market entry mode	2.7	-	2.7
Contingency role of networks as influencing foreign market entry modes	17.0	5.4	11.6
	2.7	-	2.7
<i>Networks and entrepreneurial opportunities</i>	14.3	5.4	8.9
Exploration/exploitation of opportunities	11.6	5.4	6.3
International opportunity recognition	4.5	2.7	1.8
	7.1	2.7	4.5
<i>Strategic aspects of international entrepreneurship</i>	25.0	7.1	17.9
Networks and strategic orientations	3.6	-	3.6
Entrepreneurial decision-making process	7.1	3.6	3.6
	3.6	-	3.6
<i>Multifaceted topics</i>	1.8	-	1.8
Bridging the distance dimensions (psychic, cultural, and geographic)	1.8	1.8	-
Resource acquisition	1.8	-	1.8
Developing firm capabilities	1.8	-	1.8
Leveraging the assets of foreignness	3.6	1.8	1.8
Dark side of networks in international entrepreneurship			
Virtual networks			
Understanding the dynamics of institutional environment			
Others			

5. Conclusions and future research directions

Since a wide spectrum of current research has been devoted to international entrepreneurship in the last two decades, this study has endeavored to review all relevant articles focused on a network perspective of international entrepreneurship within the context of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms operating internationally. Despite the rich body of knowledge on the specific field of subject, it can be concluded that this research is still at an early stage of development and far from maturity, revealing various inconclusive and contradictory empirical evidence presented in this review and acknowledging the importance of more scholarly attention to advance the current research streams via offering relevant future avenues. In the light of these considerations, this review reports eight distinct emergent research topics within international entrepreneurship from the perspective of network and presents rewarding insights about the conversation among the community itself. Moreover, further research questions were derived from the sections related to the future research opportunities in publications reviewed in this study. In this regard, it unpacks various further research directions concerning to the theoretical evolution of each research clique revealed in the current study (see Table 5 and Table 6).

In relation with “*external/internal determinants of international entrepreneurship*”, this stream of research draws great scholarly attention to examine some internal (i.e., organizational) and external (i.e., relational) drivers of international entrepreneurship in the extant literature (e.g., Chandra and Coviello, 2010; Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Kacker et al., 2016). Therefore, this research theme might be expanded to investigate how cultural value orientations at individual level affect the assessment of networks’ impact in international entrepreneurship, as internal knowledge and orientations exert crucial influences on entrepreneur’s behaviors and opportunity identification process (Shu et al., 2018). In this regard, other environmental drivers can be considered in examining the networks’ effects in international entrepreneurship such as host country regulatory barriers, environmental turbulence, and foreign market structure. Also, more research should be concentrated on investigating the role of internet and digital capabilities in developing network contacts and exploiting from new opportunities, because prior work has emphasized the usage of internet technologies with an attempt not only to improve information exchange and knowledge creation, but also to develop and maintain international network ties (Glavas and Mathews, 2014).

In the case of “*performance implications of international entrepreneurship*”, there exist various promising research fields that could expand the intellectual structure and evolution of the international entrepreneurship research as further research directions. First, scholars could produce more research on exploring to

what extent small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms enhance export performance, which is defined as the total output of firm's actions in export marketplaces and measured with both financial (i.e., sales, profits, and market share), and nonfinancial indicators (i.e., satisfaction, experience etc.) (Cavusgil and Zou, 1994) by the help of network relationships, yet there is a scant research considering market, strategic, and financial aspects of export performance in the pertinent literature. Next, since networks serve as a governance mechanism that helps to manage relationships (Hoang and Antoncic, 2003), it could provide a fertile ground to investigate how home/host network characteristics (i.e., size, density, and strength) differently shape relationship performance, indicating how cooperative and coordinated activities both parties have with an intent to attain mutual targets in international markets (Palmatier, Dant, and Grewal, 2007). In addition, the research theme of "*entrepreneurial networks and internationalization*" has received the most scholarly interest in international entrepreneurship area in the last two decades, demonstrating a rich body of research on itself (Sedziniauskiene et al., 2019). Nevertheless, more studies could be focused on untouched areas in the internationalization field of subject such as investigating how network density has an influence on small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms' market exit decisions in international arenas. Further, researchers should put more emphasis on examining the effects of digitalization on the internationalization patterns of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms, as digitalization has dramatically shifted the rules of thumbs via allowing even pure services to be internationalized (e.g., mobile phone software, games) (Grönroos, 2016).

With respect to "*entrepreneurial networks and knowledge acquisition*", more studies could be focused on how different network types (i.e., formal, informal, and intermediary) affects knowledge creation of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms in emerging and developed markets, since emerging countries are distinguished from developed markets in several ways in terms of institutional environment weaknesses, which in turn leads entrepreneurial firms to develop network relationships with an intent to attaining strategic goals (Ciravegna, Lopez and Kundu, 2014). In respect to the stream of "*entrepreneurial networks and foreign market entry modes*", further research could pursue the neglected theoretical perspectives in exploring the effect of foreign market entry modes. For instance, it could be a fruitful area to concentrate on how network characteristics (i.e., strength) play a significant role in the conversion process of foreign market entry modes, as small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms identify and exploit the opportunities in international markets by the help of their network connections (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000).

Regarding the theme of "*networks and entrepreneurial opportunities*", researchers should put more emphasis on examining how various network types

play a role in the exploitation/exploration of international opportunities in foreign markets. Also, there is a void in the literature in relation with exploring the effects of networking resources/capabilities on identifying international opportunities in emerging markets which have been characterized with local institutional constraints (Child and Tsai, 2005). In addition, in case of another theme receiving least attention from scholars – “*strategic aspects of international entrepreneurship*” - further research should be inclined to examine various fruitful topics such as investigating how networks affect the marketing mix adaptation/standardization strategies of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms operating in foreign markets, because prior work has acknowledged the importance of learning that could stimulate making strategic modifications within a company through network contacts in international markets (Reinl and Kelliher, 2010). In terms of “*multifaceted topics*”, scholars could pursue neglected areas to concentrate on examining the effects of networks in international entrepreneurship. For instance, dark side effects of networks in international entrepreneurship research stands as a fruitful future research area (Sedzinauskiene et al., 2019). Also, it could be interesting to explore whether knowledge gathered through networks have a profound impact on shaping firm strategies related to environmental issues especially in developed countries which have been characterized with higher public concern and rigid environmental regulations (Zeriti et al., 2014).

Table 5
Potential Avenues for Future Research

Themes	<i>External/internal determinants of international entrepreneurship</i>	<i>Performance implications of international entrepreneurship</i>	<i>Entrepreneurial networks and internationalization</i>	<i>Entrepreneurial networks and knowledge acquisition</i>
Suggested research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do cultural values affect the evaluation of networks' impact in international entrepreneurship? • How could host country regulatory barriers influence network connections of international entrepreneurs? • What is the role of internet/digital capabilities in the development of network relationships? • What entrepreneurial characteristics of managers stimulate small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms to exploit new foreign market opportunities via network contacts? • How could experiential and organizational factors play role in pursuing network contacts? • What are the influences of foreign market structure and environmental turbulence on small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms' network ties? • What are the effects of relational drivers (e.g., trust, commitment) among partners in international entrepreneurship? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms enhance export performance by the help of network relationships? • How does networks affect to different performance dimensions (i.e., strategic, market, and financial) of entrepreneurial firms in international markets? • What could be the longitudinal effect of different types of network connections (e.g., formal, informal, or intermediary) in improving international performance? • How differently home/host network characteristics (i.e., size, density, and strength) shape relationship performance in international markets? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could network density have an influence on small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms' market exit decisions in international arenas? • How digitalization affects the internationalization patterns of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms? • What could be the difference of possessing home or host network connections in the internationalization process of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms? • Do different types of networks (e.g., formal, informal) change in the later stages of internationalization? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How formal/ informal/ intermediary networks affects knowledge creation of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms in emerging vs developed markets? • How do networking resources/capabilities have an influence on organizational learning process of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms?

Table 6
Potential Avenues for Future Research

Themes	<i>Entrepreneurial networks and foreign market entry modes</i>	<i>Networks and entrepreneurial opportunities</i>	<i>Strategic aspects of international entrepreneurship</i>	<i>Multifaceted topics</i>
Suggested research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which network types have more influential effect on the selection of foreign market entry modes? • What is the contingency role of networks on the relationship between standardization/adaptation strategies and foreign market entry choice of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms? • How network strength causes foreign market entry mode conversions over time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How various network types play a role in the exploitation-exploration of international opportunities in foreign markets? • What are the effects of networking resources/capabilities on the exploration-exploitation of international opportunities in emerging markets? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How networks affect the marketing mix adaptation/standardization strategies of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms operating in foreign markets? • Do network types have an influence on the international market segmentation decisions of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms? • How could network characteristics stimulate innovation decisions of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms in international markets? • What are the impacts of network types on different strategic orientations (e.g., learning orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and market orientation)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How network relationships affect small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms' environmental strategies in foreign markets? • What are the dark side effects of networks in international entrepreneurship research? • What is the role of network types in shaping the ethical behaviours of small and medium-sized entrepreneurial firms in international markets? • How network connections have an influence on the service transition decisions of entrepreneurial firms in international markets?

Appendix
Number of Journal Articles

Journal field and name	Subtotal	1996-2009	2010-2020
International business and area studies	82	25	57
<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	11	5	6
<i>Management International Review</i>	12	1	11
<i>Journal of International Management</i>	2	-	2
<i>Journal of International Marketing</i>	5	2	3
<i>International Business Review</i>	32	10	22
<i>Journal of World Business</i>	20	7	13
Entrepreneurship and small business management	30	7	23
<i>Journal of Business Venturing</i>	8	1	7
<i>Small Business Economics</i>	7	4	3
<i>Journal of Small Business Management</i>	8	-	8
<i>Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice</i>	7	2	5
Total	112	32	80

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Özet

Küçük ve orta büyüklükteki işletmeler bağlamında uluslararası girişimcilik kavramının ağ yaklaşımı açısından incelenmesi: Literatür araştırması ve geleceğe yönelik öneriler

Araştırmacılar ve yöneticiler arasında yükselen bir eğilime sahip olan uluslararası girişimcilik kavramına yönelik literatürde çok kapsamlı ancak birbirileri ile çelişen çok fazla sayıda araştırmaya rastlanmaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, bu çalışma ağ yaklaşımı açısından uluslararası girişimcilik kavramını inceleyen bütün ampirik çalışmaları, araştırmanın yöntemi, kavramsal yaklaşımlar ve ampirik konular açısından ele alarak, sistematik bir şekilde sentezlemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu kapsamda, bu çalışmada uluslararası girişimcilik üzerine 1996 ve 2020 yılları arasında yayınlanmış 112 araştırma makalesini analiz etmek için içerik analizi yöntemi benimsenmektedir. Çalışmanın bulguları, uluslararası girişimcilik kavramının ağ yaklaşımına yaptığı teorik katkıların görülebileceği sekiz gelişmekte olan araştırma konusu ortaya çıkmıştır. Ayrıca, bu çalışma küçük ve orta büyüklükteki uluslararası pazarlarda faaliyet gösteren girişimci firmalara geleceğe yönelik için önemli bilgiler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Uluslararası girişimcilik, Ağ yaklaşımı, Uluslararası yeni girişimler, KOBİ.