

Scaling impact abroad: An analysis and framework of competences for social enterprise internationalisation

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Scaling impact abroad: An analysis and framework of competences for social enterprise internationalisation

Vienna, July 2021

WU
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UNIVERSITY OF
ECONOMICS
AND BUSINESS

Enabling
**Social
Entrepreneurs**
Scale their
**Impact
Internationally**

About this study

This report was developed as part of the Erasmus+ project [“Enabling Social Entrepreneurs to Scale their Impact Internationally”](#) (ESESII) and received funding under grant agreement no. 2020-1-NL01-KA202-064745. “Enabling Social Entrepreneurs to Scale their Impact Internationally” is an international consortium project under lead of Euclid Network (NL) in collaboration with Social Impact Award (AUT), The Center for Small Enterprise Promotion and Training at University of Leipzig (GER), Synthesis Center for Research and Education (CYP) and Materahub (IT).

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Executive Summary

The last years have seen a rapid increase in the number of social enterprises across the world, introducing a broad range of innovations to different industries. Recent estimates suggest that globally, already between 12.6% and 29.6% of enterprises are started with a social, community or environmental goal as a primary organisational purpose (Bosma et al., 2016). These social enterprises combine dual social and economic objectives at their very core (Mair & Martí, 2006). They address diverse social and ecological problems and seek to provide innovative solutions to today's most pressing challenges – such as social exclusion, poverty, or food insecurity (Dacin et al., 2010). Despite their potential to tackle social problems on a global level, **many social enterprises do not scale beyond their reach beyond local markets**, often due to a lack of skills and competences for successful internationalisation (Desa & Koch, 2014). While prior research has provided helpful insights into the motives, processes and support mechanisms of social entrepreneurial internationalisation, the concrete individual and organisational competences required to undertake these processes have received little attention (Maritz & Brown, 2013).

Against this background, this report aims to address this gap and to contribute to a better understanding of social enterprise internationalisation by shedding light on the **challenges, competences, and potential competence** gaps that impede social entrepreneurs from scaling their impact across the borders of their home markets. The authors thereby seek to contribute to the budding academic debate about social entrepreneurship internationalisation as well as provide a framework for social entrepreneurs, vocational education and training providers (VET) and the social entrepreneurship ecosystem to better support such internationalisation endeavours.

This report is structured into four main parts. In the first section of this report, we provide an extensive **review of the existing literature** on social entrepreneurial internationalisation. Drawing on academic research, practitioner literature and European research project results, the first section of this report features a literature-based competence framework for internationalising social entrepreneurs.

In the second part of this study, we outline the results from a **quantitative analysis** of a unique dataset of 579 social entrepreneurs from Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia and Africa. The quantitative study was conducted with the objective of identifying specific support needs among internationalising social entrepreneurs. Moreover, the study compared internationalising social entrepreneurs and 1) non-internationalising social entrepreneurs as well as 2) internationalising commercial entrepreneurs. Further, we illustrate the nuances in support needs arising from different scaling strategies, as well

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as differences between groups (i.e. field of activity, prior knowledge and demographics, networks, and geography). The results provide first insights into unique skill gaps among internationalising social entrepreneurs, with particular needs for support in areas such as “building visibility and credibility” in the target country as well as its ecosystem, “feeling part of a larger community and network”, “finding and keeping good talent and staff” and “accessing new clients and beneficiaries”.

The third section of the report features **eight selected case vignettes on internationalising social enterprises** – namely those of Wiener Tafel, ColaLife, Bean Voyage, Plasticpreneur, discovering hands, atempo, Husk Power Systems and iziBac. Overall, our interview partners’ organisations are based in six countries and internationalised to target countries on five different continents. In the course of the qualitative interviews, our informants reflected on their journey to internationalisation, the challenges they faced throughout the process, and the competences that were critical for scaling. Our findings suggest that internationalising social entrepreneurs face a myriad of new questions associated with working in a different country, reaching from language, social and legal differences to explicit and implicit cultural differences.

Building on the previous sections, we lastly integrate our findings from both empirical studies with our previously designed literature framework. By building an **integrated competence framework for internationalising social entrepreneurs**, we show that competence needs for social entrepreneurs are manifold. More precisely, we identify 19 competences along the lines of seven areas: 1) international opportunity identification, 2) diagnostic and strategic competence, 3) financial and business management, 4) human resource management and leadership, 5) marketing and communication, 6) intercultural competence, and 7) network management and advocacy.

Taken together, these findings underline the **need to provide targeted support for internationalising social entrepreneurs**. Support provision needs to be tailored to the respective scaling strategy chosen by the entrepreneurs, as well as to the challenges that arise from the fact that they scale impact and not merely commercial operations. Building on the scientific insights derived from this report, this framework will serve as a basis for the design of vocational education and training curricula serving social entrepreneurs across Europe.

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1. Introduction

Peter Vandor, Magdalena Winkler, and Martin Mehrwald

1.1. INTERNATIONALISATION AMONG SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Social entrepreneurs address diverse social and ecological problems and seek to provide innovative solutions to today's most pressing challenges such as social exclusion, poverty, food insecurity, waste management (Dees, 2003, Dacin et al., 2010, Bradach, 2003). In doing so, they often lend elements of their business design from the commercial sector rather than the toolbox of traditional non-profits, e.g. by embracing different forms of market income, engaging in institutional flexibility with respect to the choice of legal forms and governance, and by combining instruments, tools and language from the sectors (Battilana et al., 2012).

Recent years have seen an **increase in the number of social enterprises** (SEs)¹ across the world, introducing a broad range of innovations to different industries (Bosma et al, 2016). In light of the many pressing challenges global society is facing and the limited availability of resources, time and attention to solve them, scaling of the most effective and efficient solutions is an ethical imperative (e.g. Lashitew et al., 2020). Or, as former US president Bill Clinton is popularly quoted (see Bradach, 2003, p.19):

“Nearly every problem has been solved by someone, somewhere. The frustration is that we can't seem to replicate [those solutions] anywhere else.”

In spite of this clear **need for internationalising innovative social enterprises**, the vast majority of social entrepreneurs operate only on a local scale. A 2016 survey of social entrepreneurs in the global Impact Hub Network, showed that only 5.7% of early-stage social entrepreneurs declared having been actively internationalising their work in the past year (Vandor & Leitner, unpublished). In the same survey published in 2015, only 17% of entrepreneurs affirmed they were attempting to scale their efforts; and that included scaling domestically (Vandor et al., 2015).

¹ In this report we use the term social enterprise to describe the organisational outcome of social entrepreneurial actions (Brouard & Larivet, 2010).

These small numbers of internationalisation and scaling efforts among social entrepreneurs can be attributed to a number of reasons. First of all, there are fewer monetary incentives for growth than in commercial entrepreneurship (Bloom & Smith, 2010). Moreover, in comparison to commercial enterprises, growth is not as strongly promoted through market demand or enforced by profit-oriented investors and governance (Austin, Stevenson, et al., 2006; Davies et al., 2019). Similarly, founders' motivations are often locally rooted, inhibiting scaling to different regions (Barendsen & Gardner, 2004; Zahra et al., 2009).

Social entrepreneurs who aim to scale nonetheless face a **variety of challenges**. Social ventures are often deeply locally embedded in complex and strongly regulated service systems (e.g. secondary education) and funding ecosystems (e.g. donations, philanthropy, B2C clients) which are organised along the bounds of federal or state-level administrative units. In contrast with many commercial markets, these systems are often less permeable for non-local actors (Ölberger et al., 2020, Yang & Wu, 2015), which provides another barrier to internationalisation. The broader ecosystem perspective shows that international support networks are disjointed and differences between countries' policy frameworks can hinder SE internationalisation (Richardson, 2020). Finally, current literature identifies a lack of skills and competences as well as templates about modes of internationalisation for social entrepreneurs (Desa & Koch, 2014; Richardson, 2020). In their study of social enterprises across Europe, Weber et al. (2015, p.53) find that the social enterprise landscape in Europe is rather heterogeneous and argue that "scaling across national borders is a major challenge for the social entrepreneurs of Europe and will remain so for the immediate future".

Against this background, this report aims to address this gap and to contribute to a better understanding of social enterprise internationalisation by shedding light on the **challenges, competences, and potential competence** gaps that impede social entrepreneurs from scaling their impact across the borders of their home markets. The authors thereby seek to contribute to the budding academic debate about social entrepreneurship internationalisation as well as provide a framework for social entrepreneurs, vocational education and training providers (VET) and the social entrepreneurship ecosystem to better support such internationalisation endeavours.

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTION AND STRUCTURE OF THE DOCUMENT

Prior research has provided helpful insights into motives, processes and support mechanisms of social entrepreneurial internationalisation (Richardson, 2020; Stephan and Folmer, 2017). Yet, the concrete individual and organisational competences required to undertake these processes have received little attention and are poorly understood (Maritz & Brown, 2013). Therefore, this report seeks to address the following research question:

What competences do social entrepreneurs need in order to successfully scale their impact internationally?

In order to shed light on this question, we will start by outlining the state-of-the-art in international social entrepreneurship research. First, we will provide an overview on extant literature on international entrepreneurship. Second, we will draw on current literature on international social entrepreneurship, specifically highlighting the drivers and challenges of social entrepreneurial internationalisation as well as common internationalisation strategies among social entrepreneurs. Lastly, we will establish a literature-based competence framework for social entrepreneurs aiming to scale their impact across borders. Overall, we have screened more than 150 academic and practitioner articles, including European project reports such as INTSENSE or EntreComp, while we integrated around 90 articles in our analysis.

The second part of our report will focus on two empirical studies with regard to social entrepreneurial internationalisation. In the first study, we conduct a quantitative analysis among social entrepreneurs in order to identify the most relevant competences and possible gaps. This analysis is based on a survey of 579 social entrepreneurs that have participated in the Global Impact Hub survey. The second study is a deeper exploration of the competences needed along the internationalisation journeys of social entrepreneurs and builds on the qualitative analysis of seven social enterprises.

Lastly, we will integrate our findings from the empirical studies with our literature framework. This final framework will serve as a basis for the design of vocational education and training curricula serving social entrepreneurs across Europe.

2. Theoretical Background

In this section we will present extant research on international entrepreneurship and international social entrepreneurship. Our warmest thanks go out to David Peña-Camacho, Jazmín Ponce-Gómez and Gunnar Kaßberg from the University of Leipzig for their contribution on international entrepreneurship, which is depicted in the following section.

2.1. INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

David Peña-Camacho, Jazmín Ponce-Gómez and Gunnar Kaßberg, University of Leipzig

The phenomenon of firms' internationalisation has been a source of research for the last decades. The rapid development of international commerce and the globalisation contributed to increasing the interest of academia in this topic. Before diving into depth to the internationalisation of social enterprises, it is crucial to have an **overview of the International Entrepreneurship (IE) research field** and the theories around it. IE emerged as a prominent research field derived from the study of internationalisation of new ventures (Baier-Fuentes, Merigó, Amorós, & Gaviria-Marín, 2019). As the term suggests, IE combines two focal areas of study: international business and entrepreneurship (Cuero Acosta, Adu-Gyamfi, Nabi, & Dornberger, 2017). These two streams of literature converge to give theoretical and methodological foundations to the IE phenomena (Patricia Phillips McDougall & Oviatt, 2000).

Some scholars stated that IE deals with issues such as the internationalisation of firms, international comparisons of entrepreneurship, comparisons between countries or cultures (Cuero Acosta et al., 2017); and places particular emphasis on the "human factor" rather than the "planning factor" (Wach & Wehrmann, 2014). Other scholars have analysed the existing literature in IE and have grouped and categorised it ontologically according to its characteristics and typology. Jones et al. (2011) identified three lines of thought in IE's study: **(A) entrepreneurial internationalisation**, **(B) international comparisons of entrepreneurship**, and **(C) comparative entrepreneurial internationalisation across countries**. Research grouped in type A includes topics that focus on entrepreneurship type, internationalisation, networks and social capital, organisational and entrepreneurial issues. This section reviews the theoretical underpinnings of

IE, particularly from the entrepreneurial internationalisation perspective, and examines its relation to the concepts such as the resource-based view.

The origins of the **international entrepreneurship** study field have been a subject of debate by different authors. According to Zucchella & Magnani (2016), this term was first mentioned by Morrow (1988), who highlighted the influence of cultural awareness and technological advances in opening foreign markets to new ventures. A year later, McDougall (1989), who is also considered to set the ground for IE research, made a comparison between new ventures in domestic and foreign markets and provided the first definition of international entrepreneurship as "the development of international new ventures or start-ups that, from their inception, engage in international business" (p.387). Nevertheless, some scholars argue that Oviatt & McDougall (1994) set the starting point in this field, proposing a definition of international new ventures (INV) as an organisation that pursues a competitive advantage using its resources and selling its outputs in diverse countries. Over the past two decades, as diverse studies were conducted, more attempts providing a conceptual foundation to IE have been made.

Certainly, its definition and domain have undergone different modifications (Keupp & Gassmann, 2009). McDougall & Oviatt (2000) brought innovation and international dimension to this concept, defining it as "a combination of innovative, proactive and risk-seeking behaviour that crosses national borders and is intended to create value in organisations" (p.903). Subsequent redefinitions centred on "opportunity" accompanied attempts to provide a theoretical grounding to the term. In this regard, Oviatt and McDougall (2005) defined IE as "the discovery, enactment, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities – across national borders – to create future goods and services" (p.540). After almost ten years, Zahra, Newey, & Li, (2014) brought a sustainability perspective to IE and defined it as "the recognition, formation, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities across national borders to create new businesses, models, and solutions for value creation, including financial, social, and environmental"(p.138). These attempted definitions embrace the theories of internationalisation, resources and capabilities, and entrepreneurship while developing a new domain that focuses on the exploitation of opportunities and global sustainable well-being.

In contrast to these perspectives, Zucchella & Magnani (2016) propose IE's study as the amalgamation of three fields: international business, entrepreneurship, and strategic management (Figure 1). Unlike Oviatt and McDougall, Zucchella and Sciabini add strategic management as one of the fundamental pillars in the IE analysis. For the authors, although strategic management can be studied from the perspective of entrepreneurship and international business, its influence and productivity implications make it necessary to analyse it separately.

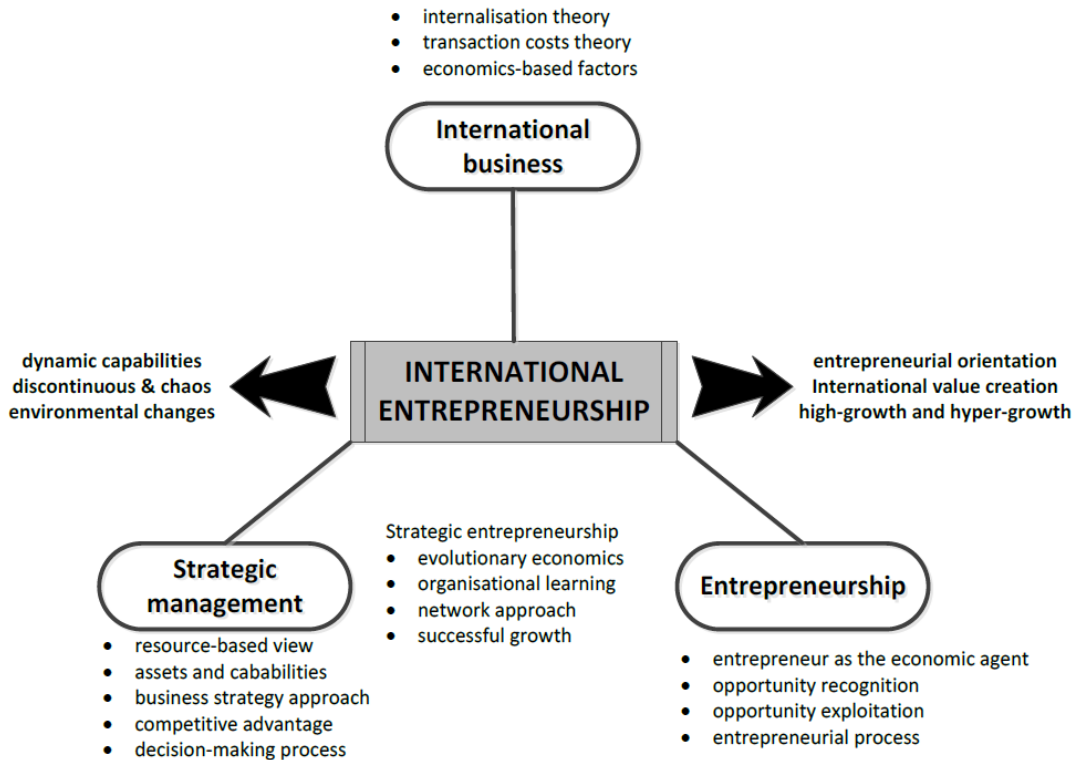


Figure 1 – International entrepreneurship as the amalgamation of three fields (source: Wach & Wehrmann, 2014)

In the field of entrepreneurship, Schumpeter (1967) already referred to IE when he pointed out that the concept of entrepreneurship, which includes not only the introduction of new products, but also new methods of production, the opening of new markets, mastering of new sources of raw material supply, and the industry reorganisation (Andersson, 2000). On the other hand, Caruana et al. (2007) defined entrepreneurship as the process of creating value by bringing together a unique set of resources to take advantage of an opportunity. The process considers five specific stages: 1. opportunity identification, 2. development of new business concepts, 3. evaluation and acquisition of the necessary set of resources, 4. business's implementation, and 5. exploitation and harvesting of the results (Caruana et al., 2007).

Linked to international business, the **theory of international entrepreneurship** arises, and it particularly prioritises the role of the entrepreneur as an economic agent and key factor in the internationalisation process of enterprises, particularly in SMEs (Wach, 2014). IE attributes a special role to the entrepreneur, given that his or her high level of creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship are aligned with the creative process of identifying and exploiting opportunities (Wach, 2014). About this, Korsakiene and Tvaronavičiene (2012) state that the entrepreneur's behaviour influences the company's behaviour, while his or her accumulated knowledge and varied experience are considered one of the most important criteria in the selection of the foreign market.

From the point of view of international business research, different theories analysed patterns or processes of internationalisation from different angles. Since the 1970s, the discussion about firm-level factors influencing the outcomes of internationalisation has emerged in the literature and gained importance ever since. What started out as a rather economic perspective on why international trade and production is beneficial to multinational companies (MNC) in the monopoly advantage theory (Hymer, 1960; Kindleberger, 1969), the internalization theory (Buckley & Casson, 1991; Rugman, 1980; Williamson, 1981), the product-lifecycle theory (Vernon, 1966) and subsequently in the more holistic eclectic paradigm (Dunning, 1977, 1995, 2003), has had a development into more dynamic approaches of internationalisation. The most well-known dynamic schools of thought that have pushed the discussion further are the models of internationalisation such as the Uppsala model (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, 2009; Vahlne & Johanson, 2017) and the Helsinki model (Luostarinen, 1979; Luostarinen & Hellman, 1994; Welch & Luostarinen, 1988) which essentially builds on the behavioural theory (Aharoni, 1966; Cyert & March, 1963). At the core of this thinking are the organisational learning processes of companies, and the assumption that internationalisation projects start with low-risk forms of market entry, which are later adapted as knowledge about the target market increases.

Specifically, the **Uppsala Model** sees internationalisation as a gradual process that firms go through to acquire and use knowledge about foreign markets and operations. Thus, the model displays internationalisation as a series of incremental decisions and proposes a four-stage incremental development of firms in the so-called "chain of establishment": (i) no regular export activities, (ii) export via independent representatives/agents, (iii) sales subsidiary and (iv) production/manufacturing (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Nevertheless, the model does not consider the decision-maker from a more conscious and deliberate strategic perspective and does not explain the reasons why firms move from one stage to another and why some firms skip stages (Andersen, 1993). Moreover, as Torres (2014) pointed out, although the Uppsala model can be useful to understand SMEs' internationalisation processes, the model is limited because it was created based on large companies that do not face the same difficulties as SMEs or even new ventures.

From the third IE's main pillar, strategic management, **the resource-based view (RBV)** emerged (Barney, 1991) as a response to the increasing economic instability, technological change, and market saturation in different industries towards the end of the 1970s (Wach & Wehrmann, 2014). The perspective of resources (Barney, 1991, Wernerfelt, 1984) and capabilities (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990, Teece et al., 1997) has served as a theoretical framework for studying the behaviour of new firms going international and continues to this day as one of the leading research approaches about internationalisation (Peng, 2001; Wach, 2014). This theory argues that the firm's resources, capabilities, and competencies facilitate the development of sustainable competitive advantages. The Resource-based view theory primarily points to differences in

organisational resource endowments as an essential determinant of the firm competitive strategy and performance.

These resources are defined as the assets, capabilities, information, knowledge, and technology, controlled by the firm, that allow to conceive and implement strategies that make the firm effective and efficient, and to gain a competitive advantage in different markets (Wheeler, Ibeh, & Dimitratos, 2008). From a strategic management perspective, the following types of resources were already identified in early models of the RBV, namely physical resources, human resources, and organisational resources (Barney, 1991), as well as financial resources, information resources, and technological resources (Stonehouse, Campbell, Hamill, & Purdie, 2004). Nevertheless, according to the dynamic schools of the RBV, traditional tangible resources give way to intangible assets and skills (Fahy, 2000; Hölzner, 2009). As stated by the Dynamic Capabilities approach (Teece et al., 1997), companies are competitive if they do not only use their existing resources, but are also flexible enough to respond appropriately to changes in the environment with new developments and are thus successful in the long term. A company is therefore more than the sum of the existing resources or capabilities of its members, and more than the sum of its routines.

The RBV and its sub-schools help to explain how the possession of superior managerial skills, and other similar factors, when approaching specific strategies, can serve as important advantages for firms that decide to venture into international markets (Knight, 2001). To provide a set of definitions that can pave the way to a better understanding of the terminology, the following key terms are interpreted as follows:

Assets are all external or internal factors that serve as inputs for value-added processes while resources are only those assets “that contribute to the actual and future competitiveness of a firm and thus account for the firm’s heterogeneity” (Freiling, Gersch, & Goeke, 2008, p. 1151). Barney specifies in his **VRIN model** that especially the valuable, scarce, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources are those which can generate long-term advantages over direct competitors (Barney, 1991, p. 105). According to Amit & Schoemaker (1993) “the firm's resources will be defined as stocks of available factors that are owned or controlled by the firm” (p.35). Resources are converted into final products or services by using a wide range of other firm assets and bonding mechanisms such as technology, management information systems, incentive systems, trust between management and labor, and more. These resources consist, inter alia, of knowhow that can be traded (e.g., patents and licenses), financial or physical assets (e.g., property, plant, and equipment), human capital, etc.”. Hoopes et. al. (2003) add that “a resource is an observable (but not necessarily tangible) asset that can be valued and traded—such as a brand, a patent, a parcel of land, or a license.

A capability, on the other hand, is not observable (and hence necessarily intangible), cannot be valued, and changes hands only as part of its entire unit.” Competencies “refer

to a set of knowledge, skills, and personality variables, which relate to successful behaviour in a designated field" (Achtenhagen, 2011, p. 12) and are therefore repeatable and goal-oriented (Freiling et al., 2008).

In the case of the competencies a company requires to internationalise, Achtenhagen (2011) establishes that the type of competencies that are considered most relevant and the areas in which they are perceived as most crucial, depend on each company-specific situation, as well as its experience in international business activities. The author sets the **POMI framework**: Personal International Orientation, Organisational Capabilities, Market Knowledge, and Institutional Environment Knowledge (Table 1), which serves as a structure to the existing literature to classify the key competencies that lead to the internationalisation of a company (Achtenhagen, 2011).

Letter	Competence	Components	Source
P	<i>Personal International Orientation</i>	Proficiency in foreign language, international travels, but also living abroad, including study and work experiences, which all contribute to acquiring foreign institutional and business knowledge. Reduces the "fear" of entering new markets.	(Dichtl, Hans-Georg, & Mueller, 1990) (Chandra, Styles, & Wilkinson, 2009) (Wach, Glodowska, & Maciejewski, 2018)
O	Experiential knowledge of the <i>organisation's capability and resources</i>	Organisational practices to facilitate international activities as well as to limit employees' potential anxiety related to becoming an international company.	(Eriksson, Johanson, Majkgard, & Sharma, 2016)
M	Experiential <i>market knowledge</i>	Knowledge about market specificities, clients, and competitors.	(Wach et al., 2018)
I	Experiential knowledge of <i>institutional frameworks</i>	Specificities of governments, rules, norms, and values in the different countries the SME might consider entering.	(Cuero Acosta et al., 2017)

Table 1 – POMI Framework (source: adapted and extended from Achtenhagen, 2011, p.18)

At the same time, following **Oviatt and McDougall's redefinition (2005)**, many authors have centred on analysing opportunities in the IE theory. This perspective has been supported by Cavusgil and Knight (2015) and their reflections which point out that IE involves innovation across the value chain in terms of identifying and exploiting opportunities. In this way, opportunities could be identified as an essential theoretical construct and articulate the IE research agenda. In this field of study, Cavusgil and Knight (2015) have analysed how the accelerated process of globalisation has increased the phenomenon of early and rapid internationalisation in firms. This phenomenon has been particularly noticeable in the number of young firms who pursue customers in foreign markets from their earliest stages. This group of firms has been called "born global" (BG).

Madsen and Servais (1997) have explored BG firms' main characteristics in the literature and found that BG firms are related to the Uppsala model, evolutionary economic thinking, and the network approach to international activities. Thus, the authors conclude that the BG phenomenon can be explained based on existing theories within firms' internationalisation processes, which can be complemented by the theory of evolutionary economics and the network approach.

Contrastingly, entrepreneurs' distinguishing characteristics are that they are more alert than others to find and exploit new opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). But turning an opportunity into a real venture requires resources and the success or failure of a new venture will depend on the profile of these resources (Greene & Brown, 1997), so in order to take advantage of market opportunities, it is necessary that the entrepreneur has the intention and at the same time the appropriate skills to exploit them (Fayolle, Liñán, & Moriano, 2014). Factors related to opportunity identification include, for example, prior knowledge (Scott, 2013), and social networks (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). In reference to a firm's resources, Grant (1996) classifies them into three broad types: a) tangible; b) intangible; and c) human to which Peng (2001) concludes that SMEs or start-ups are not able to compete with large multinational companies based on tangible resources; instead, they should focus on intangible resources, i.e., the ability to do more with less.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that international entrepreneurship (IE) as a theory emerges from the convergence of international business and entrepreneurship. Recent studies have included strategic management and its interrelation with the two previous components (Zucchella & Magnani, 2016). As Torres (2014) points out, IE emerges as a discipline of debate from the description of young and rapidly internationalising firms. This coincides with the analysis of Keupp & Gassmann (2009), who pointed out that the original definition of IE by Oviatt et al. (1994) has coerced subsequent IE studies to focus on the study of how new, young, and small firms internationalise, i.e. Born Global firms. IE has assumed firms as a set of resources and capabilities and gives an essential role to the entrepreneur as one of the success factors of firms' internationalisation, given his/her unique skills to capture the creative process of identifying and exploiting an opportunity (Wach, 2014).

Many authors are still captivated by IE and work on identifying the theoretical **inconsistencies and knowledge gaps** that prevent a more fluid research development (Reuber, Knight, Liesch, & Zhou, 2018). Certainly, the study of IE largely contributed to understanding the internationalisation of new ventures and wealth creation, especially focused on profit-making enterprises. However, in the current global scenario where considerable attention -and emergency- has been devoted to sustainable development, there is a need to extend the IE field to a broad global sustainable well-being perspective (Zahra et al., 2014). In this sense, Social Entrepreneurship (SE) enriches the IE field

emphasising the exploitation of opportunities to create systemic solutions to economic, social, and environmental problems. This intersection, international social entrepreneurship (ISE), highlights the importance to generate a blended value of the social and financial goals of entrepreneurship and recognizes the globalisation of entrepreneurial activities (Zahra et al., 2014). Moreover, SE has an important contribution to IE, offering a well-being focus perspective, where international entrepreneurs play a crucial role as business innovators, catalyst, and agents of social change worldwide.

2.2. INTERNATIONALISATION OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISES

Martin Mehrwald, Magdalena Winkler, and Peter Vandor

2.2.1. Social Entrepreneurship in an International Context

Around the globe, social entrepreneurs have long been recognised as actors that address social needs or induce societal change (Mair & Martí, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006). Social entrepreneurs, however, are not all alike but may, in fact, take on a variety of forms - whereby this diversity is contingent on the nature of the social opportunity that is pursued (Kusa, 2016). Therefore, another difference includes the geographical scope in which social entrepreneurs uncover and address social challenges (Zahra et al., 2009). Yet, research has so far largely focused on social ventures that operate within the boundaries of national, regional, or local community contexts (Kim & Lim, 2017; Marshall, 2011). In a similar vein, scholars have begun to direct their attention towards social enterprises operating in challenging institutional environments – such as base-of-the-pyramid countries (Geoffrey Desa & Koch, 2014), emerging economies (Akter et al., 2020), or transitioning market contexts (Yu, 2016). Generally, research on internationalisation in social enterprises is scarce and has mostly focused on large-scale country comparisons (Bravo, 2018; Kerlin, 2006, 2010).

The global nature of social entrepreneurs has only recently attracted **growing interest among practitioners and scholars** (Alon et al., 2020; Zahra et al., 2008, 2014). Yet, research suggests that international social entrepreneurship is not an entirely new phenomenon. Indeed, many social enterprises engage in international activities, such as the international trading of goods and services (Marshall, 2011), cross-border franchising (Iddy & Alon, 2019; Wang et al., 2015), or international funding (Drori et al., 2020).

With the aim of conceptualising the phenomenon of social venture internationalisation, scholars have outlined some definitions. Tukamushaba et al. (2011, p. 286) define international social entrepreneurship as “the **process of creatively discovering and exploiting social entrepreneurial opportunities overseas** with the application of business expertise and market-based skills, with innovative social goods and services, either with or without profit orientation, but with the pivotal objective of creating societal value rather than shareholder wealth in the overseas territories where the enterprise functions”. In a similar vein, there have been attempts to characterise the social entrepreneur dedicated to cross-border activities. In line with extant definitions on social entrepreneurship, which highlight the creation of social value by using market mechanisms (Miller et al., 2012) and opportunity identification (Mair & Martí, 2006), Marshall (2011, p.185) defines the international for-profit social entrepreneur as “an individual or group who discover, enact, evaluate and exploit opportunities to create social value through the

commercial exchange of future goods and services across national borders". In this report, we adopt Tukamushabas definition of international social entrepreneurship, but understand it more broadly as to include the various scaling strategies that are outlined in Section 2.2.2.

In spite of this growing recognition of global nature of social ventures, our understanding of the processes and driving forces of social entrepreneurial internationalisation remains limited (Alon et al., 2020). What is noteworthy, however, is the acknowledgement that the internationalisation process of social ventures is likely to play out differently than those of commercial entrepreneurs (Zahra et al., 2008, 2014) – as we will outline in more detail in the following sections and, in particular, in the competence framework. In the same vein, scholars have begun to acknowledge the need for research in understanding how the characteristics of social entrepreneurs influence the identification and evaluation of social opportunities in an international context (Alon et al., 2020). In the following section, we will therefore present an overview on the drivers and challenges in the context of social entrepreneurial internationalisation.

2.2.2. Social Entrepreneurial Scaling and Internationalisation Strategies

Potential and Drivers

The potential for social enterprises to tackle cross-border social problems is large. Due to their capability of shaping infrastructures and institutions for development, international social ventures have the potential to be "the engine of economic and social development on a global scale" (Zahra et al., 2008, p.118). Social opportunities are increasingly perceived as being global in their essence, and there are several drivers throughout the world that facilitate the international engagement of social entrepreneurs (Zahra et al., 2008):

- **Worldwide ecosystems:** In the last years, there have been vast changes in the global economic systems. In our globalised world, organisations are no longer bound to operate within national boundaries, but are increasingly interconnected. Hence, entrepreneurial opportunities – be it commercial or social – are at the disposal to firms all over the world. In light of this, value chains or financing options may easily bridge national boundaries (Zahra et al., 2014). At the same time, emerging and developing economies are increasingly entering the global economy in the course of market liberalisation – offering stimuli for the emergence of social businesses in these contexts (Akter et al., 2020; Zahra et al., 2014). For social entrepreneurs, these developments result in an abundance of social issues to be addressed globally and open up opportunities for social entrepreneurs to address social change on a global level (Short et al., 2009; Zahra et al., 2014).

- **Growing pervasiveness of entrepreneurship as a means to addressing social problems:** Around the world, social entrepreneurship is increasingly acknowledged as a powerful means to create value (Austin et al., 2006; Zahra et al., 2014). In this context, social entrepreneurship is commonly understood as a lever to tackle social problems, where extant institutions or governments refrain from intervening themselves (Mair & Marti Lanuza, 2009). For social entrepreneurs, one of the possible drivers for addressing social issues may stem from a pronounced motivation to social justice, inspiring them to create social impact (Tukamushaba et al., 2011; Zahra et al., 2009). Paired with the increasing interconnectedness of economies on a global level, this awareness to social issues may provide leeway for social entrepreneurs to engage in value-creating activities – not only on a local, but on a global scale.
- **Market, institutional, and state failures:** In light of the above, social entrepreneurs have been found to arise when existing markets and states fail to meet social needs. These contexts, which may be quite unfavourable to social entrepreneurs, often do not deter them from stepping in, but may instead lead them to seize the opportunities resulting thereof (Austin et al., 2006; Zahra et al., 2008a). In this context, Austin et al. (Austin et al., 2006) remark: “In fact, social entrepreneurs may choose to pursue opportunities to address social change not despite of, but because of, an inhospitable context”. Globalisation has brought increased attention to such institutional and governmental failures around the world, which includes, for example, grand challenges such as the increased global wealth disparity, or environmental issues. This awareness of global social challenges may ultimately facilitate international social entrepreneurial engagement in weaker institutional contexts, such as developing countries, or around the globe (Tukamushaba et al., 2011; Zahra et al., 2008a).
- **Covid-19:** The Covid-19 crisis has brought monumental disruption to political and economic systems around the world. While it remains unclear how these developments ultimately impact international economies in the long-term, new opportunities for international social entrepreneurs arise (Zahra, 2021). This is due to the fact that, in times of economic crisis, social challenges are bound to increase which may lead to the emergence of novel types of social businesses striving to tackle these issues (Austin, Stevenson, et al., 2006). In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the most pressing social issues around the world have intensified – which is why it can be expected that in the future social entrepreneurs may turn their efforts to disadvantaged members of society, and challenges such as homelessness, malnutrition and healthcare (Zahra, 2021).

In light of the above, we identify a recent growth of potential for international social enterprises as the ongoing globalisation is leading to a stronger interconnection of organisations with opportunities all over the world. Moreover, nowadays, entrepreneurial

means are perceived more viable to create social impact when it comes to tackling market, state and institutional failures, also, in times of crises. By internationally scaling their social impact, social entrepreneurs are able to tackle social opportunities on an international or global level.

Modes of Scaling and Internationalisation

Expanding their social impact is among the key drivers for social entrepreneurs (Bretos et al., 2020) as they generally aim to maximise their impact (Weber et al., 2012). Existing literature approaches this topic from two perspectives: internationalisation and scaling. This section will provide an integrated view on both foci while examining modes of scaling and internationalisation for social entrepreneurs. While there is a variety of definitions for scaling and internationalisation in the context of social entrepreneurship, we understand it as brought forward by Desa and Koch (2014, S. 148):

“[...] the process of expanding or adapting an organisation’s output to better match the magnitude of the social need or problem being tackled.”

As a consequence, motivations for scaling can emerge either through changes directed at maximising impact within an organisation or through external developments in its ecosystem (Lyon & Fernandez, 2012). They can include increasing the number of customers or users of a service as well as expanding the service with social impact (Bocken et al., 2016). On the one hand, scaling can be viewed as deepening impact via offering a wide range of products and services. On the other hand, it can be achieved by broadening impact via offering a narrower number of products and services to be easily disseminated (Desa & Koch, 2014). More detailed, four different scaling up strategies for social enterprises can be distinguished: (I) penetrating foreign markets, (II) developing new markets, (III) developing new products and (IV) diversification (Bocken et al., 2016).

Scaling in a social context needs to be described as being about expanding impact and not about becoming large (Uvin et al., 2000). Dees et al. (2004) identify three different ways for social enterprises to expand their impact: dissemination, affiliation and branching. **Dissemination** focusses on enabling others to replicate a model to generate social impact, allowing adaptation by others (Desa & Koch, 2014) without expanding the source organisation (Weber et al., 2015). This leads to a low-resource-intense spread of the social entrepreneur’s activities, but also allows very little control over their implementation (Dees et al., 2004). Therefore, dissemination can be viewed as closely related to open source approaches (Smith et al., 2016).

As a second form of scaling social impact, **affiliation** is introduced, offering a variety of possibilities to broaden impact. These include setting up a network of independent or-

organisations with common activities, objectives and principles (Weber et al., 2015). Moreover, joint ventures as well as licensing agreements between the social enterprise and other entities willing to replicate its model are attributed to affiliation scaling (Dees et al., 2004). One very tight form of this scaling strategy is social franchising. This allows a large number of entities to use the same brand name as well as the same business model with brand consistency regarded as key to the success of the social enterprise (Volkman, 2012). Therefore, affiliation strategies are characterised by an – at least at some level – formalised relationship between the source entrepreneur and the replicator.

As a third option, **branching** describes the way of scaling with the highest form of control for the social entrepreneur (Dees et al., 2004). By establishing branch offices in the desired market, the organisation can scale by itself, independent from partners (Austin, Stevenson, et al., 2006). In this case, the social enterprise can hire management personnel and oversee the operations in the branches from a headquarter (Weber et al., 2015). Thus, branching is the most narrow channel securing legal ownership and enabling to use existing infrastructure for scaling (Smith et al., 2016).

The above-mentioned definition of scaling also allows the **export of services and goods** to be viewed as scaling in an international context. While being extensively discussed in international entrepreneurship research (Coviello & Jones, 2004; Fletcher, 2004; Paul et al., 2017), literature on export among social enterprises is scarce. However, marketing services and products provided by people located in foreign countries is often relevant for social enterprises as well (Yang & Wu, 2015).

In addition to the scaling forms described above, research also points towards the importance of ethical sourcing – i.e. an organisations' responsibility for labour and human rights practices within its supply chain – in social entrepreneurship and as a means to internationalize the social impact of an organisation (Allan, 2005; Davies et al., 2019). While ethical sourcing often relates to the import of goods and services, recent research has also considered the concept of "impact sourcing" – broadly understood as the purpose of providing employment in the business process industry for marginalised individuals" (Matsumoto, 2020, p.361). Further modes of internationalization might also include the, mergers and acquisitions, use of standards, cross-sector-partnerships, political alliances and others

In the remainder of this report, we will adopt the approaching identified by Dees et al. (2004) and focus on the three most common forms of international scaling in the realm of social entrepreneurship: dissemination, franchising (which we understand as a particular form of affiliation) and branching. In addition, giving it's prominent role in internationalization research and increasing frequency in the field, we also include export as an an analytic category.

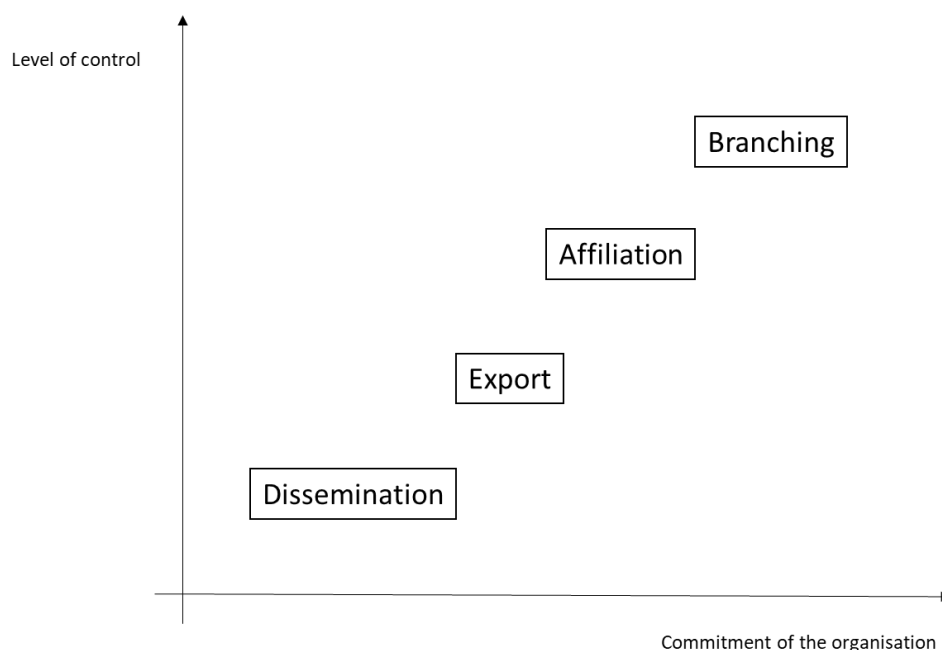


Figure 2 – Scaling strategies (source: own illustration, based on Volkmann, 2012)

When it comes to scaling of social enterprises, a number of **prerequisites and factors for success** within an organisation can be identified. As a prerequisite, the business model of the social enterprise needs to be viable, meaning to be proven effective to create social impact while being financially sustainable. Moreover, timing of the scaling attempt within an organisation's life cycle can be viewed as key (Weber et al., 2015). One of the most popular models to describe success factors for scaling is the **SCALERS model** introduced by Bloom and Chatterji (2009). The authors identify seven influential components for scaling impact: staffing, communications, building alliances, lobbying, earnings generation, replication and stimulating market forces (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009).

Additionally, the replicability of the operational model and its adaptability as well as the organisations' ability to obtain necessary resources and to meet social demands are viewed as success factors (Weber et al., 2012). This is also true when it comes to collaboration with partners, allies and donors including the interplay of control and dependency with them (Weber et al., 2015). On a personal level of the individual social entrepreneur the commitment of them driving the scaling process and the management competence can drive successful scaling (Weber et al., 2012). Last but not least, the legitimacy and reputation – the third parties' view of the organisation and its operations – is described as success factor for scaling among social entrepreneurs (Weber et al., 2015).

Regarding scaling in an international context, we identify gaps in the understanding of the internationalisation strategies social ventures employ. Still, there have been attempts to conceptualise the topic from two different perspective – scaling and internationalisation among social entrepreneurs. Generally, existing literature recognises the plurality of

practices, assuming that – similar to the scaling process per se – the internationalisation process of social entrepreneurs is distinct from those of commercial entrepreneurs (Zahra et al., 2008). Some authors have attempted to conceptualise the various internationalisation strategies social entrepreneurs engage in. For instance, Zahra et al. (2008) argue that, while some SEs internationalise gradually, some are born global or internationalise early in the organisation’s life cycle. Similarly, Chen (2012) emphasises that many social ventures are international by their very nature, for instance through generating funds in the founding country while serving beneficiaries abroad. Meanwhile, Kalinic and Pater (2013) suggest that, while social entrepreneurs are heavily guided by the social mission, they tend to cater to both – national and international markets – simultaneously. At the same time, they argue that international social ventures only commit moderately to engagement in foreign markets. Summarising the above, it becomes evident that there is little consensus as to how social ventures internationalise.

Challenges

Scaling in an effective and efficient manner is viewed as a challenge, especially for social enterprises (Bloom & Smith, 2010; Bradach, 2003; Dees et al., 2004). Due to diverging organisational and contextual factors, scaling of social enterprises differs from scaling commercial enterprises (Austin, Stevenson, et al., 2006). One important reason for that is the need to balance social impact and generating sufficient funds to finance it (Bocken et al., 2016). In addition, there is usually a **more complex and heterogeneous** set of stakeholders among SEs in comparison to commercial entrepreneurs (Austin, Stevenson, et al., 2006). To motivate desired actions by stakeholders, social entrepreneurs need to put emphasis on their altruism, compassion, volunteerism and focus on social value creations, as there is a scarcity of economic and financial incentives in social entrepreneurs’ environment (Bloom & Smith, 2010). Moreover, infrastructure to supply and distribute the SEs goods and services often need to be built up from scratch (Bloom & Smith, 2010). Additionally, when scaling internationally, further obstacles like different cultural, social, economic, legal and governmental systems can hinder success (Yang & Wu, 2015).

While Weber et al. (2015) acknowledge that scaling is still a major challenge for social enterprises across Europe, Volkmann et al. (2012) argue that **challenges vary for different scaling strategies**. More open strategies cause a trade-off issue between the consistent implementation of the source enterprise’s model and the adaptation to new contexts (Chowdhury & Santos, 2010). In addition, actions by scaling partners (e.g. social franchisees) pose the risk of accelerating mission drift and reputational loss for the social enterprise. Branching strategies’ slow progress and high resource-intensity as well as the threat to focus too much on coordination of subsidiaries can transform into impediments for scaling (Volkmann, 2012). As research on challenges specifically for exporting social services and products is scarce, we draw on literature related to export

challenges for SMEs in general. Paul et al. (2017) distinguish internal and external factors. On a micro level, SMEs need to deal with problems to access information on foreign markets, a lack of negotiating power and difficulties in selecting reliable distributors among others. Externally and on a macro level, they identify political and market reasons, like a lack of proper trade institutions, lack of governmental incentives, as well as demand insufficiency among others as possible impediments for exporting (Paul et al., 2017).

Independent from different scaling strategies, Davies et al. (2019) identify three **major barriers** for the growth of social enterprises. First of all, **values-based impediments** describe how mismatches between values and principles of an organisation and its stakeholders affect scaling attempts. Moreover, the twofold objective to balance social impact and commercial goals can obstruct growth ambitions among social enterprises. Therefore, deciding on an appropriate governance structure is key for social entrepreneurs (Chen, 2012).

Secondly, scaling may incorporate **business model impediments**. These include constraints of access to financial funds, especially from commercial and social fund providers. Moreover, the mission-oriented nature of social enterprises leads to constraints in the remuneration of staff (Weber et al., 2015), fuelling the issue of insufficient human resources for growth (Davies et al., 2019). Due to the social orientation, social enterprises also focus on the integrity of their supply chain, limiting themselves from some suppliers.

Thirdly, **institutional barriers** such as customer behaviour and traditional business norms are introduced (Davies et al., 2019). Low customer awareness and difficulties to disrupt routine customer behaviour hinder successful scaling of the social enterprise. In addition, a more ambivalent market and customer group enhances difficulties in communication (Davies et al., 2019).

Social enterprises face high barriers when entering into a new market (Davies et al., 2019), including a mismatch of the offer and the market need (Chen, 2012). Moreover, they face communication barriers with different stakeholder groups (Davies et al., 2019) and resource deficits (Austin, Stevenson, et al., 2006). In addition, replicating the model requires processes to be standardised which often poses a complex issue in social organisations (Bradach, 2003). Weber et al. (2015) argue that the obstacles for growth generally enlarge when social enterprises scale transnationally.

As mentioned above, transnational scaling inhibits particular challenges as social entrepreneurs may see themselves confronted with new obstacles (Weber et al., 2015). These challenges can result from a multitude of factors, including more pronounced cultural and legal obstacles which impede transnational scaling as well as a higher complexity of

cross-border activities. In addition, Weber et al. (2015, p.54) identify a shortage of human capital, likely in relation with the high complexity of the activities abroad, as a further challenge for the internationalisation of social enterprises.

Internally oriented	Externally oriented
Balancing social impact and commercial goals	Limited access to financial funds support networks
Mission drift	Customer behaviour and awareness
Need to standardise processes	Potential mismatch of offer and demand
Insufficient human resources for growth	Cultural, social, economic, legal and governmental differences in target-markets
Limited suppliers through focus on their integrity	Risks through the dependence on and the release of control to scaling partners

Figure 3 – Potential challenges for internationalisation (source: own illustration)

In summary, we find that the challenges for international scaling are highly diverse, while at the same time existing literature suggests that social enterprise scaling is more complex than commercial enterprise scaling. The current state of research identifies issues related to internationalisation of social enterprises as a whole, with internal as well as external issues posing the risk to hinder growth of social enterprises. The figure above presents an attempt to divide them into two groups: internally oriented and externally oriented challenges. Moreover, literature implies that challenges vary in regards to different scaling strategies. In the following section, we will introduce a competence framework for international social entrepreneurs, which shall provide an orientation as to how these barriers can be overcome.

3. Entrepreneurial Competences for International Scaling

Magdalena Winkler, Martin Mehrwald, and Peter Vandor

3.1. DEFINITION OF COMPETENCES

The concept of **competence** is a prominent subject in entrepreneurship research. In management research of the 1990's, competences were originally understood as a means to describe organisational resources which would eventually lead to competitive advantage (Deist & Winterton, 2005). Since then, the concept has evolved, and attracted a number of different definitions. By its nature, the term competence is associated with a number of meanings, prescriptions, and debates – making it a “fuzzy concept” (Deist & Winterton, 2005, p.29). Generally, scholars have identified various perceptions as to how competences can be defined. Some authors argue that competence is a socially situated concept, understanding it as the ability to perform tasks and roles according to an expected standard. Others comprehend it as a personal characteristic, which is consequently individually situated (Eraut, 1998).

In 2006, the European Parliament and the Council have issued a report on key competences for lifelong learning, in which they define competence broadly as “a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context” (p.13). This definition was taken up by the European Framework of entrepreneurial competences, published in 2016, which broadly understands entrepreneurship as “a transversal competence, which applies to all spheres of life” (p.6), including individuals, groups, or organisations (Bacigalupo et al., 2016). In the same vein, they understand skills as “the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems” (Bacigalupo et al., 2016, p.20) – which can either occur on a cognitive level (by using logical, intuitive, and creative thinking), or on a practical one (by using manual dexterity and methods, materials, tools, and instruments) (Bacigalupo et al., 2016). In light of these definitions, we assume a broad understanding of competence and skills. In the context of our study, we understand competences as learnable and acquirable abilities (not being limited to a person, but also applicable to groups and organisations), which in a broad sense can comprise of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

In the following section, we will adopt this conception of competences and skills and outline a competence framework for social entrepreneurial internationalisation.

3.2. LITERATURE-BASED FRAMEWORK OF ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCES FOR INTERNATIONALISATION

As the competences social entrepreneurs need in order to successfully scale their impact across national borders are still somewhat of a “black box”, this study offers a structured approach on unpacking its elements. For this reason, we have developed a framework illustrating the most relevant competences and skills for social entrepreneurs aiming to engage in cross-border activities. In our framework, we focused on both – competences that are learnable by the social entrepreneur or the organisation’s employees as a person as well as competences that the social enterprise as an organisation can acquire. The overall framework is depicted in figure 3.

Following the previous definition of competence, we label the overarching themes as **competence areas**, while we describe the more specific abilities as **competences**. Overall, we have found seven competence areas, which in total comprise of 16 competences. In the first four areas, we illustrate the competences that require an organisation-internal view – meaning competences needed for decisions and processes that merely occur within the social enterprise. The other three areas, in turn, depict the competences that are required for activities in connection with actors outside the organisation – such as external partners, customers, or institutions. In the following sections, we will present each competence area and unpack the competences identified within.

Internal-oriented				External-oriented			
A r e a	Opportunity Identification and Development	Diagnostic & Strategic Competence	Financial & Business Management	Human Resource Management & Leadership	Marketing & Communication	Intercultural Competence	Managing Networks and the Institutional Environment
	<p>Global awareness</p> <p>The skill of cultivating an awareness, motivation and understanding for addressing social opportunities that arise on a global level.</p>	<p>Diagnostic thinking</p> <p>The skill to effectively analyse the current situation of the social venture (by also leveraging knowledge at hand), including the analysis of economic characteristics of the target market.</p>	<p>Financial management</p> <p>The skill to attain and manage financial resources for scaling to foreign markets, including the skill to design effective structures for strategic and financial planning, evaluation and control.</p>	<p>Human resource management</p> <p>The skill of attracting and hiring the right mix of individuals on a national and international level – including the skill to make decisions on personnel planning, recruiting, performance assessment and remuneration planning.</p>	<p>Marketing</p> <p>The skill of formulating an international marketing strategy for scaling the social mission – including the skill to design effective sales pitches, to foster customer loyalty, to convey a good image of the ventures, and to adapt the offerings to the firm’s audience.</p>	<p>Intercultural competence and awareness</p> <p>The skill of cultivating an awareness of foreign cultural characteristics; and at the same time, displaying cultural sensitivity towards foreign individuals and communities.</p>	<p>Relationship and network building</p> <p>The skill to find suitable partners and to effectively build and maintain these relationships across national contexts with a diverse variety of stakeholder groups.</p>
	<p>International opportunity identification</p> <p>The skill of creatively identifying opportunities in international markets, by leveraging various sources of creativity and working together with other actors.</p>	<p>Strategic thinking</p> <p>The skill to critically assess the competitive environment of the social venture and to design long-term strategies for international growth.</p>	<p>Performance management</p> <p>The skill to effectively cater to both social and financial objectives on an international level, including the ability to effectively implement impact measurement processes.</p>	<p>Organisational structures and teamwork</p> <p>The skill to effectively implement organisational structures and processes for international scaling, while fostering teamwork and collaboration with organisational members on a national and international level.</p>	<p>Communication</p> <p>The skill of connecting to and persuading international customers and partners who hold the same values as the social entrepreneur by communicating compelling stories of the social mission.</p>	<p>Economic, legal and administrative knowledge</p> <p>The skill of attaining knowledge on foreign social, economic, and legal systems; and to consequently develop and evaluate strategic approaches for the specific needs of the international social venture.</p>	<p>Alliance management</p> <p>The skill to effectively balance dependence and control over the social venture, in favour of attaining valuable resources for cross-border operations.</p>
<p>International opportunity development</p> <p>The skill of responding to international opportunities by turning them into tangible business concepts – including the formulation of a business plan, the ability to comprehend the market, attract investors, create a vision for the organisation and drive the firm forward.</p>						<p>Advocacy and lobbying</p> <p>The skill to successfully advocate for government actions that favour the social enterprise, while building a positive reputation and, at the same time, striving for legitimacy in the foreign market.</p>	
C o m p e t e n c e							

Figure 4 – Competence framework for internationalising social entrepreneurs (source: own elaboration)

3.2.1. Area 1: Opportunity Identification and Development

In entrepreneurship research, **opportunity identification** has long been recognised as a core concept. Traditionally, there is an understanding that opportunities may either arise from external drivers – such as shocks to existing markets, for example – or from stimuli stemming endogenously from the entrepreneur (Alvarez et al., 2012). The notion of opportunity identification is also inherent to social entrepreneurs, who – in comparison to commercial entrepreneurs – by their nature do not pursue commercial opportunities, but instead identify and seize social opportunities (Kalinic & Pater, 2013). Generally, social opportunities have been found to likely differ from traditional commercial opportunities, in that they are usually aimed at creating social value or at solving social issues (Corner & Ho, 2010). In that vein, social opportunities are worth pursuing if there is a “sufficient potential for positive social impact to justify the investment of time, energy, and money required to pursue it seriously” (Guclu et al., 2002, p.1). The potential and feasibility of an opportunity, however, are not the only considerations leading to its pursuit – at the same time, the social entrepreneur must believe that the opportunity is something desirable and, ultimately, they must be motivated to address it (Grimes et al., 2013).

The understanding of social value creation through social opportunities requires engagement with social problems and consequently, the **ability of coming up with adequate solutions** (Corner & Ho, 2010). Social opportunities, however, are not just readily available to the person who recognises them but must carefully be evaluated and formulated. Guclu et al. (2002) argue that this is a twofold process – firstly, the social entrepreneur generates an idea, which, in a second step, will be developed into an appealing opportunity. In a first step, the social entrepreneur creatively comes up with an attractive idea – which is often informed by, for example, the personal experience of the social entrepreneur, by existing social needs, by external change, or by social assets (e.g. the entrepreneurial spirit of disadvantaged communities). While the first step relates to creativity fostered by an open and “opportunity oriented mindset” (p.5), the second phase emphasises both the analysis and thorough testing and refinement of the ideas developed in the first phase. Consequently, this process straddles between creativity and analysis, making both factors essential in identifying valuable social opportunities (Guclu et al., 2002). In a different vein, Corner and Ho (2010) find that for social entrepreneurs, opportunities have an organic character – meaning that they are developed over time by the actors being conscious of the particular social problem. Furthermore, they find that the development of social opportunities essentially depends on the actors involved, whereby opportunities may stem from the efforts of multiple actors collaborating to create social value.

The international social entrepreneur is highly reactive to opportunities succeeding the national scale, which enable the growth of the social venture across borders (ISSA Report, 2020; Kalinic & Pater, 2013). In light of this, international opportunities for social entrepreneurs can emerge on a local scope – meaning that local issues are addressed by social ventures from abroad – or on a global level (Kusa, 2016; Zahra et al., 2008b). In this vein, social entrepreneurs have been found to **recognise global issues** (as outlined in Section 2.2.2.) – such as environmental challenges, or increasing wealth disparity (Zahra et al., 2008a). This “cosmopolitan awareness” (Kalinic & Pater, 2013, p.4), however, may not necessarily lead to social entrepreneurs expanding globally, but can encourage them to address specific local targets across borders. Consequently, a social entrepreneur’s decision to internationalise is primarily driven by social problems, rather than by economic entrepreneurial opportunities (Kalinic & Pater, 2013). For international social entrepreneurs, these social opportunities are facilitated by an increasingly globally informed consumer behaviour (Marshall, 2011). These considerations, however, may not necessarily capture the diversity of international social entrepreneurial opportunities (Kusa, 2016).

The behavioural theory of the firm suggests that social enterprises **evaluate international social opportunities** based on five criteria: 1) prevalence, 2) relevance 3) urgency 4) accessibility, and 5) radicalness (Zahra et al., 2008). Firstly, *prevalence* describes a rather subjective notion of which opportunities the social entrepreneur considers worth pursuing. In an international context, this implies various outcomes, as social entrepreneurs from different world regions might have a varying understanding as to which opportunities are the most salient to them. Secondly, *relevance* suggests that the international social entrepreneur does not merely pursue an opportunity because it prevails – rather, this process is shaped by considerations of whether the problem fits the entrepreneur’s vision, resources and skill sets. Thirdly, *urgency* indicates that a social opportunity may attract sudden and unprecedented attention – for example, in the form of sudden crises as natural disasters. Such opportunities require swift responses by social entrepreneurs, yet individuals from different global regions may have differing perceptions of time, which may ultimately affect their reaction speed. Fourthly, *accessibility* relates to the social opportunities that are likely to not be addressed by traditional welfare providers such as governments or charities, but may instead prove more accessible to social entrepreneurs. On an international level, this would imply a reduced liability of foreignness and newness for international social entrepreneurs, as inaccessible markets by their nature dispose of little traditional welfare mechanisms. Lastly, *radicalness* refers to the degree in which social entrepreneurs introduce major social innovations, which are unlikely to be taken on by traditional welfare mechanisms due to their disrupting nature. Again, this opens up a more diverse array of opportunities to be pursued by social entrepreneurs on an international level. Overall, these five considerations shape

how international social entrepreneurs identify and address international social opportunities (Zahra et al., 2008).

In terms of entrepreneurial abilities, opportunity identification has been ranked among the core competences of entrepreneurs in the internationalisation process. This competence field includes, amongst others, hands-on skills such as developing a business model, the ability to comprehend the market, attracting investors, creating a vision for the organisation as well as driving the firm forward (Loué, 2018).

Summarising the above, we argue that that opportunity identification is a manifold concept for international social entrepreneurs. Successful social entrepreneurs do not only creatively uncover social opportunities, but also possess the skill to effectively transform their ideas into tangible business concepts (Guclu et al., 2002). Further, this process may be organic and involve the collaboration of multiple actors (Corner & Ho, 2010). The international social entrepreneur transcends national boundaries, in that social opportunities are seized on an international level (Kusa, 2016; Zahra et al., 2008). Therefore, we identify **three competences** pertinent to the competence area of **opportunity identification**:

Competence	Description	Source
Global awareness	The competence of cultivating an awareness, motivation and understanding for addressing social opportunities that arise on a global level.	(Grimes et al., 2013; Kalinic & Pater, 2013; Zahra et al., 2008a)
International opportunity identification	The competence of creatively identifying opportunities in international markets, by leveraging various sources of creativity and working together with other actors.	(Corner & Ho, 2010; Guclu et al., 2002; Kalinic & Pater, 2013)
International opportunity development	The competence of responding to international opportunities by turning them into tangible business concepts – including the formulation of a business plan, the ability to comprehend the market, attract investors, create a vision for the organisation and drive the firm forward.	(Guclu et al., 2002; Kalinic & Pater, 2013; Loué, 2018)

Table 2 – Competence area 1: Opportunity identification and development

3.2.2. Area 2: Diagnostic & Strategic Competence

Generally, there are many ways in which social entrepreneurs can seize opportunities and, consequently, scale their impact (see Section 2.2.). Yet, in comparison to commercial firms, **organisational growth for social enterprises** can be quite challenging as the pursuit of both a social and a commercial mission implies a more diverse and complex range of barriers (Davies et al., 2019). In that vein, social entrepreneurs must carefully consider whether and how they want to grow – as Austin et al. (2006, p.7) argue that “growth for the sake of growth has the potential to squander organisational resources and can actually detract from the organisation’s overall impact”. Of course, this does not mean that social ventures should not engage in growth strategies at all as growing can indeed be the most valuable way to disseminate social impact. Therefore, designing long-term growth strategies may be often the best way as social entrepreneurs might not always have re-sources readily available at hand for immediate scaling (Austin, et al., 2006).

International social ventures are inherently diverse and employ a variety of strategies in their internationalisation processes (as discussed in Section 2.2.2.). Yet, before such internationalisation strategies will be translated into action, there are some critical factors the social entrepreneur should consider. On the one hand, this concerns the internal operational aspects of the organisation, while on the other hand, target markets must be critically evaluated. In this context, Dees et al. (2004) identify the **“five R’s”** – a framework for determining the scaling path the social enterprise could embark on – including 1) readiness, 2) receptivity, 3) resources, 4) risk, and 5) returns.

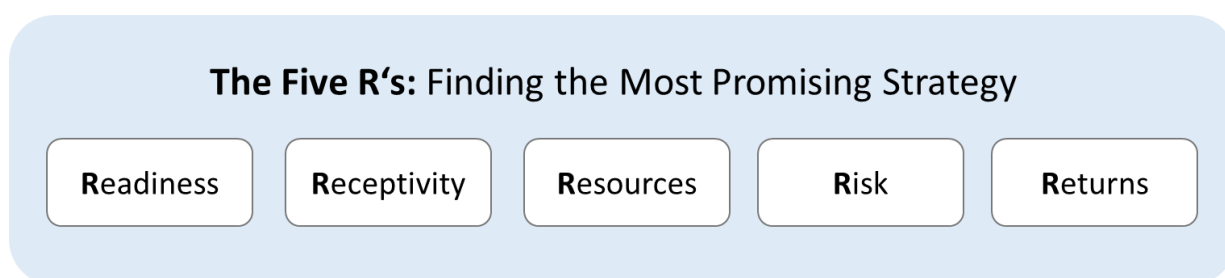


Figure 5 – The five R’s (source: own elaboration, based on Dees et al., 2004)

The first factor, *readiness*, refers to the question of whether the social innovation is ready to be spread. More precisely, the social entrepreneur should evaluate whether the social innovation is at an adequately successful stage, while the critical drivers of the social innovation should be clearly understood in order to evaluate how it can be used for scaling activities. Secondly, *receptivity* describes the key consideration of what strategy the social enterprise should best employ, so

that the social innovation will be accepted in the target market or community. This includes considerations on whether there exists need and demand for the social innovation, as well as the question of whether resistance from target communities can be expected. Thirdly, the social entrepreneur should assess the organisation's current *resource* situation before embarking on a scaling strategy. Thus, specific resource requirements, costs and eventual future resource inflows should be analysed beforehand. The fourth factor to be considered is the *risk* of the social innovation. The social entrepreneur should take the possibility into account that, in another (foreign) location, the social innovation might not be implemented correctly, may not be accepted, or create no social impact. Therefore, a comprehensive risk evaluation of the planned scaling strategy is crucial – as, in case of failure, the organisation's reputation, operations or resources could be irreversibly affected. Lastly, the social entrepreneur should understand the *returns* of the scaling strategy – which includes considerations such as which communities can be served in the best way, and how the scaling strategy might fit be the most effective fit for these targets. In turn, this includes considerations as to what type of scaling strategy should be applied, as for example, branching might accrue in higher coordination costs and efforts, but may eventually lead to more efficiency, improved organisational learning, or a more recognisable brand (Dees et al., 2004). Generally, it is noteworthy that scaling strategies do not exclusively depend on the own organisation, but are also shaped by the behaviour and the positioning of competitor organisations (Bauwens et al., 2020). Overall, it becomes evident that for social enterprises, strategizing can be quite complex (Moizer & Tracey, 2010) – making these considerations even more important.

For social entrepreneurs aiming to scale abroad, such **strategic reflections** are highly relevant due to the circumstance that going international is inevitably associated with a number of challenges and barriers (see Section 2.2.2.). Irrespective of the natural variations that (social) entrepreneurs have in their scope of the international activity and internationalisation strategies, entrepreneurs must carefully employ strategic mechanisms in order to successfully navigate these barriers (Yang & Wu, 2015). Similar to the above, Kalinic and Pater (2013) suggest that international social entrepreneurs should engage in strategic long-term planning in order to successfully realise their internationalisation activities. In this context, they argue that the internationalising social entrepreneur strategically mobilises specific existing knowledge targeted towards foreign locals, in order to facilitate the internationalisation process.

In their study on entrepreneurial competences for internationalisation, Corbellazzo et al. (2020) found both, strategic thinking as well as diagnostic thinking to be among the most essential factors. Firstly, **strategic thinking** refers to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the competitive environment of the

company; to comparing the own organisation to competitors; as well as to leveraging competitive advantages. Secondly, **diagnostic thinking** means the ability to critically assess the firm's situation – including the geographical properties of the target market, as well as eventual market entry barriers. By leveraging both of these competences, international entrepreneurs are able to make carefully considered decisions on their internationalisation strategies (Cortellazzo et al., 2020) – which has also been outlined in Dees et al.'s (2004) five R's.

Integrating the above, we argue that the internationalising social entrepreneur must dispose over a set of well pronounced competences for designing appropriate and sustainable internationalisation strategies. Hence, we have identified the following **two competences** in the cluster for **diagnostic and strategic competence**:

Competence	Description	Source
Diagnostic thinking	The competence to effectively analyse the current situation of the social venture (by also leveraging knowledge at hand), including the analysis of economic characteristics of the target market.	(Cortellazzo et al., 2020; Dees et al., 2004; Kalinic & Pater, 2013)
Strategic thinking	The competence to critically assess the competitive environment of the social venture and to design long-term strategies for international growth.	(Austin et al., 2006; Cortellazzo et al., 2020; Dees et al., 2004; Kalinic & Pater, 2013)

Table 3 – Competence area 2: Diagnostic and strategic competence

3.2.3. Area 3: Financial & Performance Management

In the previous section, we have elaborated on analytical and strategic standpoints, while we now turn to a related field. Generally, social ventures combine both social and commercial objectives at their core (Mair & Martí, 2006; Pache & Santos, 2012). The competing demands that social ventures face are clearly prevalent, as “for SE to have economic meaning, it must address a space in which profit is deemed possible but insufficient to motivate entrepreneurial action unless supplemented by moral or social incentives” (McMullen, 2011, p. 200). Even though the social mission lies at the very heart of a social venture – and is even acknowledged as a primary driver for going international (Kalinic & Pater, 2013) – social entrepreneurs must find a balance between catering to social and profit objectives (Austin et al., 2006).

In comparison to their commercial counterparts, social enterprises rely heavily on funding support (Austin et al., 2006) as **access to financial capital** is a key enabler for social venture growth (Bocken, 2015). Attracting financial resources, however, can prove more difficult for social businesses than for traditional ventures (Austin et al., 2006). Generally, social entrepreneurs have fewer financial instruments and resources readily available to them (Austin et al., 2006) – which becomes even more complicated due to the fact that external evaluators might perceive them to be more risky, as future behaviour is seen as rather unpredictable (Battilana & Lee, 2014). Furthermore, social enterprises are often not able to meet the same financial terms as traditional for-profit firms, making the receipt of financial resources even more complicated (Spiess-Knafl & Jansen, 2014). Despite these difficulties, both generating or mobilising resources in a broader sense (Weber et al., 2015), as well as securing a solid amount of financial returns are recognised as core factors needed for successful social entrepreneurial scaling (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009; Bloom & Smith, 2010). Depending on the scaling strategy, there are differing options for social entrepreneurs to fund their activities. Forms of scaling with a rather low degree of commitment, such as dissemination, could mostly rely on operating cash flows stemming from the services or product provided. More committed forms of (international) scaling such as branching, on the other hand, would require solid forms of funding – such as equity or debt capital (Spiess-Knafl & Jansen, 2014).

As a response to overcome financial constraints in social entrepreneurship, Davies et al. (2019) suggest drawing on the social mission for opening up funding opportunities in terms of social crowd-funding and social finance. In a similar vein, social entrepreneurs may engage in **impact measurement** activities, which can help them in promoting and attaining stakeholder support (Arvidson & Lyon, 2014). Evidently, social entrepreneurs must develop and employ a broad

set of management competences, which Weber et al. (2015, p.16) understand as “the ability to apply business-oriented processes and structured in the social enterprise’s daily operations”. This includes, amongst others, the competence to develop an organisational strategy, to design a sound budget planning and controlling system, to apply financial measurement indicators, as well as constant improvement activities. In turn, social entrepreneurs and managers mastering these competences have the potential to achieve successful scaling outcomes (Weber et al., 2015).

Similarly, entrepreneurs operating in a cross-border context (especially those who engage in international export) have assessed **financial management** competences among the most crucial ones needed for their internationalisation endeavours. Skills pertinent to that group, similar to the management competences outlined above, include the ability to identify financial needs, calculating costs and tax charges, applying performance measurement criteria, managing cash flow, and interpreting balance sheets (Loué, 2018). In another vein, social entrepreneurs must be aware of the transfer costs that may accrue when scaling internationally, and manage them accordingly. These costs can be either 1) internal, meaning that costs occur from adapting the operational model by scaling to other contexts, locations, or audiences; or 2) external, meaning the costs that accrue from adapting the venture to different foreign contexts (e.g. regulatory requirements or cultural specifics) (Weber et al., 2015). Furthermore, other national contexts are likely to have varying, and often complex regulatory requirements – which is another factor international social entrepreneurs should consider in their scaling strategies (Richardson, 2020; Sure, 2017). For the international social entrepreneur, it is therefore imperative to attain and manage the financial resources that are required for sustainable activities in foreign markets (ISSA Report, 2020).

Resting on the above, we argue that the international social entrepreneur should possess pronounced financial and management competences in order to successfully grow and enter foreign markets. In light of the challenges outlined in section 2.2.2., international social entrepreneurs may see themselves confronted with difficulties in tapping into foreign funding networks,

Hence, we identify the following **two competences** for the area of **financial and performance management**:

Competence	Description	Source
Financial management	The competence to attain and manage financial resources for scaling to foreign markets, including the skill to design effective structures for strategic and financial planning, evaluation and control.	(Weber et al., 2015; Bloom & Chatterji, 2009; P. Bloom & Smith, 2010; Bocken, 2015; ISSA Report, 2020)
Performance management	The competence to effectively cater to both social and financial objectives on an international level, including the ability to effectively implement impact measurement processes.	(Austin et al., 2006; Weber et al., 2015; Saebi et al., 2018)

Table 4 – Competence area 3: Financial and performance management

3.2.4. Area 4: Human Resource Management & Leadership

By their very nature, social ventures are subject to contradictions. Fundamentally, social entrepreneurs face competing demands stemming from the social and the commercial logics they employ. Yet, this dual orientation may not always be easy to reconcile – as balancing both a social and a commercial mission makes these so-called “hybrid organisations” inherent to tensions and sources of internal conflict (Mair & Martí, 2006; Pache & Santos, 2012). For the **internal management** of an organisation, such competing demands have wider implications in terms of how social businesses organise themselves. In this context, social entrepreneurs frequently face decisions as to whom to hire – should they go with the business-oriented professional, or the individual that is committed to a social cause? (Pache & Santos, 2012). Indeed, organisations that recruit a balanced ratio of individuals from both a professional and volunteer background find themselves in a better position to scale their social mission (Bloom & Smith, 2010). Similarly, effectively mobilising human resources is one of the prerequisites for successful social entrepreneurial scaling (Weber et al., 2015). Yet, due to their limited financial resource availability in comparison to mere profit-oriented firms, social enterprises have a more restricted access to a talented workforce (Austin et al., 2006). In light of these challenges, Davies et al. (2019) argue that social entrepreneurs should leverage their social purpose in order to attain **human capital**. For the entrepreneur entering foreign markets, human resource decisions may prove quite challenging. Evidently, managers must decide who the right candidate for activities abroad is, as international entrepreneurs depend on their staff to be committed to the internationalisation journey (Cortellazzo et al., 2020).

On a different note, internationalisation opens up other questions to be considered – for example, the **organisational structures and decision processes** to be integrated on both, local and international level (Sure, 2017) as well as the degree of communication and collaboration among team members. In a similar way, international entrepreneurs of both commercial and social ventures have to make choices on leadership and the organisational culture they aim to build. For example, Kumar and Sharma (2018) find that organisational cultures that emphasise collaboration, sharing, and continuous learning have positive effects on the identification and realisation of international opportunities. Of course, one must consider that scaling strategies vary in the extent of how formalised organisational structures are implemented and consequently, in their degree of personnel intensity (Dees et al., 2004). For more committed scaling forms, such as branching, this imply that, to some extent, the social entrepreneur would have to delegate decisions. In that context, Saebi et al. (2019) make an interesting suggestion as they argue that social entrepreneurs who are more willing to dele-

gate to managers or employees could be more successful in their scaling activities. Overall, these considerations imply that international entrepreneurs should carefully weigh on organisational, human resource, and staffing decisions.

In their study on behavioural competences of international entrepreneurs, Cortellazzo et al. (2020) found a strong orientation towards **teamwork** among entrepreneurs to result in high international performance outcomes. More specifically, this competence includes factors such as the creation of symbols of group identity, fostering commitment towards a team, task, or common goal as well as the communication of need for teamwork (Cortellazzo et al., 2020). Similarly, Loué (2018) finds that international entrepreneurs evaluate human resource competences – such as personnel planning, recruiting, performance assessment, or remuneration planning – among their core skills.

Based on the above, we argue that for international social entrepreneurs, both competences on human resource management and structural decisions are highly relevant. Of course, we acknowledge that the importance of hiring and staffing decisions may vary across scaling strategies. Nonetheless, social entrepreneurs have to consider attracting the right mix of individuals that are both, committed to a social mission as well as focused on business efficiency (Bloom & Smith, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2012). In turn, uncertainties may stem from both the essential difficulties social ventures face in attaining talent (Austin et al., 2006), as well as the foreign context in which the social entrepreneur has to make these decisions (Marshall, 2011). In light of the geographical distance, we argue that social entrepreneurs working with teams and organisation members from different background and in foreign contexts requires pronounced abilities – which is why for the competence area **human resource management and leadership** we have identified the following **two competences**:

Competence	Description	Source
Human resource management	The competence of attracting and hiring the right mix of individuals on a national and international level – including the skill to make decisions on personnel planning, recruiting, performance assessment and remuneration planning.	(Weber et al., 2015; P. Bloom & Smith, 2010; Loué, 2018; Pache & Santos, 2012)
Organisational structures and teamwork	The competence to effectively implement organisational structures and processes for international scaling, while fostering teamwork and collaboration with organisational members on a national and international level.	(Cortellazzo et al., 2020; Sure, 2017)

Table 5 – Competence area 4: Human resource management and leadership

3.2.5. Area 5: Marketing & Communication

Repeatedly, the pursuit of a social mission through market-based methods has been recognised as the very essence of a social business (Mair & Martí, 2006; Saebi et al., 2018). While these inherently conflicting missions of social orientation vs. market orientation are reflected in a social enterprise's internal configuration (Pache & Santos, 2012), social ventures have to decide between highlighting their social mission, their market mission, or both at the same time towards stakeholder groups in their **marketing and communication** endeavours (Smith et al., 2013). In this context, social entrepreneurs have been found to sensibly consider whether and to what extent they make use of commercial terminology, as this may result in tensions between the venture and some of their stakeholder groups (e.g. the general public, staff, or local authorities). Instead, social ventures turn to using alternative terms in order to emphasise the social mission – which often serves as a key lever for the engagement and communication with external stakeholders (Bergfeld et al., 2021; Sullivan Mort et al., 2003). Generally, social entrepreneurs connect to customers with whom they share common values (Marshall, 2011). For the social entrepreneur scaling to foreign markets, reaching local customers may be a challenging task – as social problems of foreign local communities may be of a very specific character (Yang & Wu, 2014). Since the world becomes more and more digitalised and connected, international organisations increasingly engage and interact with customers across borders (Katsikeas et al., 2019). In this context, successful international social entrepreneurs do not only strongly commit to a social mission, but also effectively communicate it by including it as a core element of the marketing endeavours. This, in turn, goes along with drafting a clear and appealing story of the enterprise's mission as a means of connecting with international customers and partners, which may consequently stimulate purchases (Marshall, 2011a). In this context, social entrepreneurs must carefully weigh on the language and message they use to target foreign communities (Sure, 2017) – as foreign cultures may have substantially different perceptions as to what may be acceptable and desirable.

One of the challenges for social entrepreneurial scaling is that the entrepreneurs fail to **understand the needs and culture** of their target group to effectively address them. For successful scaling, the social entrepreneur must therefore be able to convincingly persuade the firm's core stakeholders – including spreading a message of the key benefits of the social venture in order to achieve greater social impact (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009). In an international context, successful entrepreneurs have ranked comprehensive marketing skills among the most important competences – which includes, amongst others, the ability to design convincing sales pitches, to promote a favourable image of the venture, to foster customer loyalty, and to adapt their offerings to the demand of their audience (Loué, 2018).

At the same time, engaging in cross-border activities opens up several other considerations. This includes, amongst others, decisions on how to market products and services abroad, the pricing strategies to be implemented, as well as eventual distribution channels (Sure, 2017). While these reflections are important, they may of course, not equally apply to every international social entrepreneur, as there can be substantial differences between business models and scaling strategies – and consequently, the way marketing and communication activities are managed. In light of the above, we find that for social entrepreneurs aiming to internationalise, **marketing and communication** is of crucial importance – which is why we have identified the following **two competences**:

Competence	Description	Source
Marketing	The competence of formulating an international marketing strategy for scaling the social mission – including the skill to design convincing sales pitches, to foster customer loyalty, to convey a good image of the ventures, and to adapt the offerings to the firm’s audience.	(Bloom & Chatterji, 2009b; Loué, 2018; Marshall, 2011)
Communication	The competence of connecting to and persuading international customers and partners who hold the same values as the social entrepreneur by communicating compelling stories of the social mission, and by considering cultural differences in language and communication.	(Bergfeld et al., 2021; Kalinic & Pater, 2013; Zahra et al., 2008; Sure, 2017)

Table 6 – Competence area 5: Marketing and communication

3.2.6. Area 6: Intercultural Competence

One of the primary characteristics of social entrepreneurs is that they, above all, strive to tackle social issues (Mair & Martí, 2006; Miller et al., 2012). Thus, social entrepreneurs have profound understanding of the situation, values and specific needs of the community and individuals they aim to address (Murphy & Coombes, 2009). For international social entrepreneurs, **this knowledge about foreign cultures and specific economic contexts**, however, may not be immediately tangible. As previously outlined in the section on the challenges of social entrepreneurial internationalisation (see Section 2.2.2.), social ventures that engage in cross-border activities may have to face various barriers by entering operational environments that are utterly different from their respective home market (Yang & Wu, 2014). These foreign social, economic and legal environments can have very different characteristics – which can result in great challenges for international social entrepreneurs to operate in these contexts. Thus, social entrepreneurs aiming to scale abroad should gain a comprehensive understanding of these systems (ISSA Report, 2020; Marshall, 2011) and, consequently, develop appropriate strategic approaches (Yang & Wu, 2014) – which we also discussed in competence area two.

In addition to tangible knowledge on international economic and legal systems, which can be understood as the cognitive level of intercultural knowledge (Lang & Baldauf, 2016), **intercultural competence** also refers to elements of culture that are harder to grasp. In this sense, culture can be understood as the “shared motives, values, beliefs, identities and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations” (House et al., 2004, p.15). In terms of intercultural competence, this includes, amongst others, considerations on cultural characteristics as to how communication unfolds, how hierarchical structures are perceived and enacted upon, how ambiguity is perceived as well as other customs and habits (Hofstede, 2011). In light of this, intercultural competence can be understood as the ability to communicate with individuals from other cultures in a situation-specific and effective manner. This includes, on the one hand, the competence to demonstrate intercultural sensitivity towards foreign partners; and on the other hand, to adjust behaviour accordingly (Lang & Baldauf, 2016). The two probably most well-known and relevant studies on cultural elements to date are the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004) and Geert Hofstede’s (2011) model on cultural dimensions. These studies group national cultural characteristics in relation to one another, and illustrate how national cultural characteristics vary across countries. Hofstede (2011), for example, explores dimensions such as power distance, individualism vs. collectivism, short-term vs. long-term orientation, or indulgence vs. restraint. The GLOBE study partly builds on Hofstede’s

dimensions and further incorporates elements such as humane orientation or assertiveness orientation (House et al., 2004). Overall, these studies provide a useful means of orientation on how differing cultural characteristics play out across national cultures.

Intercultural considerations are **relevant to many organisational aspects** in internationalisation – for example, in the course of marketing activities, which we outlined in area five, or for the collaboration with employees or partners in foreign countries. In light of this, these abilities may be even more important to social entrepreneurs – as they, in comparison to commercial entrepreneurs, target specific social needs (Mair & Martí, 2006). Tucker and Croom (2021) suggest that social entrepreneurial behaviour towards foreign cultures is defined by religious, social, and cross-cultural factors. At the same time, they point towards a possible “dark side” of social entrepreneurship, which may come into play when social entrepreneurs understand of their actions as heroic, while they “serve as a justification rather than a motivation” (Tucker & Croom, 2021, p.5). More precisely, foreign contexts in particular require social entrepreneurs to be aware of their actions – in that they do not come across as demeaning or paternalistic (Tucker & Croom, 2021).

Coherent with international entrepreneurship literature, which emphasises cross-cultural understanding as a crucial element in an organisation’s pursuit of international opportunity identification (Muzychenko, 2008; Zahra et al., 2008), we argue that the successful international social entrepreneur should possess the competence to evaluate and to understand cultural specifics in order to tackle social problems on an international scale. On the one hand, these skills may refer to knowledge on foreign economic and legal environments and to operate in them accordingly; while on the other hand, intercultural competence should be regarded in terms of intangible knowledge on foreign cultural specifics, behaviours and customs.

With this in mind, it might not be sensible to regard intercultural competence only as a standalone ability. Instead, intercultural competence might come into play in many different contexts, and to varying degrees. For instance, literature highlights the importance of context-specific competences in international marketing, describing market knowledge as an antecedent of international marketing capabilities (Morgan et al., 2018). In light of this, we argue that intercultural competence serves as a **bridging competence** that connects multiple competence areas. In line with the above, we therefore identify the following **two competences** in the thematic area **intercultural competence**:

Competence	Description	Source
Intercultural competence and awareness	The competence of cultivating an awareness of foreign cultural characteristics; and at the same time, displaying cultural sensitivity towards foreign individuals and communities.	(Hofstede, 2011; House et al., 2004; Lang & Baldauf, 2016)
Economic, legal and administrative knowledge	The competence of attaining knowledge on foreign social, economic, and legal systems; and to consequently develop and evaluate strategic approaches for the specific needs of the international social venture.	(Kalinic & Pater, 2013; Marshall, 2011; Yang & Wu, 2014; Zahra et al., 2008)

Table 7 – Competence area 6: Intercultural competence

3.2.7. Area 7: Managing Networks and the Institutional Environment

In research, it has been recognised that for social entrepreneurs, building networks posits a crucial success factor in light of limited organisational resources. In the same vein, the social entrepreneur must possess the skill of creatively and effectively **building and fostering relationships** within his or her network. In comparison to commercial enterprises, the sphere of the social enterprise includes a wide diversity of heterogeneous stakeholders – including (co-)funders, staff, non-profit organisations, governments, competitors, or clients – which ultimately comes along with high complexity for the social entrepreneur who has to balance these interests (Austin, 2000; Austin et al., 2006). This focus on relationship management further proves particularly important in terms of scaling a social venture’s business model. For entrepreneurial scaling, building effective alliances in the form of partnerships, coalitions, and other relationships in the pursuit of social change is a critical element, which eases the organisation’s path to achieving its goals (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009). These relationships, however, are not only important for the objective of spreading a social mission (Bauwens et al., 2020), but are critical for achieving widespread access to resources – which, in turn, facilitates successful scaling endeavours (Weber et al., 2015). Similarly, successful social entrepreneurs have been found to be very effective networkers who are in unison with the ecosystem surrounding the social business (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009). Consequently, finding suitable partners is the first major and highly relevant step in the course of relationship building for social entrepreneurs tapping into foreign markets.

Yet, managing these relationships may entail great difficulties for the social entrepreneur. One of the key challenges emerging thereof is the consideration as to how close the social venture will work with its partners, as well as the degree of control to be relinquished over the social venture. While there is no universal answer to the question of who exactly the right partner is and to what extent social entrepreneurs may need or want to depend on others, social entrepreneurs

must develop the capability of assessing what the right decision for their venture is, and how they can effectively manage alliances (Weber et al., 2015). In pursuit of their mission to induce social change, social entrepreneurs are likely to depend on governmental relationships for support (Bloom & Chatterji, 2009). Generally, some national institutional contexts prove more favourable for social ventures than others (Stephan et al., 2015). Especially when entering challenging institutional contexts, social entrepreneurs must actively seek for governmental support. In this context, Bloom and Chatterji (2009, p.120) define lobbying rather loosely as “the effectiveness with which the organisation is able to advocate for government actions that may work in its favour”. In the same vein, social entrepreneurs depend on building a favourable reputation, striving to be seen as a legitimate market player in the eye of the public (Weber et al., 2015; Nicholls, 2010). Such actions assist the social entrepreneur in attaining resources that are valuable to the organisation (Austin et al., 2006) – which is not only crucial on the national level, but also in international contexts (Weber et al., 2015).

For social ventures aiming to scale their business internationally, the ability to **manage networks and relationships** is of utmost importance. Studies exploring the internationalisation of social entrepreneurs have highlighted the relevance of engaging in relationship building in order to pursue social impact on a global level (Kalinic & Pater, 2013; Marshall, 2011). In accordance with the suggestion that international social entrepreneurs should foster cross-cultural knowledge, collaborative partnerships may help them in accessing context-specific insights (Marshall, 2011) – which, again, highlights the need to effectively manage these stakeholder relationships across various national contexts (Yang & Wu, 2014). For international (social) entrepreneurs, networks are further perceived as an imperative means to cope with institutional challenges, such as acquiring foreign market knowledge (Freeman & Cavusgil, 2007; Kalinic & Pater, 2013). When Vahlne and Johnson (2009) revisited their Uppsala model and the notion that firms entering foreign markets are affected by the “liability of foreignness” three decades after their first study (see Section 2.1.), they essentially concluded that network affiliation is a prerequisite for successful internationalisation – making those organisations outside of relevant networks subject to the so-called “liability of outsidership”.

The issues outlined above highlight the need for international social entrepreneurs to develop skills linked to effectively building cross-border relationships and to coping with tensions arising thereof. Summarising the above, we find that in the competence area **managing networks and the institutional environment** the following **three competences** are relevant:

Competence	Description	Source
Relationship and network building	The competence to find suitable partners and to effectively build and maintain these relationships across national contexts with a diverse variety of stakeholder groups.	(Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Marshall, 2011; Yang & Wu, 2014)
Alliance management	The competence to effectively balance dependence and control over the social venture, in favour of attaining valuable resources for cross-border operations.	(Weber et al., 2015)
Advocacy and lobbying	The competence to successfully advocate for government actions that favour the social enterprise, while building a positive reputation and, at the same time, striving for legitimacy in the foreign market.	(Weber et al., 2015; Bloom & Chatterji, 2009)

Table 8 – Competence area 7: Managing networks and the institutional environment

3.3. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Within the past decade, social entrepreneurship as a stream of research has increasingly gained attention among scholars. Yet, there is a prevailing understanding that the literature is still in its infancy and somewhat fragmented (Dacin et al., 2011; Saebi et al., 2018). This may be even more the case for research on international social entrepreneurship, which so far has merely scratched the surface on the drivers, processes and outcomes of social enterprise internationalisation (Alon et al., 2020).

In this literature review, we have attempted to shed light on a phenomenon that, so far, has received little to no attention among researchers – the **competences needed for international social entrepreneurial scaling**. In our conceptualisation, we unpacked the state-of-the-art in international social entrepreneurship, specifically highlighting the potential, drivers, and challenges of social entrepreneurial cross-border activities. Finally, we developed a skill and competence framework for social entrepreneurs aiming to engage in cross-border activities. From our analysis, we identified seven competence clusters including, in total, 15 skills. Overall, we found that social entrepreneurs are inherently subject to complexities, which result from the pursuit of both a social and a commercial mission (Mair & Martí, 2006; Pache & Santos, 2012). These complexities may prove even more difficult in terms of cross-border scaling, as social entrepreneurs face additional barriers emerging in international contexts (Kalinic & Pater, 2013; Marshall, 2011; Zahra et al., 2008). On a general note, our analysis revealed that the competences and skills social entrepreneurs required for international scaling are quite diverse and bridge multiple organisational functions. While the commitment to a social mission lies at the very heart of social businesses and social entrepreneurial internationalisation (Kalinic & Pater, 2013; Zahra et al., 2008), our analysis revealed that competences and skills addressed in literature are largely related to commercial and strategic aspects of international (social) entrepreneurship. This is somewhat surprising, as for social entrepreneurial activities, social skills such as empathy or sympathy are highly relevant (Amini et al., 2018). These discrepancies may stem from the fact that, on the one hand, research in the thematic area of international social entrepreneurship is still at an early stage; on the other hand, social entrepreneurs are frequently illustrated as being a specific type of the traditional entrepreneur (Austin et al., 2006; Dacin et al., 2010).

Notably, from our analysis we have recognised that there exists a **gap in literature** towards entrepreneurial skills and competences concerning the internal attitudes and interpersonal behavioural factors driving the internationalisation of social entrepreneurs. In that context, some scholars argue that a risk-taking

mindset (Kalinic & Pater, 2013; Marshall, 2011), and a strong personal commitment to a social mission serve as a motivation for cross-border activities (Kalinic & Pater, 2013). Similarly, we found relationship building and networking skills to be among the most important competences named in international (social) entrepreneurial literature (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Kalinic & Pater, 2013; Marshall, 2011). Yet, from existing research, we lack understanding as to how exactly these factors might play out and favour internationalisation. In a similar vein, we found that research so far has given little attention as to how the competences required for international scaling might relate to different modes of internationalisation – which is why, with our study, we hope to provide a more nuanced understanding of international social entrepreneurial skills and competences.

On a concluding note, we contend that the skills and competences identified in this study shall not be understood as a comprehensive collection applicable to every single social entrepreneur aiming to scale across borders. As Dacin et al. (2010, p.42) remark:

“Defining social entrepreneurship by individual-level characteristics and processes and activities will inevitably lead to yet more discussion and debate about what these characteristics should be; it is a debate which can never be resolved, because it is unlikely that a definitive set of characteristics can be applied to all kinds of social entrepreneurial activity across all contexts.”

4. Study 1: Support Needs of Internationalising Social Entrepreneurs

Peter Vandor, Magdalena Winkler, and Martin Mehrwald

In previous sections, we have discussed the theoretical background of international entrepreneurship (Sections 2.1) and international social entrepreneurship (Section 2.1), and have developed a literature-based framework of key competences (Section 3). Complementing these perspectives, this section offers an empirical perspective on the topic. In an analysis of a unique dataset of 579 social entrepreneurs from 54 cities on five continents, we explore the areas in which internationalising social entrepreneurs seek support (Section 4.2.1.), and how these differ from other social entrepreneurs, commercial entrepreneurs (Section 4.2.2.), and along different trajectories of internationalisation (Section 4.2.3.). The section closes with a brief discussion of findings (Section 4.3.)

4.1. METHOD

In order to investigate and test these competing hypotheses, we conducted a **quantitative survey among members of the Impact Hub network**, “one of the world’s largest networks focused on building entrepreneurial communities for impact at scale” (Impact Hub, 2019). The sampling approach provides a high fit with the goal of studying support needs of different types of entrepreneurship. The Impact Hub network serves as co-working space, service provider and intermediary in the entrepreneurship ecosystems of many cities across the globe. While attracting many impact-oriented founders, it also hosts a diverse range of entrepreneurs including regular commercial entrepreneurs, sustainable entrepreneurs and representatives of other types of organisations (Vandor et al., 2015). This setup allows us to investigate entrepreneurs with high diversity with respect to their mission orientation.

4.1.1. Variables

The survey captured internationalisation stages through several steps. First, respondents in an executive position in an organisation were asked to indicate the

development stage that was most characteristic of their venture: options including (1) intention formation, (2) idea development, (3) start-up, (4) established organisation, and (5) scaling (Andersson et al., 2016). Respondents with scaling organisations were subsequently asked to indicate whether their scaled their venture locally or internationally. Respondents who indicated prior internationalisation or scaling were asked to indicate the mode of scaling. Using the taxonomy of Dees and Anderson (2004), they were offered to choices “Branching (e.g. by establishing new operations of my own organisation)”, “Creating affiliations with partners (e.g. through franchise and/or licensing agreements)”, “Disseminating knowledge (e.g. through seminars, websites, handbooks)”, or a combination of these approaches².

Another key variable was **mission orientation**, was measured with an instrument which was developed in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor project (Lepoutre et al., 2013) and has been applied in empirical research on social entrepreneurship (e.g. Bacq et al., 2016). Participants were asked to define what kind of value they aspired to create through their activities and to distribute 100 points to indicate their focus on three dimensions: financial value, environmental value and social value. The variable was then recoded to indicate whether the respondent prioritised social or environmental value above commercial goals and thus can be understood as primarily social entrepreneur (1) or not (0). This is consistent with an understanding of social entrepreneurship as an activity that combines and balances social and economic value creation but eventually prioritises the social mission over other goals (Dacin et al., 2010; Dees, 1998).

Support needs were captured with a condensed version of the entrepreneurial support needs scale developed in Vandor et al. (2015), containing 18 areas in which entrepreneurs frequently seek support. Entrepreneurs were asked to indicate the importance of those needs over the last twelve months on a three-point Likert-type scale ranging from “low importance” (1) to “high importance” (3). Such three-point scales have been argued to be appropriate when they are used as part of composite scales and where it is important to reduce fatigue among participants (Lehmann and Hulbert, 1972).

The model included some **control variables**: the age of respondents, the number of years of work experience, gender (the survey included variables for female,

² Note: the taxonomy of Dees and Anderson (2004), which is widely used in the context of social entrepreneurship, shares some main elements of the theory around mode of entry in commercial internationalisation (e.g. Agarwal and Ramaswami, 1992). However, it does not include export (probably due to the high level of human-oriented services in social services) as categories, nor acquisitions, which are very rare in the social realm. Instead, it adds open dissemination as a category that is more widespread among impact-oriented organisations for whom appropriating returns is sometimes a lower priority.

male and other non-binary categories, the latter being collapsed into one third gender category), and the level of educational attainment. Further questions also included whether the respondent had (co-)founded the organisation, and their current role in it. The survey was distributed online through a decentralised network of Impact Hub representatives. It was available in seven languages.

4.1.2. The Sample

The unfiltered **sample** includes responses of 2,560 individuals from 59 cities in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America. In accordance with the sampling criteria used in other studies on entrepreneurship, in particular work based on data from the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor project (Lepoutre et al., 2013), only respondents that (co-)founded the venture and held a board or management position remained included in the sample. After excluding ventures that were not predominantly impact-oriented³, respondents who were not founders and executives in their organisation, and organisations that had been in existence longer than 10 years, 579 responses remained.

Out of these organisations, 100 reported to being in the development stage of scaling (the rest consistent of 274 organisations in the start-up stage and 205 organisations with an established business but not scaling activity). Of these organisations, 28 reported to have expanded internationally *over the last year* (the rest locally, or not at all). Since organisations reported on their specific support needs over the past year, this sub-sample allows us to identify the support needs of social entrepreneurs of organisations that have internationalised their activities in the course of the last 12 months. While we selected this subsample to be able to explore support needs with the highest level of accuracy, it has to be noted that internationalisation is more widely spread in the overall sample. A total of 239 respondents reported to already operate on an international or global basis (43.7% of social entrepreneurs). Moreover, 102 respondents (16.7% of social entrepreneurs) indicated that gaining access to support on how to expand into other geographical areas is of very high importance to them, implying a high level of interest in internationalisation among social entrepreneurs in the sample.

The ventures in the subsample of internationalising social entrepreneurs used a broad variate of scaling approaches. 32.1% had chosen to internationalise through branching, another 21.4% through affiliation and another 25% had chosen to openly disseminating their knowledge, which is regarded as “the simplest and usually the least resource intensive, although the disseminating organisation

³ Respondents indicated in the survey whether their ventures’ prioritise the creation of economic, social or environmental value. The latter two types are understood as “impact-oriented” in this study.

has little control over implementation in new locations” (Dees and Anderson, 2004, p.28). Three respondents (10.7%) used a combination of dissemination and affiliation, two combined dissemination with branching, one respondent reported used all named approaches. The subsample also provides a balanced mix with respect to other characteristics: 50% of respondents were male, 45% female, 5% “Other/no answer”. Respondents were based in Amsterdam Vienna, (4 ventures), Madrid, London (3 ventures), Zurich, San Francisco (2 ventures), and Caracas, Taipei, Athens, Austin, Bucharest, Florence, Stockholm, Moscow, Munich (1 venture respectively). Their organisations had been founded 3.6 years ago on average (S.D.: 3.3 years) and were most frequently active in education and learning (32.1%), technology (7%), philanthropy (21.4%), corporate social responsibility (14.3%), healthcare research and consulting (each 10.7%).

4.2. RESULTS

4.2.1. What Support do Internationalising Social Entrepreneurs need?

First, our analysis turns to the core group of social entrepreneurs that have been internationalising over the past years. Table 9 reports the averages and standard deviates of their support needs in 18 areas, as well as the share of respondents who identified a support need as “very important”. The most frequently selected areas include “building visibility and credibility” in the target country as well as its ecosystem (64%), “feeling part of a larger community and network” (46%), “Find and keep good talent and staff” (43%), “accessing new clients and beneficiaries” and “building international connections” (46% each), and “connecting to advisors, experts and supporters” (29%).

The relative importance of **building credibility and networks** is consistent with the more generally recognised role of networks in international entrepreneurship to “help entrepreneurs identify international opportunities and establish credibility” (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005, p.54) and to overcome the liabilities of outsidership (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009). As Johanson and Vahlne (2009) argue, an internationalising firm suffers most fundamentally from being an outsider in the target market, which can make business nearly impossible. Its outsider position hinders the internationalising firm in gaining access to knowledge about actors in the target market and localised business knowledge, as well as the ability to identify opportunities and necessary. Against this background, it is no surprise that building credibility and local networks were not only seen as important for internationalisation, but as areas, in which external support is required.

Support need	Average	Std. Dev.	Share "very important"
Gain visibility and credibility	2.64	0.49	64%
Feel part of a larger community and network	2.39	0.63	46%
Find and keep good talent and staff	2.32	0.67	43%
Access new clients or beneficiaries	2.29	0.81	50%
Build international connections	2.29	0.76	46%
Connect to advisors, experts and supporters	2.18	0.61	29%
Expand into new geographic areas	2.14	0.71	32%
Come up with new ideas and initiatives	2.14	0.71	32%
Learn about new issues and topics	2.11	0.69	29%
Partner and collaborate with other members	2.07	0.60	21%
Generate revenue	2.07	0.72	29%
Obtain financial capital	1.96	0.79	29%
Develop skills and capabilities	1.96	0.69	21%
Evaluate impact of own activities	1.96	0.74	25%
Strengthen your personal motivation	1.93	0.81	29%
Advocate for better policy frameworks and market conditions for my activities	1.93	0.72	21%
Access better working infrastructure	1.89	0.74	21%
Start an own project or venture	1.64	0.78	18%

Table 9 – Support needs of internationalising social entrepreneurs (n=28)

Other areas which are typically more associated with earlier stages of the venture process are clearly less important for internationalising social entrepreneurs. Such areas including support in “starting an own project or venture” (18%), “strengthening individual motivation” (29%) and “accessing better working infrastructure” (21%). In spite of these clear differences, it is worth noting that there is considerable variance within the group of social entrepreneurs. With the exception of gaining visibility and credibility, none of the areas was identified as “very important” by more than half of the sub-sample. This points at a potential opportunity to pinpoint support needs more specifically in the group, as will be explored in Section 5.2.3.

Support need	Internationalizing social entrepreneurs (n=28)			Non-internationalizing social entrepreneurs (n=551)			Difference
	Avg.	Std. dev.	Share "very important"	Avg.	Std. dev.	Share "very important"	
Gain visibility and credibility	2.64	0.49	64%	2.31	0.69	44%	20%
Feel part of a larger community and network	2.39	0.63	46%	2.37	0.62	45%	2%
Find and keep good talent and staff	2.32	0.67	43%	1.94	0.80	29%	14%
Access new clients or beneficiaries	2.29	0.81	50%	2.21	0.74	40%	10%
Build international connections	2.29	0.76	46%	1.86	0.78	25%	22%
Connect to advisors, experts and supporters	2.18	0.61	29%	2.29	0.62	38%	-10%
Expand into new geographic areas	2.14	0.71	32%	1.65	0.75	17%	15%
Come up with new ideas and initiatives	2.14	0.71	32%	2.18	0.69	34%	-2%
Learn about new issues and topics	2.11	0.69	29%	2.05	0.67	25%	3%
Partner and collaborate with other members	2.07	0.60	21%	2.12	0.66	29%	-7%
Generate revenue	2.07	0.72	29%	2.01	0.77	30%	-2%
Obtain financial capital	1.96	0.79	29%	1.77	0.80	24%	5%
Develop skills and capabilities	1.96	0.69	21%	2.15	0.69	32%	-11%
Evaluate impact of own activities	1.96	0.74	25%	1.94	0.71	22%	3%
Strengthen your personal motivation	1.93	0.81	29%	2.23	0.72	40%	-12%
Advocate for better policy frameworks and market conditions for my activities	1.93	0.72	21%	1.64	0.71	14%	8%
Access better working infrastructure	1.89	0.74	21%	2.03	0.72	28%	-6%
Start an own project or venture	1.64	0.78	18%	1.88	0.81	28%	-10%

Table 10 – Support needs of internationalising social entrepreneurs and non-internationalising social entrepreneurs

4.2.2. How Unique are these Support Needs? Comparisons with Non-internationalising Social Entrepreneurs and Internationalising Commercial Entrepreneurs

In the previous section, we have identified a prioritised list of areas, in which internationalising social entrepreneurs seek external support. In a next step, we will compare the priorities of these entrepreneurs with two groups: a) social entrepreneurs who are not internationalising, and b) commercial entrepreneurs who are also in the process of internationalisation. This allows us to gauge whether the identified support needs are indeed distinct for internationalising social entrepreneurs or whether they represent support needs that are maybe shared by a larger group of entrepreneurs and are not typical for internationalisation. Understanding the distinctness of needs will help understand whether support services aimed at other groups of entrepreneurs can meet such needs or whether internationalising social entrepreneurs require different vocational and education training.

The comparison between the support needs **of internationalising social entrepreneurs and non-internationalising social entrepreneurs** is presented in Table 11. While results show similar levels of overall support needs, they also

point at considerable differences.⁴ Areas such as “strengthening your personal motivation”, “starting an own project or ventures”, “accessing better work infrastructure” and “connect to advisors, experts and supporters” are more important for the non-internationalising sub-sample, reflecting the lower level of organisational maturity in this group (Vandor et al., 2015). At the same time, support in **“gaining visibility and credibility”, “building international connections”, “expanding into new geographical areas” and “accessing new clients and beneficiaries”** is in higher demand in the internationalising social entrepreneurs sub-sample. This underlines the previous findings that building credibility and (as well as through) accessing networks of partners and clients abroad are central areas, in which support is needed.

Notably, **support in the area of human resources** is also higher in demand among internationalising social entrepreneurs, whereas the development of skills and capabilities appears less important as an area of support. In many cases, this reflects fact that these organisations have grown out of their earliest start-up phase and employ other staff than the entrepreneurs themselves. This allows a critical shift with respect to capacity building. Rather than requiring the founders to learn every needed skill (as is often the case in nascent entrepreneurship stages), these organisations can build organisational competences through skilling different parts of their staff, hiring or contracting needed expertise or building and embedding knowledge in their organisational processes.

Support need	Internationalizing social entrepreneurs (n=28)			Internationalizing commercial entrepreneurs (n=54)			Difference
	Avg.	Std. dev.	Share "very important"	Avg.	Std. dev.	Share "very important"	
Gain visibility and credibility	2.64	0.49	64%	2.24	0.75	43%	22%
Feel part of a larger community and network	2.39	0.63	46%	2.22	0.74	41%	6%
Find and keep good talent and staff	2.32	0.67	43%	1.96	0.85	33%	10%
Access new clients or beneficiaries	2.29	0.81	50%	2.11	0.79	37%	13%
Build international connections	2.29	0.76	46%	2.24	0.73	41%	6%
Connect to advisors, experts and supporters	2.18	0.61	29%	2.20	0.66	33%	-5%
Expand into new geographic areas	2.14	0.71	32%	2.19	0.78	41%	-9%
Come up with new ideas and initiatives	2.14	0.71	32%	2.15	0.71	33%	-1%
Learn about new issues and topics	2.11	0.69	29%	2.09	0.71	30%	-1%
Partner and collaborate with other members	2.07	0.60	21%	2.06	0.76	31%	-10%
Generate revenue	2.07	0.72	29%	2.19	0.80	43%	-14%
Obtain financial capital	1.96	0.79	29%	1.74	0.85	26%	3%
Develop skills and capabilities	1.96	0.69	21%	2.04	0.67	24%	-3%
Evaluate impact of own activities	1.96	0.74	25%	1.83	0.69	17%	8%
Strengthen your personal motivation	1.93	0.81	29%	2.24	0.78	44%	-16%
Advocate for better policy frameworks and market conditions for my activities	1.93	0.72	21%	1.50	0.61	6%	16%
Access better working infrastructure	1.89	0.74	21%	2.24	0.70	39%	-17%
Start an own project or venture	1.64	0.78	18%	1.72	0.83	24%	-6%

⁴ Differences in group comparisons were rounded as decimal points were considered in the analysis.

Table 11 – Support needs of internationalising social entrepreneurs and internationalising commercial entrepreneurs

The Impact Hub survey data also allows for a comparison between the 28 internationalising social entrepreneurs and 54 commercial entrepreneurs who reported having actively engaged in the process of internationalising over the last year as well. While we find no difference in the overall level of support needs in the two sub-samples, there are some remarkable differences with respect to specific support needs. As illustrated in Table 11, support needs with respect to “gaining visibility and credibility”, “finding and keeping good staff”, and “accessing new clients and beneficiaries” are significantly more pronounced among social entrepreneurs than among their commercial counterparts. Again, these items seem to be distinct for the group of international social entrepreneurs. **In comparison with commercial entrepreneurs, the higher need for visibility, sales and HR support** potentially reflects underlying differences in the funding models of these organisations. While commercial entrepreneurs tend to rely on earned income models (as is also reflected in the high importance of the support need “generating revenue” in the commercial sub-sample), social entrepreneurs more often seek third-party funding through public or philanthropic sources. These types of partners however tend to favour domestic organisations, while international organisations can suffer from a liability of foreignness (e.g. Ölberger et al., 2020). Together, these arguments suggest that social entrepreneurs need to build credibility with several quite different stakeholders in a new country in order to start internationalisation (beneficiaries/clients as well as funders/donors), while commercial entrepreneurs with an earned in some cases might more easily take a gradual approach, e.g. starting with first sales to one particular client.

Other differences include “**advocating for better policy frameworks and market conditions**” and “**evaluation social impact**” which are more important to international social entrepreneurs, and the need to “strengthen personal motivation” and “accessing work infrastructure”, which is more pronounced among commercial entrepreneurs. Again, some these patterns reflect underlying differences between social and commercial entrepreneurship with respect to entrepreneurs’ motivations, key stakeholders and questions of performance measurement (Austin et al., 2006; Stephan and Drencheva, 2017).

4.2.3. How do Support Needs differ along Modes of Internationalisation?

The data also allows us to explore the support needs of different modes of internationalisation. Research on commercial internationalisation has repeatedly shown that different modes of internationalisation are associated with different demands on the entrepreneur and their organisation (Agarwal and Ramaswami, 1992; Andersen, 1997). In line with argument, our data reveals interesting differences between the support needs of entrepreneurs that internationalised through branching, affiliation and dissemination.

Support need	Branching (n=13)			Affiliation (n=11)			Dissemination (n=12)		
	Avg.	Std. dev.	Share "very important"	Avg.	Std. dev.	Share "very important"	Avg.	Std. dev.	Share "very important"
Gain visibility and credibility	2.77	0.44	77%	2.55	0.52	55%	2.50	0.52	50%
Feel part of a larger community and network	2.46	0.52	46%	2.27	0.65	36%	2.33	0.65	42%
Find and keep good talent and staff	2.54	0.52	54%	2.18	0.75	36%	2.17	0.58	25%
Access new clients or beneficiaries	2.62	0.77	77%	2.27	0.79	45%	1.92	0.79	25%
Build international connections	2.31	0.85	54%	2.09	0.83	36%	2.25	0.75	42%
Connect to advisors, experts and supporters	2.46	0.52	46%	1.91	0.54	9%	2.00	0.60	17%
Expand into new geographic areas	2.31	0.75	46%	1.82	0.60	9%	2.17	0.72	33%
Come up with new ideas and initiatives	2.38	0.65	46%	2.09	0.70	27%	1.83	0.72	17%
Learn about new issues and topics	2.31	0.48	31%	2.00	0.63	18%	2.00	0.85	33%
Partner and collaborate with other members	2.23	0.60	31%	1.82	0.60	9%	2.17	0.58	25%
Generate revenue	2.46	0.52	46%	1.82	0.75	18%	2.08	0.67	25%
Obtain financial capital	2.15	0.69	31%	2.18	0.87	45%	1.75	0.75	17%
Develop skills and capabilities	2.15	0.80	38%	2.00	0.45	9%	1.75	0.62	8%
Evaluate impact of own activities	2.15	0.80	38%	1.82	0.40	0%	1.83	0.83	25%
Strengthen your personal motivation	2.00	0.91	38%	1.82	0.75	18%	1.83	0.72	17%
Advocate for better policy frameworks and market conditions for my activities	2.08	0.86	38%	2.09	0.70	27%	1.83	0.72	17%
Access better working infrastructure	2.23	0.60	31%	1.45	0.69	9%	1.75	0.75	17%
Start an own project or venture	1.92	0.86	31%	1.45	0.69	9%	1.58	0.67	8%

Table 12 – Comparison of support needs of different types of internationalisation models (n=28 multiple answers possible)

First, it is worth pointing out that **branching was associated with the highest overall support needs** (average of support needs branching: 2.31 on the scale from "1 – support is not important" to "3 – support is very important", affiliation: 1.98, dissemination: 1.99). Support needs that were more pronounced for branching organisations in 16 of the 18 categories, and in particular in "gaining visibility and credibility", and "accessing new clients and beneficiaries" (both identified as very important for 77% of respondents each), as well as "finding and keeping new talent" and "connecting to advisors, supporters and experts". A number of areas that are otherwise associated with early-stage businesses were

also perceived as more important, including “coming up with new ideas”, “accessing work infrastructure”, and “learning about new issues and topics”. Overall, this is consistent with the understanding in prior research that branching is the mode of internationalisation, which requires that the highest level of resource investment on behalf of the scaling organisation (Dees and Anderson, 2004; Heinecke and Mayer, 2012). Unlikely other modes, branching requires the entrepreneur to learn about the local marketplace, competition and regulations, as well as **building the operative and coordination infrastructure** for the new branch. Moreover, it is the mode in which the scaling company shoulders the highest share of risk of failure. Against this background, seeking support and trainings appears a rational way to mitigate this risk.

In contrast, respondents who **internationalise through affiliation** (e.g. licensing agreements, franchising) reported **lower support needs**. Especially support with respect to connecting to advisors, international connections and geographic expansion in general was in lower demand than in other groups. A possible interpretation for finding is that successful affiliation models tend to be able to foster demand abroad without the need to actively research and advertise in the new country. Organisations such as the Impact Hub network or Social Impact Award often receive many more request to join the network than can be processed (Giudici et al., 2020). The necessity to build networks, credibility, etc. is thus more likely to fall on the local partner in this scenario. At the same time, such agreements and licensing often do not allow full cost recovery in the social domain but require additional cross-funding from third parties, which might explain the higher focus on obtaining financial capital in this mode.

Finally, internationalisation through **dissemination** reported a slightly **different set of support priorities**. Amongst others, only 25% indicated “finding and keeping good staff” as a very important support need, which reflects that this is the least resource-intensive form of internationalising from perspective of the scaling organisations. Similarly, obtaining investment capital and accessing new clients were in lower demand than for other modes of internationalisation, reflecting that these kind of operative tasks tend to fall into the responsibility of local partners (Dees and Anderson, 2004).

Given the small sizes of available sub-samples, these findings should be taken with a pinch of salt. Nonetheless, they point towards substantial differences between different modes of internationalisation and the competences required for these distinct paths.

4.2.4. Analyses of group differences

In addition to comparing support needs between different types of entrepreneurs, the data also allows us a more general analysis of differences between these groups, e.g. with respect to their fields of activity, prior knowledge, networks, and geography. These analyses help us gain a broader understanding of the distinctive characteristics of internationalising social entrepreneurs.

- **Field of activity**

A comparison of the fields of activities and industries of internationalising and non-internationalising social entrepreneurs showed that internationalisation is fairly common in all areas. Out of 54 areas of activities and industries, only five showed differences significant on a $p < .05$ or $p < 0.1$ level.

Organisations in the areas of poverty alleviation (18% of internationalising subsample, 7% of non-internationalising subsample), philanthropy (21% v. 5%) and technology (22% v. 11%) were more likely to engage in internationalisation in our sample. The areas of community development (7% of internationalising subsample, 22% of non-internationalising subsample) and environment (4% v. 18%) saw significantly lower rates of internationalising.

Comparison of internationalisation efforts between social and commercial entrepreneurs also yield at many commonalities. Their fields of activity on diverge significantly in five areas: social entrepreneurs were overrepresented in philanthropy (none of the commercial entrepreneurs, 21% of social entrepreneurs), technology (9% of commercial entrepreneurs, 25% of social entrepreneurs) and sustainability (32 v. 6%), but underrepresented in trade (11% v. 0%) and consulting (28% of commercial entrepreneurs, 11% of social entrepreneurs).

Together, these findings point highlight that **philanthropy and technology** represent two areas of particular interest for internationalising of social entrepreneurs, who are overrepresented in this field in comparison with both non-internationalising and commercial entrepreneurs.

- **Prior knowledge and demographics**

Comparison of individual-level prior knowledge and demographics between internationalising and non-internationalising ventures yielded no significant results. Contrasting internationalising social and commercial ventures however, pointed to some interesting differences.

While only 21% of managers and founders of internationalising commercial ventures were women, the **share of female managers and founders reached**

47% among internationalising social ventures. This is in line with the more general observation that the gender gap is smaller in social entrepreneurship than commercial entrepreneurship (Huysentruyt, 2014). Little surprising, managers and founders of social ventures reported significantly higher level of third-sector work experience (Ø 6.4 years among social entrepreneurs, v. Ø 2.2 years among commercial entrepreneurs) and lower levels of private sector work experience (Ø 7.9 years v. Ø 11.3 years).

- **Networks**

A key element of internationalisation is access to the right networks (Johanson & Vahle, 2009, Section 3.2.7). Exploration of Impact Hub data allowed us some explorative analyses of these networks with respect to key supporters and funders, as well as the overall size of close and distant contacts in their network (cp. Vandor et al., 2020).

Analyses revealed some interesting differences that provide insights into the **funding structure of internationalising social entrepreneurs**. While support by most networks types was not significantly different between internationalising and non-internationalising social entrepreneurs (e.g. incubators, media, education institutions, peers), internationalising social entrepreneurs were more likely to receive three types of support:

- From philanthropists (36% among internationalising ventures, 10% among non-internationalising ventures)
- From angel investors and venture capitalists (21% v. 15%)
- From international agencies such as the EU, USAID, etc. (11% v. 4%)

From these three funding source, especially support by philanthropists distinguished them from internationalising commercial entrepreneurs. In the latter group, only 2% were able to receive this type of support.

- **Geography**

Finally, data also allowed us to explore the role of some macroeconomic indicators in the role of internationalisation among social entrepreneurs. Preliminary analyses however revealed no clear influence of the home-country context (gross domestic product per capita, rule of law, the level of corruption and others) on social enterprise internationalisation.

4.3. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we presented insights from 579 social entrepreneurs, 28 internationalising social entrepreneurs and 54 internationalising commercial entrepreneurs from the global Impact Hub network. The analyses of their support needs contribute a number of observations to this project's goal to identify key competences as well as competence gaps for the internationalisation of social entrepreneurs.

First, results show that internationalising social entrepreneurs indeed **seek a considerable amount of support from others**. Their overall level of support needs is not different from other development stages of entrepreneurs, for which such support is often already available in form of vocational education and training (VET), incubators, accelerators, etc. Overall, entrepreneurs' calls for support underlines the main premise of this project that external support can be beneficial for the promotion of international scaling of innovative social practices.

Second, the findings reveal that internationalising social entrepreneurs have a **distinct profile of support needs**, which differs from other social entrepreneurs as well as internationalising commercial entrepreneurs. Amongst other, they report higher needs to receive assistance around building credibility and visibility, building international networks with clients, partners, and resource providers, and in human resource management. As highlighted above, this distinct support profile of international social entrepreneurs points towards the **need for specific, tailored trainings and VET interventions for this group**. Simply offering general social entrepreneurship trainings or copying internationalisation trainings from the commercial realm are unlikely to provide a good fit. Instead, tailored trainings should take into account specific needs as well as other characteristics revealed by our exploratory analysis, such as the extraordinary role of philanthropic institutions as means for internationalisation funding, the different types of activities pursued or the different gender composition of international social entrepreneurs.

Third, explorative analyses suggest that **different modes of internationalisation require different types of competences and support**. Entrepreneurs who internationalise through branching report the highest level of overall demand and in particular prioritise a wide range of competences related needed for building and coordinating new operations. Other modes were associated with slightly different support needs, e.g. a rather high need for financial capital but lower needs to tap into local networks in the case of affiliation, and a preference for network resources over human and capital resources in the case of dissemination. This suggests that tailoring future trainings and VET interventions to different

modes of internationalisation might be a key success factor to create a fit with participants' needs.

Finally, the results provide some support for the decision of the authors to focus on a **broader understanding of competences** in this paper, rather than one that is only concerned with the skills of the entrepreneur. As shown in the comparison of support needs of internationalising social entrepreneurs and non-internationalising social entrepreneurs (Table 10), support in the area of human resources is in demand among internationalising social entrepreneurs, whereas the development of skills and capabilities appears less important as an area of support. As discussed, this likely reflects a higher level of maturity and size in internationalising organisations, which allows organisations to decouple competences from the individual learning of entrepreneurs, through training other staff, acquiring competences on markets for advice and consultancy, or embed them through means of organisational learning.

5. Study 2: Case Vignettes on Social Entrepreneurial Internationalisation

Magdalena Winkler, Martin Mehrwald and Peter Vador⁵

5.1. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In order to shed light on the internationalisation challenges and competences of social entrepreneurs, we applied an exploratory **qualitative case analysis** (Gioia et al., 2013; Yin, 2009). Given the scarce research on social entrepreneurial internationalisation, this approach was chosen to uncover the challenges entrepreneurs and organisations of the social economy face when going international.

The **sampling** of cases was conducted on the basis of the theoretical sampling approach. First, a long-list of 55 potential cases was gathered via research among social entrepreneurship awards, networks as well as online materials provided by the consortium partners. For our analysis, we deliberately chose two cases for each mode of scaling – namely dissemination, export, franchising, and branching – respectively (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This approach was chosen to obtain a broad understanding of the internationalisation strategies of social ventures, and consequently, to uncover insights on the challenges – and possible nuances – across our informants. The eight specific cases were selected carefully and in several iterations to ensure diversity not only with respect to mode of internationalisation but also gender, area of activity, countries of activity, and educational background. Overall, our interview partners' organisations are based in six countries and internationalised to target countries on five different continents. Three of these cases also included internationalisation attempts that can be regarded as "failed"⁶ in the sense that activities of the organisation, their partner organisation or subsidiary in a country discontinued two years after launching against the companies' prior plans. These failed internationalisation attempts can

⁵ The authors also would like to express their gratitude to Kaushal Sapkota for his contributions during our qualitative interviews.

⁶ In an organisational context, failure can be broadly defined as "a deviation from expected and desired outcomes" (Cannon & Edmondson, 2001, p.162).

be regarded as particularly insightful, as they sometimes allow identifying challenges and competence gaps that could not be surmounted by respondents.

For each organisation, we interviewed one founder or internationalisation manager. Prior to conducting these **semi-structured interviews**, we developed and tested a **qualitative research instrument** (see Appendix). Therefore, we developed a catalogue of interview questions which was designed to first develop an understanding of the internationalisation strategies employed by social ventures, and to dive deeper into challenges in a subsequent step. Prior to the interviews, the instrument was iteratively refined through discussions among the authors, and was further internally tested in the course of a trial interview.

Overall, the interviews were conducted by all three authors of this paper, with the duration of the interviews ranging between 60 and 90 minutes. Our interview partners stated to be active in two to more than 35 countries. An overview of the interview partners is presented in Table 1. In addition to the interviews, we reviewed various organisational documents for each case – such as websites, news articles, or previously collected interview data – in order to triangulate the content of interviews with organisational artefacts. These materials provided additional background information on the activities and internationalisation challenges of the selected social enterprises.

All interviews were recorded with the permission of the interview partners and transcribed ad verbatim. After transcription, the **data were analysed** according to the method proposed by Gioia et al. (2013). In order to make sense of our data, we identified 19 competence themes, which we subsequently compared, evaluated and reduced to seven competence areas. Throughout the analysis, we revisited the a priori created system of categories – namely the competence areas illustrated in the literature-based framework we developed previously (see Section 3.3.2). Iteratively cycling back and forth between our data, we dropped, merged, and revised several codes and engaged in iterative and selective coding (Grodal et al., 2020). At the same time, we revisited the literature-based framework we developed in order to check for evidence or contrasting themes that emerged in our findings (Gioia et al., 2013). Lastly, we identified two aggregate dimensions – the internal and external oriented perspective on internationalisation competences – which present the overarching framework of our findings. During our research process, we engaged in a continuous recording of memos and regular discussions among the three authors.

In the following, we will present a case vignette on each of the selected cases, describing the respective activities of the organisation, their internationalisation journey, and the identified internationalisation competences.

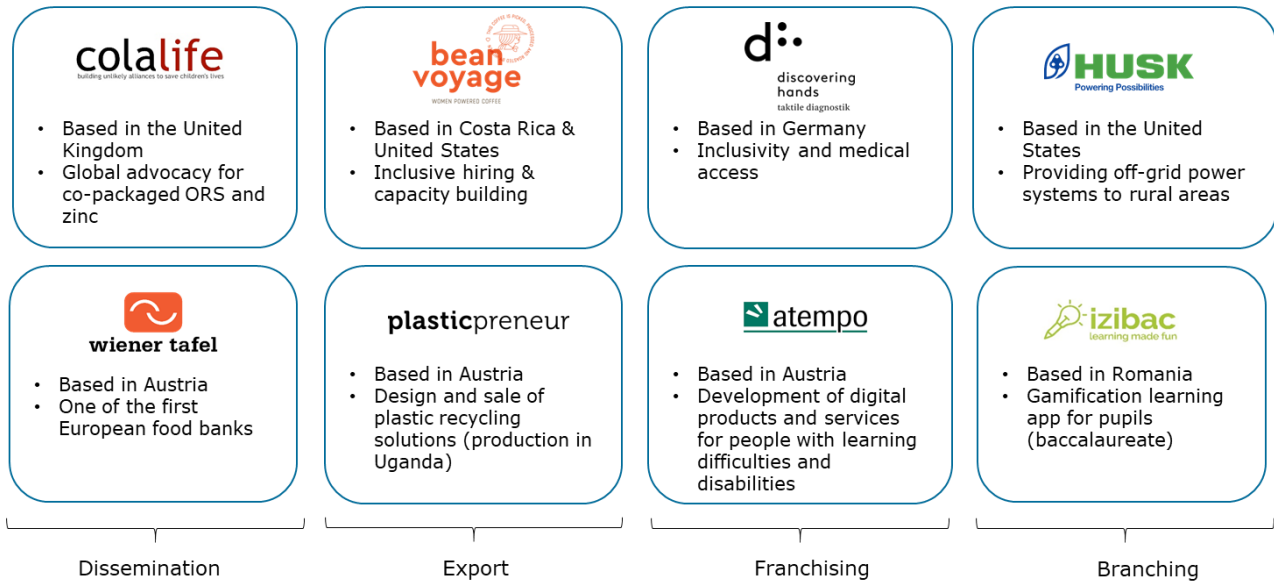


Figure 6 – Eight case vignettes on the internationalisation of social enterprises

5.2. CASE VIGNETTE – WIENER TAFEL

Founder:	Martin Haiderer
Year of foundation:	1999
Home country:	Austria
Social impact:	Foodbank concept
Target countries:	European network
Form of scaling:	Dissemination



The organisation

While today, still many supermarkets waste groceries that are yet fit for consumption, many people do not have access to sufficient amount of food in order to avoid hunger. This problem became evident to founder and former honorary director of the Wiener Tafel, Martin Haiderer, who recognised the increasing discrepancy between food waste and hunger during his work at an Austrian shelter in the mid 1990's. It is for this reason that Wiener Tafel's mission is to distribute food to those in need. Today, Wiener Tafel has a team of 13 employees and is supported by a number of volunteers. While the early pre-founding years were characterised through uncertainty and little acceptance on the market, through early cooperation with the Hamburger food bank and German supermarket REWE Wiener Tafel has strengthened its position over the years. Having been founded in 1999 as a charitable organisation, Wiener Tafel has been one of the very first foodbank concepts in Europe. Unlike many other traditional food banks, Wiener Tafel's operations are built upon two cornerstones. The first one is the daily front-line work – which means the organisation and distribution of food from where it is abundant to those in need. The second, and equally important one, is the aim of creating awareness for its social cause – which is done today within FEBA, a transnational network of European food banks.



Figure 7 – A delivery of goods for Wiener Tafel (credit: Wiener Tafel)

Internationalisation journey

Wiener Tafel's journey to international dissemination began to take shape in the years 2002 to 2003, where first public appearances helped in raising awareness to the cause. Starting in 2005, this led to first international requests from other European organisations – mostly from Austrian neighbour countries such as Hungary, Czech Republic, or Slovenia – and one Japanese delegation. Ultimately, this was favoured due to a shift in Eastern European civil society, which experienced an upheaval during the early 2000's. These developments helped shape Wiener Tafel's success, as various large and established non-profit organisations, religious organisations, and consumption-critical initiatives began to approach Wiener Tafel for collaborative efforts. At the invitation of international countries, the team around Martin Haiderer visited some organisations personally in order to support their efforts through the exchange of experiences, knowledge transfer as well as consulting activities. In 2006, Wiener Tafel was increasingly striving for the formation of an umbrella organisation of food banks – however, at the time, many national organisations valued their autonomy, making these initial efforts unsuccessful. Yet, with the appointment of a new, full-time director in the year 2010, Wiener Tafel had the resources to more actively shape their internationalisation journey. This led to increasing international requests for collaboration as at the same time, the food waste movement had received more attention on both a national and international level. Additionally, ever since 2010 the national environment has proven more favourable towards Wiener Tafel, with the rise of many food banks, social markets and similar initiatives in Austria. This led to a more professionalised approach for collaboration among food banks firstly at national, and then at international level. Ultimately, Wiener Tafel joined the European food bank network FEBA in 2013. With its membership, Wiener Tafel has expanded its focus over Austria and Germany towards other international partners, while the collaborative efforts with Austrian associations are still ongoing. Now, there is a continuous exchange and reciprocal learning among all member organisations. Yet, Wiener Tafel never built formalised relationships with other food banks throughout its journey. Instead, collaborative efforts are organised through continuous knowledge sharing. Above all, the network membership has especially proven favourable in terms of the increased political engagement of the food bank members, as lobbying for a facilitated distribution of food across members raising countries and awareness raising initiatives take place under the united umbrella of the European network. Ever since 2013, Wiener Tafel's internationalisation has strongly increased, with a considerable easing of coordination efforts in the form of joint appearance and projects.

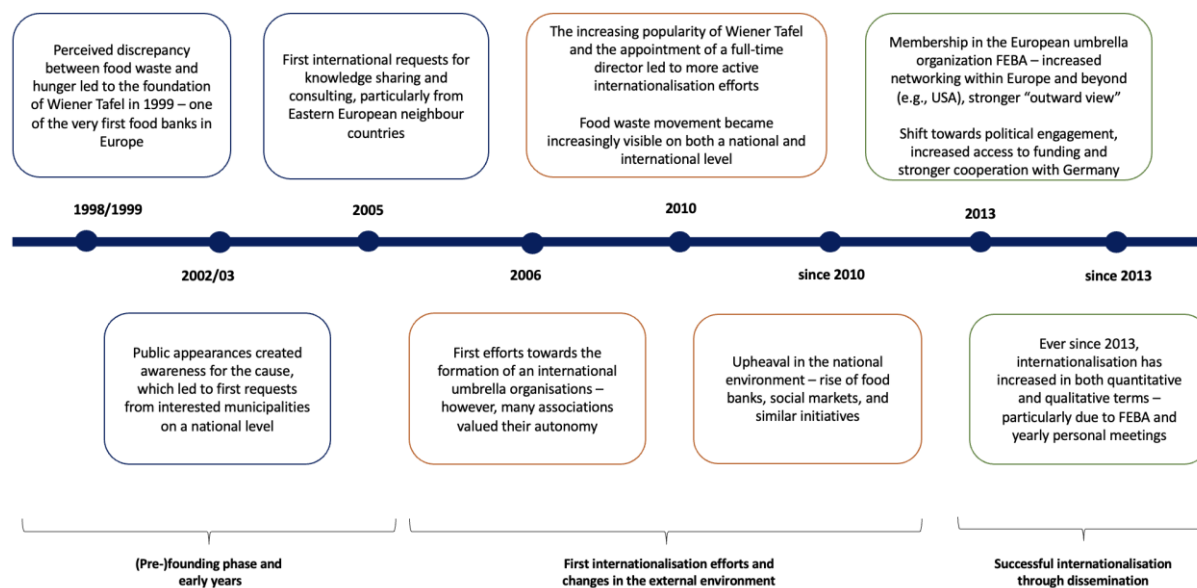


Figure 8 – Wiener Tafel’s internationalisation timeline

Challenges for international scaling

During the early years of Wiener Tafel’s activities, the founders were faced with a **lack of personnel resources and financial capital**. This was particularly due to the fact that the social economy – and in particular, food banks – was still in a nascent stage in Europe, which also made the acceptance of the new concept on the market difficult. Going forward, when Wiener Tafel received first requests on a national and international basis, one of the key challenges that came along was related to the **foreign cultural characteristics** of international organisations that approached Wiener Tafel. While this was, on the one hand, related to intangible elements such as language and interaction with foreign partners, the other side of the coin meant to understand the differences in the environment and market conditions abroad. The realisation that *“what has been proven totally worthwhile here, can never work there”* proved particularly important in terms of creating acceptance for a new concept such as a food bank abroad:

“Civil engagement was just starting to arise, and it was not so easy to recruit volunteers as it was in Austria, where members of the middle class can well bring in resources or voluntary engagement, for example. At the time, such an understanding in the Central and Eastern European countries was not there yet. This means that there was a totally different question of resources.”

One specific task of Wiener Tafel’s dissemination efforts was therefore related to **strategic thinking** – that is, understanding where the internationalisation approach of dissemination may provide value, and how it can be utilised. When Wiener Tafel joined the international network FEBA in 2013, and the shift from

the “*bilateral phase to the multilateral phase*” occurred, a new particular set of challenges arose. Formerly, Wiener Tafel tended to engage in dialogue with individual organisations. With the membership in a large network, however, **complexities** in the overall **organisational set-up** increased – for example, through regular meetings with members, or through elaborate accounting and reporting tasks. Similarly, questions such as how a small organisation like Wiener Tafel may contribute to larger European projects came to light – which was often perceived as challenging due to the at times “*sluggish*” nature of the network community.

Identified internationalisation competences

In light of the challenges Wiener Tafel faced during their internationalisation journey, what became essential was **understanding different national frameworks and conditions** from interested parties – such as Eastern European countries or Japan. As Martin Haiderer noted, one critical factor was:

“Understanding what the conditions are, the underlying assumptions and, yes, the concrete objectives of the other party [...] in order to see if there can even be a match, or if we expect totally different scenarios”

In the context of this approach to **relationship management**, understanding the needs and support requirements of partners has been perceived as particularly important in international dissemination – particularly in light of creating a realistic and viable support for partner organisations:

“And, I believe, a very important skill in the international roll-out is to see, what do the respective project partners abroad need. Which steps do they have to take, which know-how do they need, which resources do they need to have in order to reach their milestones”

Strikingly, dissemination seems to require a certain set of competences related to **interpersonal communication**. Martin Haiderer noted that for them, the most important competences refer to empathy and sensitivity for the needs of the partners involved – demining the “*art of listening*” as crucial for dissemination on an international level:

“And that is, I believe, the bottom line. I must understand the interest of my vis a vis, so that it does not only become a self-presentation [...] And, I believe, openness is enough, and the attempt to understand and learn about the situation, the topic from the perspective of the others”.

In a similar vein, Wiener Tafel aimed at building and strengthening its own **(personnel) resource base** – for example, by specifically hiring volunteers from different backgrounds and with broad language skills in order to engage in what Martin calls an “*intercultural dialogue*” between the parties involved. While these

competences appear to remain critical throughout the entire collaboration process with international partners, especially in the later stages of Wiener Tafel's international engagement the focus appears to have broadened. With regard to the membership in an, at times, "*sluggish*" system, Martin Haiderer recalls patience, conviction and a "*focus on the essential*" as crucial. Overall, in addition to all of the skills and competences explicitly named during the interview process, we argue that Wiener Tafel had the competence to **adapt to external changes** in the environment as they went along in their internationalisation journey. During the early years of Wiener Tafel, they managed to navigate a challenging environment, while facing a lack of resources; once a change in the environment and the overall awareness for the food waste movement occurred, they were able to adapt quickly and to leverage their skills and know-how where necessary. All in all – and despite facing several challenges – the team of Wiener Tafel employed a great number of competences throughout their journey, making their internationalisation efforts successful at last.

5.3. CASE VIGNETTE - COLALIFE

Founders:	Simon and Jane Berry
Year of foundation:	2011
Home country:	United Kingdom
Social impact:	Co-packaging of ORS and zinc
Target countries:	Global impact
Form of scaling:	Dissemination through global advocacy



The organisation

"Coca-Cola seems to get everywhere in developing countries, yet simple life-saving medicines don't. Why?" This was the question Simon and Jane Berry, the co-founders of ColaLife, asked themselves when they visited Zambia for the first time in the 1980's, where they observed a lack of medicine supply, especially in rural regions. Children were at a high risk of contracting diarrhoea – leading to 1 in 8 children dying before their fifth birthday from preventable causes. Yet, the health sector has known how to treat diarrhoea for decades – by means of Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) and zinc.



Figure 9 – Children next to a Kit Yamoyo wall painting, George Compound, Lusaka, Zambia (credit: Laurence Wilbraham)

Guided by these observations, Simon and Jane came up with the idea of leveraging Coca-Cola's distribution channels for co-packaged ORS and zinc production to ship to rural communities. While the initial focus was on using Coca-Cola's distribution channels to improve access to medicine, today ColaLife concentrates on advocating for co-packaged ORS and zinc globally.

History and internationalisation journey

ColaLife's journey began in 1986 when founder Simon Berry was working on the British Aid Programme in Zambia. During his time there, Simon realised that the underlying issue was not related to finding a solution, but instead it was the lack of access to existing solutions. After his stay in Zambia, Simon and his wife Jane first launched a charity that was focused on UK rural development. In 2008, Simon attended an online event launched by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown – the so-called "Business Call to Action", in which global multi-nationals were challenged to operate in a way that increased their social impact. There, Coca-Cola was a launch partner, and Simon saw this as an opportunity to get Coca-Cola's attention. At the same time, Simon set up a Facebook group, in which he shared his idea about utilising Coca-Cola's logistics system for co-distribution – which became influential very quickly. Ultimately, through the success of the Facebook group, the BBC learned about ColaLife's cause, and established a connection between Coca-Cola and ColaLife in 2008. This marked the beginning of a longstanding advisory relationship between both organisations:

"So, the relationship has been advisory all the way along [...] They played a massive part in the sense of being very free with their advice. And, you know, obviously all the questions we could possibly ask about their distribution system and how it works. So, it was very, very significant in terms of advice."

From 2008 until 2010, Simon significantly promoted the idea of ColaLife on speaking tours, which garnered attention from Johnson & Johnson during a conference presentation in Prague. They invited ColaLife to an internal boot camp in September 2010 – where Simon and Jane won 250,000 USD funding for the trial. In the same year, Simon and Jane made the decision to quit their jobs to work on the ColaLife idea full-time. After shortlisting several countries for a possible trial they re-visited Zambia and worked with organisations there to create a plan for an 18-month trial. The so-called ColaLife Operational Trial Zambia⁷ was launched, and ColaLife became an independent UK charity in 2011. During the first eight months of the trial from December 2011 to August 2012, the founders designed a packaging prototype, while the actual trial – co-designed by local actors including Zambia's Ministry of Health – then went on for 12 months. The trial was a success, and proved that their co-packaged ORS and zinc product could travel through the same channels as Coca-Cola to reach rural areas in Zambia. During the trial period, the number of children who received the diarrhoea treatment increased in the remote rural trial areas from less than 1% to 45%.⁸

⁷ <https://www.colalife.org/2011/07/18/at-last-a-peek-at-the-colalife-trial-plan/>

⁸ <https://www.colalife.org/kityamoyo/>

However, the trial showed that co-distribution of the ORS/zinc co-pack in Coca-Cola crates was not needed, as Simon Berry stated: *"It wasn't the space in the crates that was important it was the space in the market for a well designed diarrhoea treatment kit."* What proved to be essential was the aspiration to commit to a social mission, and to deliver a suitable product design for the co-packaging of ORS and zinc – the so-called Kit Yamoyo ("Kit of Life"). Since 2013, ColaLife has been supporting local partners such as public, private and non-profit organisations to scale-up the co-packaging Kit and its value chain across Zambia. It is estimated that one life is saved for every 1,000 Kit Yamoyos distributed, and thousands more children are protected from stunting due to chronic diarrhoea and poor nutritionⁱ.

In 2017, after successfully scaling up in Zambia Simon and Jane looked at how they might globalise their impact. They decided to focus on advocacy for the co-packaging of ORS and zinc. With great success, ColaLife managed to advocate for change on a global level: in 2019, the World Health Organisation (WHO) introduced the co-packaging of ORS and zinc to the list of essential medicines. Yet, this is not the end of ColaLife's advocacy for better medical access. Currently, Simon and Jane are working on an advocacy plan in liaison with the WHO and the country offices of UNICEF for a joint statement on the importance of co-packaging. The dissemination of ColaLife's impact is facilitated through an open [Playbook](#), which is published with a commitment to support its users and serves as a means of inspiration and guidance for others who aim to induce social change. Today, ColaLife has more than 8,000 online supporters and interested stakeholders from all around the globe.

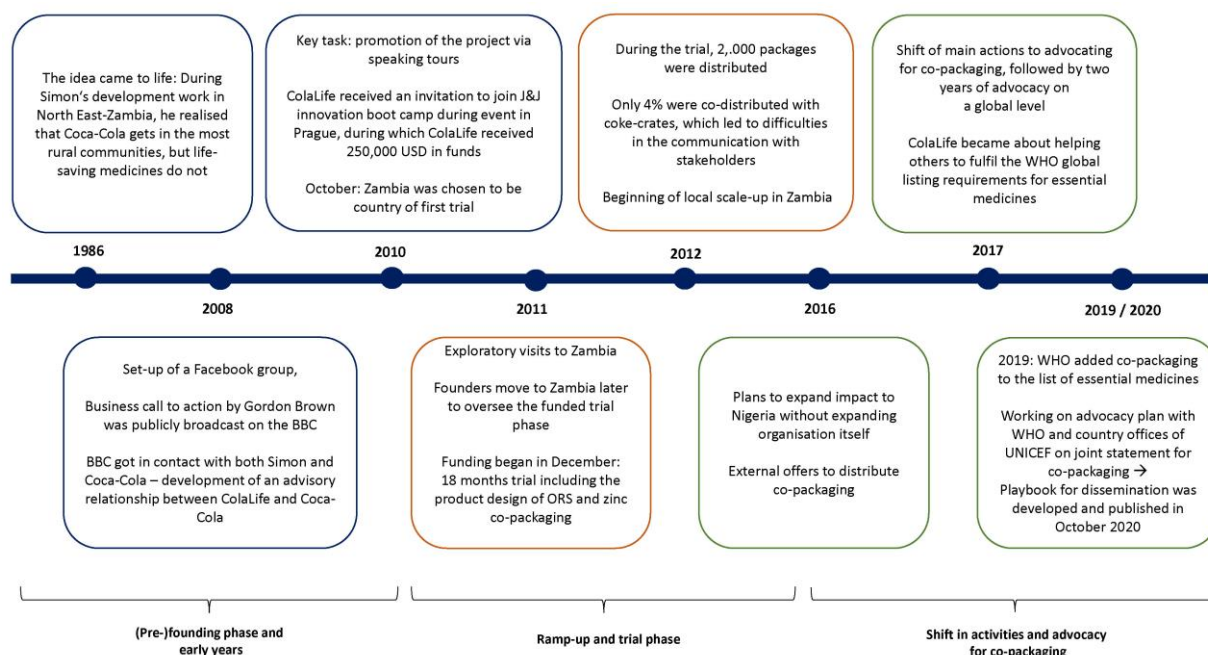


Figure 10 – ColaLife's internationalisation timeline

Challenges for international scaling

ColaLife's approach to social impact is unique in many ways. Unlike many other organisations in the field of social entrepreneurship, ColaLife is not about providing a product or a service, or simple transfer of knowledge. Instead – and from the very beginning of ColaLife's activities – the aim of ColaLife was to instigate change on a global level. Simon explained:

"The idea was, we would globalise the idea of co-distribution and get Coca-Cola on board in terms of their support for the idea and then we would hand off the whole thing [...] Our role was always going to be catalytic".

As innovative this approach to social change was, it came not without challenges. In the beginning of ColaLife's activities, the mission was driven by the idea of leveraging Coca-Cola's distribution system for providing medical access to rural areas. Consequently, and as many people who actively used ColaLife's Facebook Group were behind the idea, abandoning the initial plan came with a backlash, and proved challenging for **communication** with external stakeholders. Our interview partner remarked:

"And, but what is quite interesting, when the trial came to an end – and it was quite obvious that the co-distribution was not important – we had a massive communication problem on our hands. Because like you say, all our funders, all our supports, from outside Zambia at least, had signed up this idea of co-distribution. It was a momentary challenge of 'how are we

going to deal with that?'. And this is where having a clear vision, a clear purpose is really important. We were about improving access to diarrhoea treatment, we weren't about cool packets that fit into coke crates-"

Another challenge identified in the course of ColaLife's journey to global change is associated with the long-term sustainability of creating impact. Besides ensuring longstanding funding this especially means setting up sustainable structures to create impact. Prior to launching ColaLife, Simon had many years of experience in international development, and he realised that nearly all development projects stopped when the funding ended – a situation he wanted to avoid for ColaLife: *"It is very easy to raise money and have a massive impact, but you have to ensure the impact is sustained."*

Identified internationalisation competences

Throughout their journey, ColaLife displayed a broad variety of competences. As illustrated before, the founders agreed from the very beginning that they did not want to be a permanent part of the solution in Zambia. Instead, their activities were directed at bringing about social change with a long-term perspective. Ultimately, the **global awareness** of the social problem was what led Simon and Jane from the very beginning. In this context, the founders demonstrated both **diagnostic and strategic thinking** competences, by critically reflecting on ColaLife's capabilities to introduce change, while they accordingly designed a strategy to create long-term impact. Simon stated:

"If you want to have global impact, you cannot do it yourself – you need a different strategy [...] Very few problems can be solved by one organisation."

This goes to show that ColaLife applied unique approach to problem solving, by actively **building and managing relationships** with multiple stakeholders for the pursuit of a common goal. This includes being able to network, and – as Simon calls it – *"gathering people around this vision"*. In a similar vein, Simon and Jane displayed a strong sense of **leadership** in their interaction with stakeholders. Simon explained:

"It is about encouraging others to have a go [...] What we did not need was any health expertise, any expertise in logistics or product design. Our role was to bring people together who had these competences."

During this process, ColaLife complemented their activities by extensive **communication** efforts in the form of public presentations (including five [TEDx](#) presentations) and the release of open source documents (such as the previously mentioned Playbook and the Facebook group) – which was helpful in creating awareness for the mission.

"What is missing is the actual way people are thinking about solving problems. You need to change people's mindset in terms of how you solve a problem in a sustainable way."

With their shift towards advocacy for [the co-packaging of ORS and zinc](#), the founders of ColaLife successfully demonstrated **political competence** on a global scale in that they actively changed the WHO's essential medicines list for adding co-packaged ORS and zinc.

In sum, we observe that ColaLife crafted an innovative and unique approach to globalise impact. What both Simon and Jane refer to as ["nine unlikely strands to catalyse change"](#) has been proven successful and, going forward, will continue to inspire others who aim to proactively bring about social change.

5.4. CASE VIGNETTE – BEAN VOYAGE

Founder:	Abhinav Khanal, Sunghee Tark	
Year of foundation:	2017	
Home country:	Costa Rica	
Social impact:	Eradicating the gender gap in farming communities by providing training, market access, advisory services, and health and well-being support to smallholder women coffee farmers	
International markets:	Partners in CAN, USA, CH, UK, KOR	
Form of scaling:	Export	

The organisation

During their studies in 2014, the co-founders of Bean Voyage, Sunghee Tark and Abhinav Khanal, travelled to the south of Costa Rica with the aim to host a community-based workshop on supporting an association of local female farmers in economic and social empowerment. Soon, they realised that the underlying issue of gender-based discrimination on the ground is a pervasive one: In Costa Rica, smallholder women lack access to knowledge and the market connections to reach conscious buyers, and often make less than the living wage from coffee sales. They grow increasingly poor, and the community breaks down with women living in a state of desperation and unable to support their families (Bean Voyage, 2021). Guided by their awareness of the problem, Bean Voyage's co-founders decided to take matters into their own hands. With the aim of building an equitable value chain for smallholder women, Sunghee and Abhinav founded Bean Voyage in 2015 – beginning with a 15-month pilot phase.

„And so that's when we kind of ended up coming up with this idea for Bean Voyage, which was a very simple project with the goal to connect. There was a small group of women there, and our goal was to connect some of those women to people who wanted to buy their coffee directly – so that most of the money would come directly to them.“

Soon after the early starting phase, Bean Voyage expanded its offerings. Currently, Bean Voyage's core activities consist of two pillars: firstly, dedicated partnerships with and trainings for smallholder women, and secondly, the export of coffee beans farmed by smallholder women.

"During that 12-week training, farmers are learning how to improve their productivity, how to use better practices that are more climate friendly and climate smart. We also provide them training on things like farm finance, household finance, topics that allow for them to improve their business practices."

Internationalisation journey

Very early on in its life cycle, more specifically, already during the pilot stage, Bean Voyage began exporting the roasted coffee to the United States which made them quickly grow into an e-commerce platform. After a while, however, Abhinav and Sunghee realised that by exporting roasted coffee beans only, their profit margins were not increasing, which provided the impetus to add additional forms of revenue such as trading green coffee and providing educational programmes for students to learn about the coffee supply chain. The shift towards green coffee (this is, unroasted coffee) in the year 2018 as an additional product line provided the ability to work in larger capacities. Ultimately, Bean Voyage's strong social media presence led to enquiries from two partner organisations in Canada, which have been crucial partners ever since.

Soon after, Bean Voyage began to explore the possibility of implementing international training programmes in Nepal and Guatemala in 2019. This was accompanied by an intense research period to gain an understanding of the local conditions and training needs. While the internationalisation steps in North America were characterised by a rather "passive" approach, Bean Voyage began to actively reach out to possible customers, which led to a rapid expansion to Europe, namely Switzerland and the UK, in 2020. Abhinav describes the approach as follows:

"And throughout it all, what we're able to do is find very small shops that usually maybe don't have the resources to buy directly from farmers because they don't know how to go there. And we actually reach out to them and say, 'hey, here's an opportunity for you to meet, for example, Ericka. This is her farm. This is her story.' We give them the exact details of where the coffee is from, and we also give them a price breakdown of how much money she makes from that purchase."

Bean Voyage's market entry in Europe was carefully planned: the entry was accompanied by market evaluations (which included, for example, a test on price sensitivity among customers), and secondly, careful considerations on the partners selected. With the success of entering the European market, prospective community partners from Brazil and Nigeria interested in local training pro-

grammes have approached Bean Voyage. Yet, this is not the end of Bean Voyage's internationalisation journey. In the year 2021, the founders continue expanding to different markets, with South Korea being the next target.

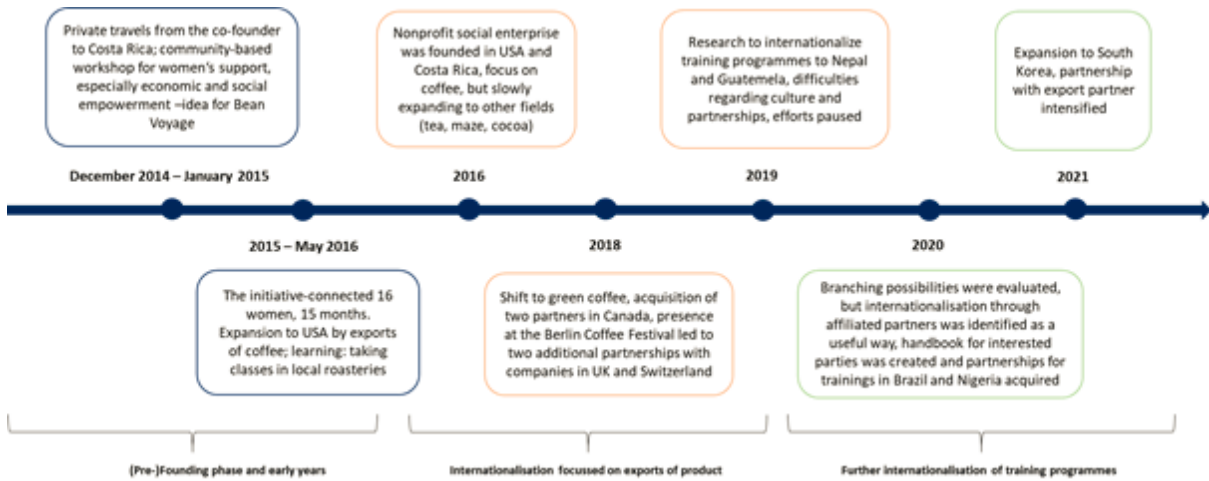


Figure 11 – Bean Voyage's internationalisation timeline

Challenges for international scaling

In its early years, Bean Voyage's internationalisation journey was driven by a rather passive approach as the partner organisations in North America approached Bean Voyage based on its strong online presence. Later on, however, the founders shifted their focus and professionalised for rapid internationalisation. This also included the task of actively searching for potential partnerships abroad, which was highlighted by the founders as one of the most crucial elements for scaling abroad. In this process, Bean Voyage faced challenges in terms of **identifying and acquiring partners** that would fit the organisation's values. Abhinav stated:

"Where we've struggled, [...], is that we're looking for local partners. I think a big part of that internationalisation process is having local partners that are reliable, that can provide some element of support in the overall thing [...] I feel like social entrepreneurship needs to focus more on finding local partners that have similar values and mission and trying to align work."

However, Abhinav stated that he perceives the social enterprise sector to be more open to **collaborations** than the commercial sector. Today, Bean Voyage's partnership network is quite diverse, including collaborations with family foundations, corporate partners such as Starbucks, and institutional partners, such as the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, and the United Nations Development Programme.

Another challenge Bean Voyage faced during its internationalisation journey relates to **legal and regulatory aspects**. In this context, the founders of Bean Voyage remarked formal aspects such as registration formalities and payment systems to be challenging:

"Actually, the legal aspect of going in and working in a different country, payment systems, super tricky bank transfer fees – those are things that usually come quite at the end of the research, usually only when you decide to kind of get started [...] But what we've realised is actually to prioritise that a bit more. You're blindsided by that because you're so interested and motivated to go into a new country, and then you realise it's actually very difficult to register or get started somewhere."

Similarly, another challenge came in the form of obtaining **funding** for internationalisation. While the initial set-up of Bean Voyage's mission was supported by many funders, obtaining funding for the more commercially-oriented internationalisation endeavours proved to be challenging. Interestingly, Abhinav stated that, while they received a lot of funding for pursuing the idea on a local level, scaling was barely supported:

"There is hardly anyone who's willing to give you a grant or willing to invest time and resources in it. I say that as a very practical challenge that I see with a lot of social enterprises [...] You see a lot more, almost 'overmobilisation' on the programming end of the service to the farmer. And then, almost like limited resources, almost nothing when it comes to market expansion."

Identified internationalisation competences

Along Bean Voyage's internationalisation journey, the founders displayed a multifaceted set of competences for entering foreign markets. One of the most important learnings for Bean Voyage was the realisation that the rapid internationalisation progress required a more organised approach within the firm than was previously the case. Thus, this was done by means of **opportunity identification**, as the founders decided to implement tools such as price sensitivity analyses in order to identify and evaluate opportunities in the targeted foreign markets. Additionally, Bean Voyage strongly engaged in **strategic planning** which was achieved, amongst others, through the implementation of a customer-relationship management tool and a tailored outreach plan for the European market. At the same time, this professionalised approach to internationalisation was accompanied by a shift towards **marketing** activities. As Abhinav explained:

"There's so much focus on community, community, community. But I think it needs to be more about, hey, like 'how can we help sell more of these products in the international market?'"

Linked to this, another crucial element is the **intercultural competence** that came into play along two dimensions. Firstly, Abhinav highlighted the formal market-related aspects to be of utmost importance when exporting to foreign countries. This intercultural orientation became, for instance, highly relevant in terms of understanding customer behaviour and values in foreign markets:

"Local coffee drinking preferences are different. The way people talk about coffee is different. The amount of money people pay for coffee is different. So, being able to actually understand that from a local perspective is very important before you decide to just start somewhere."

Secondly, the informal aspects of culture had to be understood, including the variations of interpersonal behaviour and communication across different cultures. Therefore, *"being mindful of the local context"* has been identified as an important competence in social entrepreneurial internationalisation. For Bean Voyage, this also meant acquiring **language skills** of the local communities in Costa Rica – which is why the founders swiftly became fluent in Spanish. In reference to the local communities served with Bean Voyages business model, Abhinav remarked that there is a great responsibility in the **communication** with stakeholders that comes along with serving a social cause. For him, a critical factor is to *"not inflate stories to fit your agenda"* – meaning that Bean Voyage acts as a gatekeeper between the market and the farmers who trust them with their story. Similarly, Abhinav highlighted **relationship building** to be a very important competence – particularly in terms of finding the right partners who share the same values. Lastly, the team of Bean Voyage named some competence **gaps** in terms of **financial management**, a task that was especially important in the beginning of the internationalisation journey.

5.5. CASE VIGNETTE – PLASTICPRENEUR

Founder: Sören Lex
Year of foundation: 2018
Home country: Austria

plasticpreneur

Social impact: Developing and distributing small scale plastic recycling solutions

Target countries: Export to 46 countries

Form of scaling: Export

The organisation

Plasticpreneur is an Austrian social business dedicated to introducing a circular economy approach for plastic products. By providing recycling machines accompanied with workshops on social entrepreneurial skills, the organisation aims to enable users to starting their own social businesses. Among Plasticpreneur's customers are schools, science centres, NGOs as well as for-profit companies. The organisation came to life with the founder travelling to Uganda and starting a community-based microfinancing organisation. Realising he wanted to do something bigger and gaining experience from other projects led to the development of the founder's intention to create value by recycling plastic. Nowadays, Plasticpreneur is organised as a limited liability corporation. The social business won "Innovative Ideas and Technologies vs. COVID-19 and beyond", a global call from UNIDO in June 2020 for providing local production possibilities of personal protective equipment.

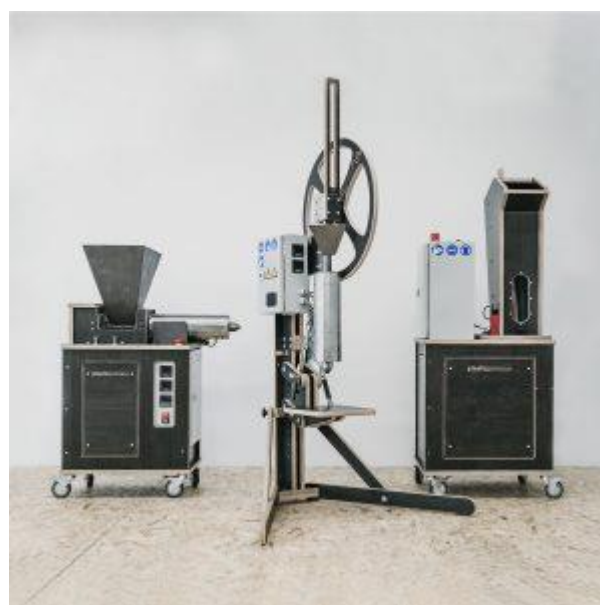


Figure 12 – Plasticpreneur's machines enable small-scale recycling of plastic products

Internationalisation journey

Plasticpreneur's internationalisation story started with Sören Lex' private journey to Uganda in 2015, aiming to start a community-based microfinance organisation. However, soon afterwards he realised that he wanted to do something bigger, with the possibility of working with materials like bamboo and waste coming to

his attention. After experimenting with building bikes, the first machines to recycle plastic were built in Uganda. However, the focus was first laid on producing skiing poles from recycled materials. Soon, the potential of the recycling machines was discovered and the focus shifted.

In 2017, Sören went through a start-up programme and received a first funding from the promotional bank of the Austrian federal government. However, according to his own statement:

"[...] the money was not used the best way, because the people we contracted for developing were just not doing anything right or going the right way with it."

What followed was a continuous enhancement of the machines and, finally, Plasticpreneur came into existence in 2018, using a business model, which aimed to include social entrepreneurship elements. This happened in a co-evolution with Precious Plastic - a self-described "movement" and mix of open source community of makers and circular economy enthusiasts, now increasingly a platform for selling hardware for plastic upcycling in a more commercial setting. Over time, a strong co-dependence between Precious Plastic and Plasticpreneur developed, with Plasticpreneur being a central actor on the platform. As there were no further efforts taken to expand sales abroad, all international demand was basically generated via Precious Plastic between 2018 and 2020. In 2020, Plasticpreneur was transformed into a limited liability company.

Up until today, Plasticpreneur exported approximately 180 plastic recycling machines to more than 45 countries. Sören argues that important contributors to the company's success includes the CE certification. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Plasticpreneur shifted to the production of protective plastic face shields, creating a strong increase in demand and international publicity. Thus, the majority of sales happened in 2020. The founder stated that the company benefits from strong media coverage and inbound marketing, generating publicity without additional costs.

According to Sören's own statement, there was no focus on active internationalisation up until 2021. Still, learnings from the past showed that more local presence is needed. From now on, Plasticpreneur will put stronger emphasis on a more decentralized and structured approach when it comes to entering new markets.

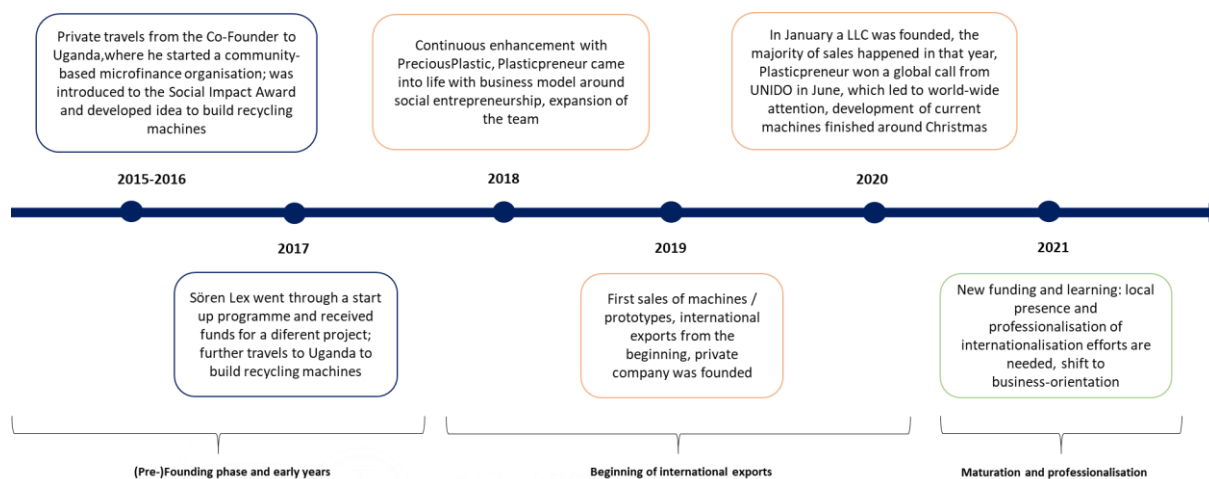


Figure 13 – Plasticpreneur’s internationalisation timeline

Challenges for international scaling

While Plasticpreneur’s first customer was a friend of the founder, already the second order came from a market abroad. Thus, as Plasticpreneur acted on international markets from early on, challenges for scaling include rather practical issues as well. At first, the major challenge was being able to deliver the machines in an adequate quality. **Machine development and its certification** stayed a strong issue in the first phase of internationalisation, revealing the ambivalence between the potential of the organisation and where Plasticpreneur and its product were standing at the time.

What followed was a number of **administrative challenges** in entering foreign markets. These included finding information about customs, money-transfer as well as logistics to move products into new target markets.

When it comes to the current maturation phase of the business, shifting from an engineering focus to a business focus is identified as a major challenge with major challenges being related to **marketing** issues. Because of this, Plasticpreneur aim to identify what to concentrate on with the help of past customers. Moreover, in this phase the organisation identified the need to better understand its target group and, consequently, further develop the customer funnel. Firstly, Sören Lex stated the need to focus on the development of selection criteria for new markets as well as potential partners. While NGOs tend to be more resource-intensive customers, they create the impact the founder of Plasticpreneur is passionate about. In contrast, commercial buyers just want the machines for their properties.

In addition, Sören Lex illustrated **opening up for collaborations or outsourcing** when it comes to solving problems as a major challenge, describing it difficult:

"Allowing myself or the team to reach out to people who have done it before, instead of thinking we need to go ourselves through the process [...] But if we would have taken earlier some of those things into the company, we would have saved time and money."

Identified internationalisation competences

Important contributions for Plasticpreneur's early success came from the organisation's technical expertise. Although the machines did not perform well at first, hiring team members with the right engineering skills proved to be an important step and showed importance of **human resource management** competences. This enabled the enhancement of the machines' quality, ultimately leading to their CE certification which played an important role for the organisation's **marketing** efforts. Providing high standard products combined with capacity-building for customers showed the trustworthiness of Plasticpreneur.

Sören Lex stated that it was very helpful getting to know local needs in Uganda through his travels, as this provided many credentials, security and a proof of concept in Plasticpreneur's case. Additionally, this allowed gaining **intercultural competence and awareness** for the target market and, ultimately, **connecting to local networks**. Similarly, being a present player on the platform Precious Plastic from early on, interacting with the community and **maintaining the relationship** with the platform helped gain legitimacy and reputation in the field.

When it comes to **performance management**, our interview partner stressed the importance of setting realistic goals when scaling internationally. Correspondingly, **diagnostic thinking** about the current situation of the organisation, as well as a **strategic** approach to modes of internationalisation are identified as contributing factors of successful internationalisation efforts.

Later on, crucial competences shifted to **administrative and country-context dependent** issues. This included knowledge on logistics, customs or money-transfer in the target market. In addition, our interview partner illustrated the importance of maintaining a close customer-relation and the knowledge where to obtain support and how to use it as important steps.

In the current maturation phase of Plasticpreneur's internationalisation, the focus shifts to business competences in particular. More elaborate **marketing and sales strategies** are described as key next steps, highlighted by the current establishment of dedicated organisational roles. Moreover, he identified project management and supply chain management skills as key to further develop Plasticpreneur's international activities.

5.6. CASE VIGNETTE – DISCOVERING HANDS

Founder:	Frank Hoffmann
Year of foundation:	2011
Home country:	Germany
Social impact:	Training of visually impaired women for breast cancer screening
International markets:	Partners in AT, CH, IND, NEP, MEX and COL
Form of scaling:	Franchising



The organisation

Breast cancer is the most widespread cancer disease among women across the globe – yet, access to breast cancer screening is scarce, particularly in rural areas of developing countries. At the same time, visually impaired women across the globe face discrimination in the workplace. Discovering hands is a German social business dedicated to training blind and visually impaired women to Clinical Breast Examiners (CBEs) for the early detection of breast cancer. In 2006, discovering hands' journey



Figure 14 – A medical tactile-examination (credit: discovering hands)

begun when gynaecologist and founder Frank Hofmann realised the potential visually impaired women had for tactile perception in the field of early breast cancer detection. Based off the initial idea, Frank collaborated with German training institutions for the blind and the medical chamber in Nordrhein, which then led to the development of a training curriculum for Medical-Tactile Examiners (MTEs.) From 2010 onwards, there was increased international awareness on discovering hands' mission among the social entrepreneurial community. Ultimately, discovering hands was founded in 2011 in Germany and, since then, has successfully spread its mission across national borders.

Internationalisation journey

discovering hands' activities with respect to internationalisation started not long after its official foundation. Beginning in 2012, different organisations approached founder Frank Hoffmann as the communication about the social mission had been spread. At the time, discovering hands employed a *"trial-and-error approach"* with regard to their international partnerships, including a number of negotiations and pilot agreements with different potential partners. The internationalisation process was mainly reactive and passive, as foreign partners actively approached founder Frank Hoffmann for the implementation of the project abroad.

In 2015 the first franchise agreement had successfully been implemented with partners and a group of supporters in Austria, including private investors as some of the first key partners of discovering hands outside of Germany. Soon after, in the year 2015, discovering hands carried out pilot projects with partners in Colombia and in 2017 in Mexico. In Colombia, the development bank CAF was a key supporter and collaboratively, they implemented a concept abroad, including training the first MTE's. Later on, CAF supported the Mexican initiative as well, however, the entire programme had to be put on hold due to internal policy changes at CAF.

In 2015, another partnership has been established in India funded by Bayer foundation, where the first Indian MTEs could be trained and ultimately leading to the closure of a pilot project contract with an Indian training partner in 2019. Since then more MTE's have been trained including the first three MTEs from Nepal. Going forward, and after several other requests from European organisations, the team recognised the need for a more professional internationalisation structure, which lead to the implementation of a feasibility study in the years 2019/20. Ultimately, discovering hands entered a phase of professionalisation in 2020, including a more strategic approach to country selection and evaluation as well as quality management in international franchising. Since then, the franchising concept has been expanded to Switzerland (the first four MTEs started training in May), and MTE training programmes remain ongoing.



Figure 15 – Discovering Hand's internationalisation timeline

Challenges for international scaling

The early years of discovering hands internationalisation journey were characterised by a rather passive approach to franchising, meaning that external organisations tended to approach discovering hands about their social mission and future collaborations. In the same vein, these partners were in the lead on the implementation of the concept abroad, which was for example the case with the Colombian partner. While this dynamic brought advantages, such as the availability of resources and funds, for example, there were some challenging aspects to it as well, which became evident when the Colombian partner had to back out of the collaboration due to changes in the internal set-up. As our interview partner Marisa Mühlböck, Head of Internationalisation at discovering hand, remarked:

"They were not allowed to follow the project as it was before. And then, all of a sudden you lose the lead, you lose the project manager somehow. So, if that happens, then it becomes really challenging, and especially when there is a huge time difference and distance where you cannot visit the colleagues and sit on the same table and talk about, OK, how can we pull up the loose ends and continue to project successfully?"

These challenges seem to be directly related to franchising as a particular form of scaling, which is accompanied by a pronounced dependency on the partner organisations which implement the franchise concept on an international level. Therefore, **building a responsible partner structure** is perceived as crucial, as partners are to a large extent responsible for building networks and running operations abroad. At the same time, **keeping a certain amount of control** on the side of the franchise owner is largely important, especially in the medical field where practices and standards underlie strict quality specifications, making the international franchise set-up "a struggle between structure and flexibility", as

Marisa names it. Additionally, international franchising is largely influenced by **cultural characteristics** and the **geographical distance** between home and international markets, making communication and coordination under the franchising umbrella challenging at times. In this context, a reliable franchising structure is perceived as a core element that has to be kept consistent across partner countries – a recognition that has ultimately provided leeway for discovering hands' shift from a passive internationalisation approach towards a more active strategy.

Identified internationalisation competences

In light of the challenges discovering hands had to face during their internationalisation journey, several competences have been named as being helpful in overcoming eventual internationalisation barriers. During the interview, Marisa noted that *"it is always a challenge to build something from scratch"*, making it necessary **to develop a vision** for the organisation. For example, discovering hands follows the vision of **advocating** for the MTE as a recognised profession not only in Germany, but on an international level⁹.

In this context, Marisa stated that implementing a vision requires a broader skill-set of **planning and coordination**. At the same time, the franchising structure requires people to have a certain amount of creativity and flexibility as the different target countries may potentially be very different from one another. Therefore, Marisa stated: *"I think you need to be adaptive and flexible and see what's the best option to create social impact"*. In the same vein, for discovering hands the pursuit of social impact goes hand in hand with ensuring **financial sustainability**, as the organisation's aim is to remain self-sustaining in the long term which requires competences, such as the development of a business plan, attaining funders and strategic considerations.

In addition, one of the most critical competences is implied to be stakeholder management. Especially in the later and mature phases of international franchising, communication was perceived as challenging, which may often be due to cultural differences and customs:

"You deal with different countries, different frameworks, different situations [...]. You know that the [country A] team will always deliver at the right time [...]. And in [country B] you might to take into consideration other ways, how you communicate, which issues are communicated, and

⁹ <https://www.discovering-hands.at/aktuelles/news/ausgewaehlt/we-should-use-all-weapons-we-have-to-fight-breast-cancer>


which are not, which are a taboo. So, this kind of diplomatic communication skill I think you need to have."

At the same time, international franchising requires a continuous communication process among the franchise owner and the franchisees. This is due to the fact that at times, knowledge transfer may prove quite challenging. As Marisa stated:

"It is so important to implement a continuous communication process, because as soon as you lose that tie and you don't know what's going on in the country, it becomes difficult, and it costs time, and time is money."

In this vein, discovering hands has been successful in aligning **organisational structures** with the new international set-up, and similarly, in managing **team-work** across borders. Overall, it is implied that franchising requires a distinct set of skills and competences in order to face the challenges related to international scaling.

5.7. CASE VIGNETTE – ATEMPO

Founder:	Walburga Fröhlich, Klaus Candussi	
Year of foundation:	2001	
Home country:	Austria	
Social impact:	Enabling people with learning difficulties and disabilities to work and learn	
International partners:	AT, CH, D	
Form of scaling:	Franchising	

The organisation

atempo is an Austrian social business dedicated to contributing to an inclusive society in which people can live, learn and work together equally. The organisation does so by offering a wide range of services and products addressed to persons with disabilities, civil society organisations, businesses and public authorities. Among their most important services are capito, nueva and ava. Through capito, the organisation tackles information barriers by translating difficult texts into easily understandable language. In the project nueva, people with disabilities carry out evaluations of offers for people with disabilities. Finally, ava is an online platform directed at matching supply and demand of assistance services for people with disabilities.

Internationalisation journey

atempo took its first steps towards internationalisation by creating a national scaling strategy shortly after the organisation was founded in 2001 in Graz, Austria. While there had been a branch in Vienna from the beginning, from 2005 on, interest for branch offices from Austrian regions Vorarlberg and Upper Austria arose. To meet this interest, a social franchising strategy was developed in collaboration with external partners, leading to the creation of extensive documentation, a franchise handbook and franchising contracts.

After the strategy has been formulated, atempo took another important step in its scaling strategy by splitting up the organisation into a for-profit and non-profit part. While the for-profit CFS GmbH was in charge of the franchising and main partner for investors, the non-profit atempo GmbH was positioned as franchising partner and pilot organisation, aiming to further develop know-how within the franchise. The creation of these two entities helped the founders to disentangle

the increasing diversity of goals and activities that emerged with internationalisation with respect to their geographical mandate (serving beneficiaries in Styria and Vienna vs. franchise partners in three countries), funding sources (public funds vs. impact investors) and main activities (working with beneficiaries vs. building, serving and managing a network of franchisees). To maintain control and alignment with the overall vision, an overarching umbrella organisation (atempo association) as well as the two founders held shares in CFS GmbH, with the umbrella organisation also owning the non-profit .

From 2008 onwards, atempo faced difficulties due to the financial crisis and subsequent cuts in public funding. While the interest in franchising licensing was mounting rapidly in Germany, the organisation thus faced grave financial threats by 2011. With their back to the walls, the founders decided to focus their efforts even more on franchising, formulating the goals to growth from six to 25 franchise partners. As our interview partner Walburga Fröhlich stated: *"We needed to grow to survive."*

To implement and fund this international scaling vision, atempo partnered with the impact investor BonVenture and the Erste Bank (Scheck, 2017). In collaboration with external partners, atempo went through further steps of professionalization by improving the franchise model and know-how documentation. This helped the organisation gain a foothold in Germany. To the surprise of the founders, building partnerships was especially successful in the geographically more distant Northern parts of the country. Walburga Fröhlich indicated:

"Internationalisation or scaling work best with partners far enough away to not appear as competitor, but still close enough to have positive emotions towards each other."¹⁰

The focus on scaling after 2011 led to a more active approach to acquire franchise partners. Amongst other, the atempo team started organising field trips for selected potential partners to the pilot franchisee in Austria, which proved a successful means for onboarding and gaining new partners. From 2012 on, atempo experienced strong growth, with five to six organisations per year joining the franchise. With this growth, also the need for further standardisation of processes increased (e.g. quality management, exit possibilities for franchisees). The task of new partner acquisition was decoupled from the directors of the organisation and the process of onboarding and know-how transfer become standardised and organised around specific events and dates. This allowed a shift of responsibilities for the two managing directors who could now increasingly focus on innovation, know-how leadership and strategic decision to serve future markets.

¹⁰ Prior research into international business provides other potential explanations, such as the psychic distance paradox (O'Grady and Lane, 1996). This research has shown that internationalisation efforts are often less successful in psychologically close countries, since involved parties tend to make the erroneous assumption that the countries norms and cultures are similar altogether.

From 2016 on, atempo started to focus on digitisation in their internationalisation strategy, providing a growing number of franchise-services and processes in digital, permanently accessible formats. Finally, in 2020 atempo developed plans to further to internationalise also to non-German-speaking countries. By this time, the network had grown to 26 partners, employed over 560 individuals, 324 of whom have a disability (atempo, 2021).

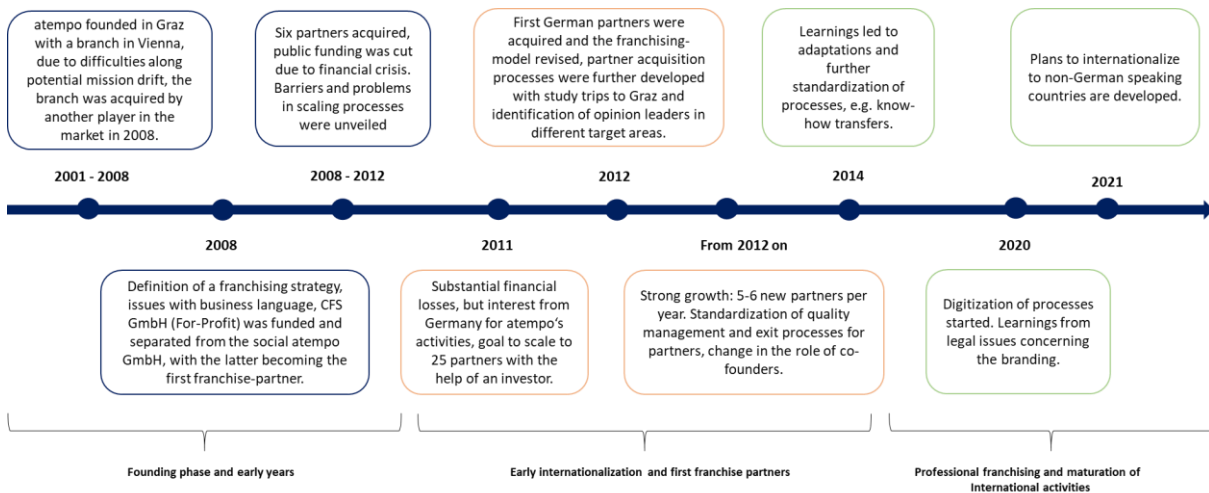


Figure 16 – atempo's internationalisation timeline

Challenges for international scaling

In the early years of scaling atempo, Walburga Fröhlich described that it was perceived difficult to win over potential partners in the beginning:

"[...] because we had to convince them not only of our product, but also our form of scaling."

Part of this challenge was related to the concept and language of franchising, which was perceived as too "commercial" concepts by many mission-oriented partners. These doubts turned out to be a significant barrier in many cases and required prolonged discussions as well as increased sensitivity of the management team with regard to the terminology used.

Other barriers included cases of the "not-invented-here syndrome" (Katz and Allen, 1982). In these cases, the concept was rejected by potential partners or their public funders in spite of its benefits, because it had not come from within the own organisation or geographical region. As Walburga Fröhlich experienced it:

"Scaling is always perceived as a kind of insult to the country or province into which you scale".

As the network of partners grew, additional challenges emerged, including **the retention of partners** as well as building a sound process for partners to leave the network and return the licence. Moreover, the strong growth of atempo's franchise increased the demands on management. As the franchise became larger, many functions that had been governed primarily through individual relationships with the founders in the beginning had to be replaced with more standardized and scalable processes. Thereby, the role of the managing directors shifted from operational to a **more strategic and knowledge management-based approach**.

When it comes to identified competence gaps, Walburga Fröhlich described it challenging to find relevant information and learning opportunities for scaling across borders. Especially **country-specific information** and in-depth programmes to **create suitable strategies** would have been helpful in atempo's internationalisation journey.

Identified internationalisation competences

Our analysis revealed a number of key competences which were crucial in the internationalisation process of atempo. First, Walburga Fröhlich stated the competence to **analyse the target market** as one of the main contributors to successful internationalisation. **Intercultural competence and awareness** on a macro and micro level were pointed out as important factors too. In addition to sensitivity and awareness towards the culture of (potential) franchise partners, our interview partner also pointed out that it can include knowing then one can "work with cultural clichés". In the case of atempo, the generally positive cliché of Austrians in Germany as sympathetic, service-oriented and good hosts provided as fitting frame for presenting the franchise.

Moreover, Walburga Fröhlich argued that **relationship building** as well as **relationship management** play a significant role in acquiring customers and potential partners. For example, atempo managed to showcase their professionalism and building trust by organizing elaborate field trips for interested parties. By inviting several interested parties from the same regions, these trips at time also created some level of competition for the franchise licence between potential partners.

Similarly, **strategic thinking** forms a key competence when scaling abroad. In atempo's context, this especially revolves about identifying an adequate mode of internationalisation as well choosing the right target markets and organisations. In the case of atempo, this meant that some potentially attractive partnerships in Asia were deliberately not entered in spite of promising leads. At the given time, the complexity of managing a network across several time zones as well as gaining a deep understanding of these new countries contexts would have required too much management attention.

Besides knowing the target market, it was also crucial for atempo to truly understand their own products, and being able to **diagnose strengths and weaknesses in their value propositions**. Walburga Fröhlich explained that in her view, identifying the real drivers of a product's success is one of the major steps in direction of scaling successfully. This requires also a critical appraisal of whether the product remains attractive also without the founders' sales competences, or as our interview partner put it:

"A product is scalable when it works without your charm and apple strudel."

Finally, our interview partner also mentioned competences related to internal structural changes. By repeatedly reflecting on and adapting their own organisational roles during the internationalisation journey, the co-founders showed **leadership** competences. Similarly, repeated changes in atempo's team over time required **human resource management** competences on behalf of atempo's management team.

5.8. CASE VIGNETTE – HUSK POWER SYSTEMS

Founders:	Gyanesh Pandey, Manoj Sinha, Ratnesh Yadav, Chip Ransler
Year of foundation:	2008
Home country:	India,
Social impact:	Providing off-grid power systems based on renewable energies to rural areas
International markets:	TZ, NG
Form of scaling:	Branching



The organisation

Husk Power Systems (“Husk”) was founded in 2008 and has been globally oriented from the beginning. Experiencing difficulties in accessing energy in his home-community in rural India, co-founder and CEO Manoj Sinha realised that “energy poverty” affects hundreds of millions of people around the globe, in part because extending the electricity grid to remote areas does not make financial or operational sense. The founders realized they would have to solve the issue of access to energy on their own. By creating off-grid and weak grid power systems, including “minigrids”, Husk’s main mission is providing rural communities with access to electricity, and increasingly to energy services. Focusing on biomass gasification systems at first, the company integrated solar panels into their power plants starting in 2014. With more than 130 sites in total, Husk currently employs approximately 650 employees across its target countries in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. It is the only rural minigrad company working in both continents.

Internationalisation journey

From the beginning, Husk worked as an international organisation, with its headquarters located in the United States. It now has local entities in India, Nigeria and Tanzania. In combination with an international board of directors and the motivation to carry its solution to every potential target country, this led to the company acting with a global mind-set from early on, as our interview partner Sinha stated:

“We never thought it was just an Indian company trying to solve a problem that was local to India. We wanted to give it a global shape from the get-go.”

With strong media attention supporting international funding efforts, by 2010 the company managed to scale from two to twelve power plants. Still, Husk’s focus was on the Indian market until 2015. After experiencing strong growth locally,

the company started to look into potential international markets, with Sinha travelling to multiple African countries, analysing the local situation. Husk concluded that Tanzania, like India, faced a similar lack of access to electricity and identified the local policy regulations as favourable for their activities. Moreover, they analysed the market from a business perspective, including market size and regulations for money transfer. Thus, the company decided to enter Tanzania in 2015, aiming to replicate its business model while acknowledging the local context.

Subsequently, Husk established its own legal entity and team in Tanzania, run by a local country manager. The company provided the local team with expertise from experienced employees in order to enable knowledge sharing and capacity building for the new entity.

Similarly, Husk began entering Nigeria in 2017, after the country adopted a mini-grid policy that was largely based on India's regulatory framework, which created favourable regulations for the company. This highlights that policy and regulation are essential for Husk's internationalisation efforts. Therefore, by 2017, Husk consisted of its US-based parent organisation, as well as three local entities in India, Tanzania and Nigeria. In 2021, the company is exploring expansion into several other African and Asian countries.

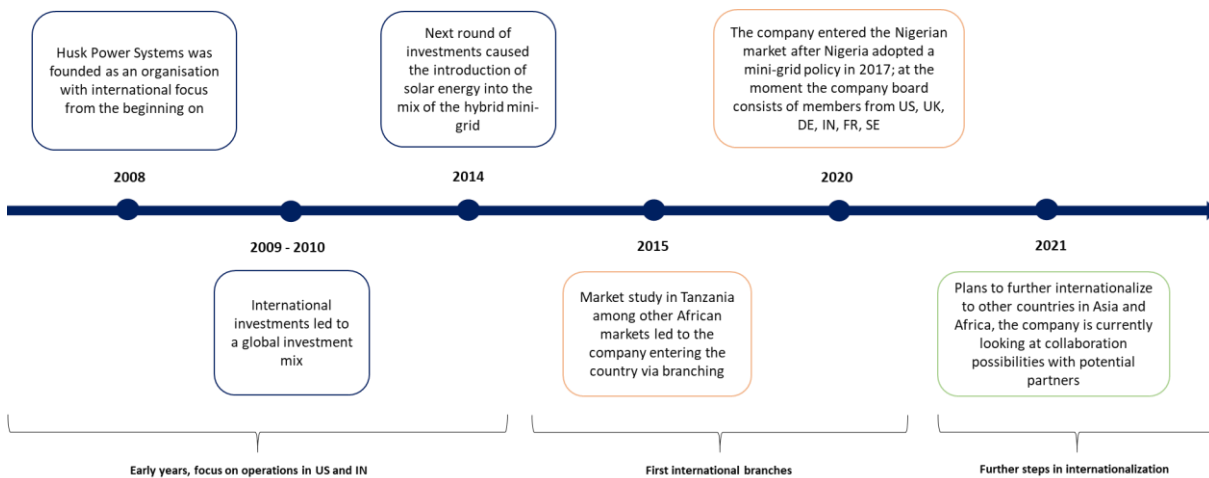


Figure 17 – Husk Power System's internationalisation timeline

Challenges for international scaling

Our interview partner described three challenges to scaling internationally: 1) team building, 2) adapting to new foreign markets and cultures and 3) partnerships. When it comes to **setting up a team**, co-founder Manoj Sinha cited difficulties to utilise existing talent pools in foreign contexts as potential employees abroad often lacked experience in the industry. Thus, building up a local talent

pool slowed the company's progress in internationalisation efforts, with Sinha stating that markets abroad:

"[...] may not have the right talent for what you want to do. So, that was one of the learnings from Tanzania. The kind of talent pool that we needed to have in place in 2015 we couldn't find."

In this context, our interview partner stated that at times, it was **difficult to fully understand and work within the culture of a new market**, e.g. in Tanzania. While Sinha adapted his behaviour and actions to the new context (e.g. when negotiating, or motivating the team), he also pointed to some limitations to this approach and the need to acknowledge cultural differences between partners. According to Sinha, these cross-cultural differences contributed to failed franchising efforts in Tanzania, where **finding potential partners** proved an additional major challenge. As Sinha described:

"There was not enough data or references that you can check on (to perform due diligence). So, you have to take a risk. You know, you go with three or four partners and you expect to fail."

In a similar vein, scaling was also challenged by the differences in **legal and administrative structures**, which added unexpected difficulties to the formation of the new company:

"If you go to government with an approach that is the same approach I would use for the Indian government, it is never going to work out in Tanzania."

In light of this experience, our interview partner argued strongly in favour of training programmes for internationalising that prepare founders for developing a better ability to understand and navigate cultural differences.

Identified internationalisation competences

From the beginning, the Husk co-founders were highly **aware of the global scope of the problem** the company wanted to solve: energy poverty. They responded by envisioning an international, "born global" company from the start (Chetty & Campbell-Hunt, 2004). Husk's board is international in its composition, which has proved highly valuable in navigating cross-cultural challenges. Moreover, especially at an early-stage, the co-founders' global mindset and exposure to multi-cultural environments proved helpful. Subsequently, Sinha was able to develop experience and knowledge about different cultural settings, including awareness of potential differences in basic business practices (e.g. attitudes regarding work ethic).

Similarly, the ability to evaluate the potential of target markets turned out to be a key competence for Husk's internationalisation efforts. Our interview partner

described gaining **knowledge of the administrative, legal and economic situation** abroad as essential before entering a new market. For the company in particular, these are factors like the policy situation, population size, as well as the annual expenditures on diesel fuel. Moreover, evaluations of the talent pool market and external capital inflow into a country as well as safety issues are analysed. For the entry of international markets, Husk also required **strategic competence** and assessed different modes of internationalisation. As opposed to first efforts in Tanzania, the company decided to enter Nigeria via branching, instead of franchising. This allowed them to keep control of their operations abroad, making the success independent from international partners.

Setting up and managing relationships with external partners was another key competence mentioned by our interview partner – especially highlighting the importance of finding the right partners for scaling internationally. This especially includes verifying and crosschecking information about potential partners, creating a basis for reliable collaboration.

Finally, our interview partner illustrated a variety of different competences needed for successful internationalisation, with **team building and hiring decisions** regarded as the most important, as well as **cultural sensitivity**:

"When you are building a team, you are bringing in human beings. And human beings bring along a lot of culture [...] that can become a hindrance or become an asset. So that is usually the toughest thing to assess, whether it makes sense for you, whether it makes sense for your company, and whether it makes sense for the mission that you are trying to accomplish."

To address these challenges, Husk has learned to form mixed teams of expatriates and locals to enable knowledge transfer and build stronger national teams. Similarly, the company now provides cross-training for onboarding.

In addition to addressing the cultural challenges related to human resource management, Husk also learned that it is worthwhile to invest in favourable employer branding. This is especially important for the company, as Sinha pointed out, because *"the talent pool can make or break a business"* and strong brands attract strong talent. When it comes to hiring decisions, our interview partner regards the competence to understand the attitude of potential employees as crucial. This also includes a fit with Husk's mission, integrity and willingness to grow. Similarly, our interview partner highlighted the importance of **leadership** competences, especially empathy for employees and a sense for *"pace"* in internationalisation regarded as key.

5.9. CASE VIGNETTE - IZIBAC

Founders:	Raluca Bacinschi-Stratulat and Adrian Stratulat
Year of foundation:	2017
Home country:	Romania
Social impact:	Making e-learning accessible to all students
International market:	United States
Form of scaling:	Branching



The organisation

iziBac (meaning “easy” and “bac”, for baccalaureate) is a Romanian social start-up aiming to provide all students with the opportunity of e-learning for the baccalaureate exam – regardless of their social background. Coming from both an educational and a business background, co-founder Raluca had the idea for the start-up as she observed her students being afraid of the baccalaureate exam in Romania. At the same time, the educational field clearly lacked digitalisation, which ultimately provided the impetus for Raluca to move forward. Having an initial idea, a business plan, and a network, Raluca entered Social Impact Award in 2017. During the development and refinement phase at the competition, developer and co-founder Adrian joined the team. Lastly, they won the competition – which became, what she calls – “*a crucial part in our development*”. Before the official launch of the app, many efforts were made in terms of content generation, teacher support and beta-testing. On 1 June 2018 – Romania’s Children’s Day – the e-learning app was officially launched on both Android and IOS. Starting from scratch, the app today has more than 50.000 users in Romania, and 6.000 – 7.000 users are active every month.

Internationalisation journey

After their launch, the co-founders of iziBac were invited to several media appearances, which helped iziBac in receiving a lot of public attention for their cause. The win at Social Impact Award strengthened this development, and the co-founders were eventually offered the Romanian civic national prize. In 2019, they joined the Innovx accelerator programme and redesigned the app – this was when they employed a “global mindset” to their operations. While such a global approach was perceived as daunting at first, the accelerator programme provided a boost not only in terms of expertise, but also in the confidence of the founders to scale internationally. Soon after, iziBac applied for the EU project SME Phase

2 – while they did not receive any funding, they obtained the European Seal of Excellence in Innovation, which was accompanied by an encouragement of the European Union to expand the scope of iziBac across national borders. This led to the realisation that the “skeleton” of iziBac could indeed be used for other entities. In 2020, iziBac began to more intensely prepare for international scaling. In February, the co-founders visited Silicon Valley, where they expanded their network towards a number of private investors, equity funds, and universities. In light of the planned international scaling, iziBac first began to strengthen their national network in Romania – as Raluca stated “2020 was solely focused on partnerships”. In collaboration with a local contact in the United States, iziBac aimed at introducing SmartBus – an initiative, which would transform bus rides of high schoolers towards an interactive and joint learning experience for the SAT exam. However, the project ultimately did not go through as they faced resistance from local high schools, governments, and regional committees. Yet, at the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic drastically demonstrated the need for expanding the scope towards digitalisation in e-learning. By the end of 2020, iziBac was listed at SeedBlink, and they managed to obtain 160 000 EUR in funding. Due to the ongoing governmental resistance, partnerships were shifted towards local NGOs rather than the public sector. In 2021, and going forward 2022, iziBac aims to strengthen its position in the United States by building a dedicated team in the form of a subsidiary. More precisely, the plan is to explore capabilities for future partnerships in the United States, to evaluate other market entry options (for example in Asia), as well as to engage in intensive market research. Lastly, iziBac aims to form an association of EdTech providers in Romania in order to tackle the barriers imposed by the local governments.

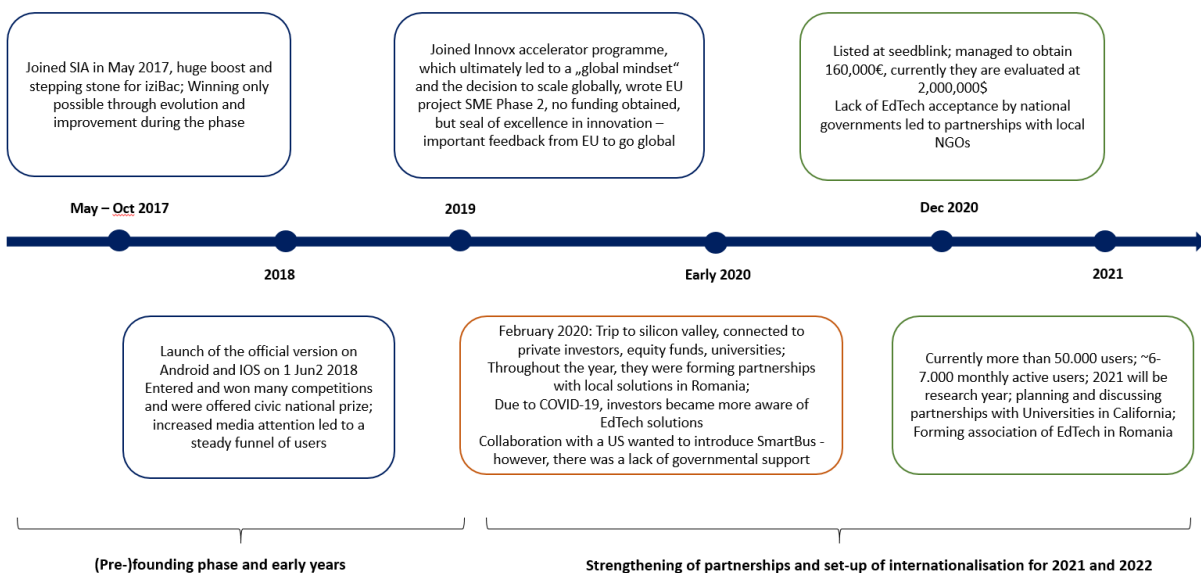


Figure 18 – iziBac’s internationalisation timeline

Challenges for international scaling

Along its journey, one of the biggest challenges iziBac had to and still has to face is the lack of acceptance of Educational Technology (EdTech) on government side. These **legal and regulatory barriers** however, do not only relate to foreign markets such as the United States, but have been proven to be challenging in the home market Romania as well. Although the pandemic has demonstrated a dire need for digitalisation in education, many governments are still cautious with supporting social entrepreneurs in the EdTech sector. Even more so, iziBac remarked that they did not only feel a lack of support provided by local governments, but a massive headwind in their attempts to attain support for their social mission – both locally and abroad. As Raluca put it:

"If we want to survive, we need to offer our services for free. This is the Romanian government's point of view. They do not offer funding for us, they actually kind of block it. So, we are kind of fighting windmills."

In this context, **securing public funding** is perceived as a major challenge for startups in the Ed-Tech sector. In turn, these financial constraints further have broader implications for the internationalisation approach that was chosen by our informant, as options were limited by the lack of funding available:

"We also wanted to expand at a European level first. That's why we applied for the SME [funding]. But the SME did not pull through. So, we had to find a different solution. That's why we are now focusing on the US market more than the European market."

For iziBac, **legal and regulatory barriers** opened on several instances – that is, on the one hand, the lack of funding by public entities, and further, challenges related to setting up operations (in this case, establishing organisational structures) abroad. Lastly, one major challenge the founders of iziBac faced are decisions on **personnel decisions** internationalisation. For example, Raluca stated that for in the context of internationalisation decisions, *"finding the right people to expand with"* is an extremely difficult task.

Identified internationalisation competences

In light of the multifaceted challenges that go along with international branching of social enterprises, iziBac has displayed a rich set of competences along their internationalisation journey. As iziBac has currently entered a more mature phase of their operations, there is a perceived need to shift away from the mere focus on the social mission – and to emphasise more on **entrepreneurship and business competences** to make the business model stable and more sustainable. In terms of competences, **market evaluation** is perceived as critical in this context. The EdTech sector as a particular form is strongly dependent on governmental regulations – making **strategic planning** in the form of market evaluations a particular competence one should have when entering foreign markets.

As Raluca stated “*So, for us, it's going to be a research year in which we want to see the return of investment where we should put the money with the biggest impact*”. In a similar way, **performance management** has been named as a crucial competence, in that iziBac has recognised the need for setting realistic and sustainable goals for the organisation’s international expansion. At the same time, **intercultural competence** has clearly been named a crucial necessity in an international context. However, for geographically distant markets, building personal experiences in foreign markets is important: Raluca stated:

“So that's where you need to kind of get out of your house and really go and meet the market to get to know them physically, not only through calls, or through what your investor has to say about it.”

In the same vein, Raluca mentioned the importance of **communication and negotiation** skills, especially in the context of analysing nonverbal and paraverbal communication with foreign partners for “*being able to achieve ‘win-win-win’ types of negotiation*”. With their entry into foreign markets, the founders of iziBac have focused on building their **marketing** competences. However, a support need that, according to Raluca, is still missing at the moment for social entrepreneurs relates to conclusive data on how to digitally market a product or a service in a different cultural context in order to attain customers abroad. In the sense of **relationship management** – be it with customers, investors, or other stakeholders – our interview partner highlighted the importance of carefully balancing both commercial and social objectives. As the organisations’ stakeholders may have very different expectations from each other (e.g. the students using the app and investors), Raluca regards being honest and transparent about the organisation’s steps to be very important in relationship management. In line with this, the founders of iziBac have demonstrated **political engagement** in order to shape the regulatory environment to their favour and to secure public funding. For example, this iziBac made efforts to overcome regulatory barriers to e-learning through the formation of an association with local EdTech providers. Along their internationalisation journey, iziBac has applied a **gradual approach to internationalisation** in order to strengthen core capacities step by step:

„ That's where we started forming partnerships with local solutions here in Romania, because we realised that if we want to go global, we need to be stronger [...] First, we wanted to set ground in Romania, in our country, to be able to have a strong foundation to learn a lot about how the product can be better [...] First, you test it locally and then you grow it globally.”

Overall, iziBac has displayed a wide variety of competences throughout their internationalisation journey – and will continue to expand their impact across borders in the future.

5.10. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Our case studies aim to shed light on specific challenges faced by eight internationalising social entrepreneurs in addition to competences needed to overcome them and scale abroad successfully. During our interviews, they **identified a wide variety of competences**, unveiling differences and commonalities among their respective internationalisation journeys. Figure 19 presents the results of internationalisation competences from our case studies, grouped by competence areas.

	ColaLife	Wiener Tafel	BeanVoyage	Plastic-preneur	atempo	Discovering Hands	Husk Power Systems	iziBac
Global Awareness	X						X	
Opportunity Identification		X	X		X			
Diagnostic Thinking	X		X		X			
Strategic Thinking	X		X	X	X	X		X
Strategic Planning			X					X
Financial Management	X	X	X					X
Performance Management		X		X		X		X
Human Resource Management		X			X		X	X
Leadership	X			X	X	X	X	
Organisational Structures and Teamwork		X			X	X		
Marketing			X	X	X			X
Communication	X	X		X	X	X		
Language Skills			X					
Intercultural Competence and Awareness		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Economic, Legal and Administrative Knowledge		X	X	X		X	X	
Relationship and Network	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Relationship Management	X	X		X	X	X		
Political Activities	X	X				X		X

Figure 19 – Competences as discussed by our informants

In general, we recognise a number of competences, which appear important to a majority of internationalising social entrepreneurs in our case analysis. Most prominently, **relationship building and management** played a crucial role for all of our interview partners. Moreover, our interview partners stressed the importance of **intercultural competences** in addition to access to country-specific information, including data on the economic, legal and administrative situation in the target country as well. When it comes to overcoming internal challenges while internationalising, **being able to create long-term strategies** for scaling, financial management as well as the ability to create sustainable business structures were highlighted. Similarly, our informants highlighted human resource management competences like the ability to set up and enable teams to drive the mission forward abroad. Additionally, leadership competences and the ability to adapt leadership styles to new surroundings were identified to support successful internationalisation efforts.

The cases also underscore that **different modes of internationalisation create different competence needs**. Disseminating organisations (Wiener Tafel, ColaLife) highlighted political engagement and advocacy during their internationalisation journey. Also, the ability to **communicate a compelling but realistic narrative** regarding the organisations' social mission to stakeholders was perceived important especially by disseminating, but also franchising organisations (atempo, Discovering Hands). Similarly, the significance of **human resource management** activities arose predominantly in interviews with representatives of franchising and branching organisations (Husk Power Systems, iziBac), with hiring decisions proving substantial for the latter. When it comes to exporting organisations (Plasticpreneur and BeanVoyage), we identified a high significance of **marketing efforts** for successful internationalisation.

While rarely discussed explicitly, issues related to **keeping or releasing control** over the organisation's mission and activities were described during our interviews. On the one hand, Simon Berry of disseminating ColaLife argued in favour of purposely letting go of control. On the other hand, Husk Power System's Manoj Sinha described difficulties in retaining control from the perspective of international branches. Moreover, the topic of control seems to be related to relationship management, as it was discussed mainly in this context during our interviews.

In combination with the often-stated necessity of intercultural competences, one interview partner highlighted the need of **foreign language skills** in combination with successful internationalisation. Of course, rising proficiency levels (Education First, n.d.) lead to English serving as a universal communication language globally. Still, we argue that speaking the target country's mother tongue can positively influence connecting with locals and, generally, internationalisation efforts.

In light of the above, it becomes evident that social entrepreneurs need to tackle a **diverse range of challenges** when scaling abroad. Our case analysis shows that there is no one-fits-all set of competences needed when internationalising. Instead, regrouping the identified competences along shared areas as well as mode of internationalisation can help illuminating some competence patterns in our case analyses. Figure 19 shows internationalisation competences which arose during interviews with our informants, grouped by modes of internationalisation. Competences that were mentioned more frequently are located at the base of this visual depiction. Additionally, similar foci are grouped by having the same background colours.

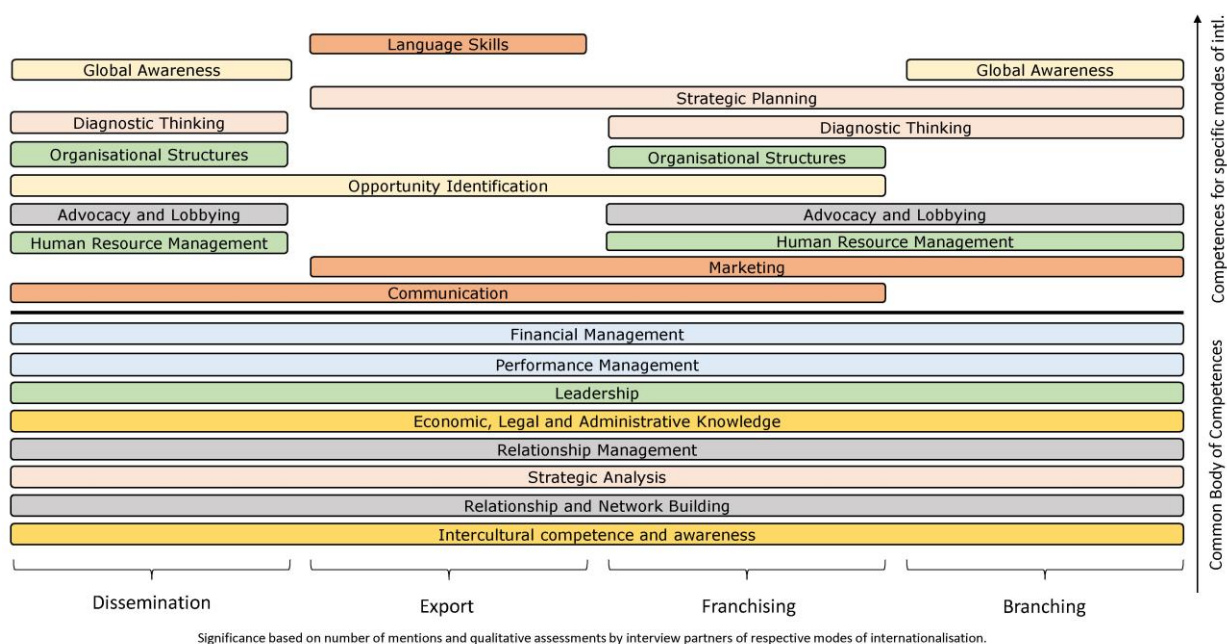


Figure 20 – Competences sorted by mode of internationalisation

As can be seen, respondents reported a **common body of competences** that seemed to be relevant for all modes of internationalisation, including intercultural awareness, human resource management, relationship and others. In addition, we identified **competences for specific modes of internationalisation** – as some types of competences were more likely to be mentioned by respondents with particular modes of internationalisation. For example, advocacy and lobbying were not mentioned by exporting organisations, and marketing and strategic planning not by social entrepreneurs with a dissemination strategy.

More generally speaking, the qualitative analysis shows tendencies about broader fields of competences appearing more relevant for specific modes of international scaling. Firstly, competences in relation to identifying the scope of social opportunities were highlighted by interview partners from disseminating organisations. In addition, competences related to marketing and communication were especially significant for informants from exporting organisations. Similarly, topics related human resource management and hiring team members were highlighted in the context of franchising and branching organisations.

In light of the above, we contend that the qualitative case analysis supports and extends the theoretical framework presented in Section 3. Still, it highlights a common body as well as differences in competence needs for social enterprise internationalisation among our interview partners. Subsequently, this enables us to integrate findings with our previous studies.

6. Integrated Framework on the Internationalisation Competences of Social Entrepreneurs

Magdalena Winkler, Martin Mehrwald and Peter Vandro

Social entrepreneurs who aim to internationalise their activities face a variety of challenges – from navigating a different cultural and regulatory environment to the emergence of new demands for the organisation, its structure and leadership (Bloom & Smith, 2010; Bradach, 2003; Dees et al., 2004). Against this background, internationalising social entrepreneurs require a specific set of skills and competences to be successful.

This final section provides a **synthesis of our insights** from the previously presented literature review (Section 2), the literature-based framework of internationalisation competences for social entrepreneurs (Section 3), the quantitative study of entrepreneurs in the Impact Hub network (Section 4), and the in-depth analysis of eight internationalisation cases (Section 5). Based on the above, this section presents an integrated framework of key competences¹¹ for internationalising social entrepreneurs.

¹¹ In the context of our study, we understand competences as learnable and acquirable abilities (not being limited to a person, but also applicable to groups and organisations), which in a broad sense can comprise of knowledge, skills and attitudes (see Section 3.1 for details).

6.1. INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE INTERNATIONALISATION

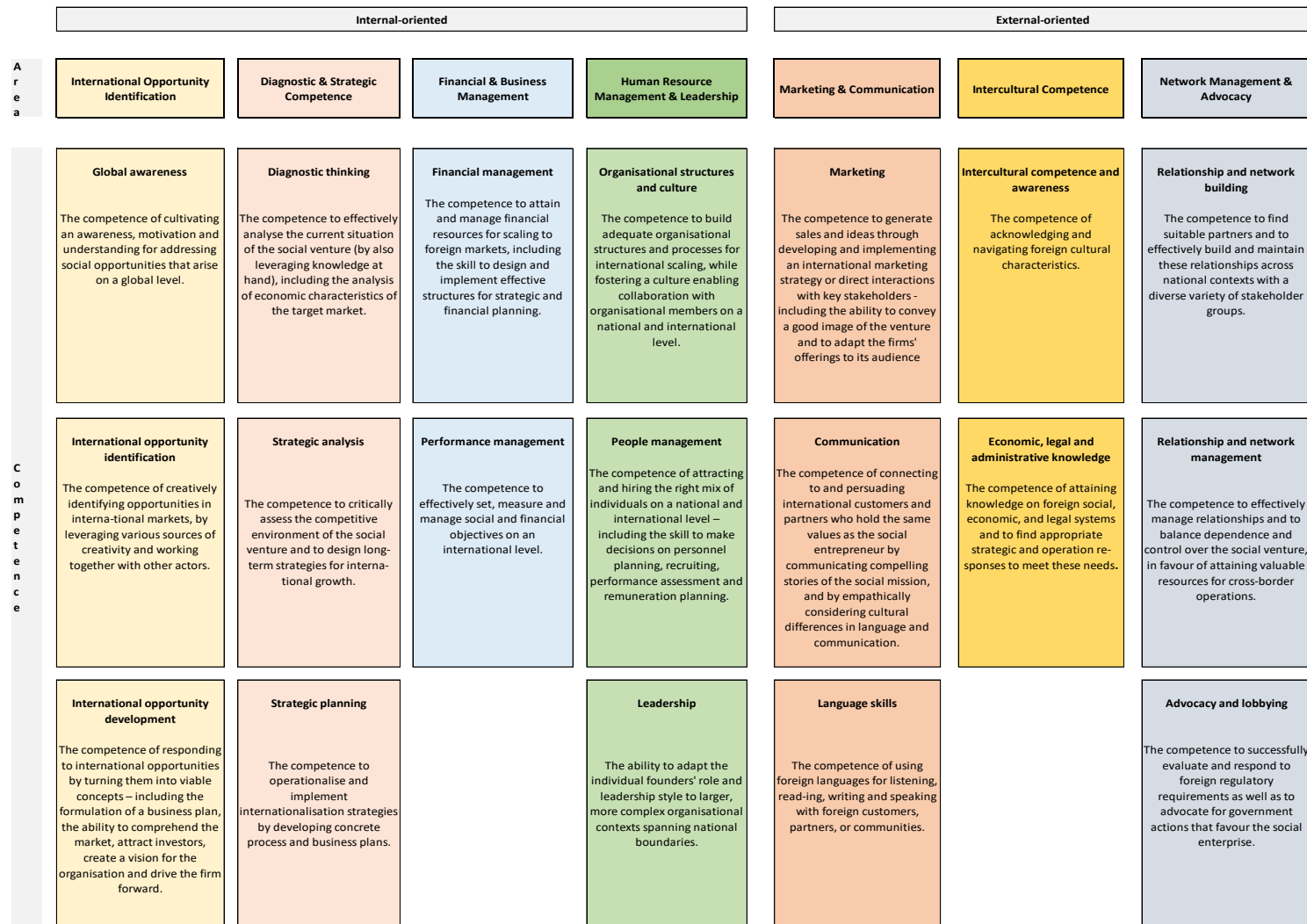


Figure 21 – Integrated competence framework for internationalising social entrepreneurs

6.1.1. Area 1: International Opportunity Identification and Development

The existence of social opportunities – meaning opportunities to serve a social cause or addressing a social issue – is closely tied to an entrepreneurs' ability to identify and seize them (Corner & Ho, 2010). In the literature-based framework, we identified three competences in the overarching area of international opportunity identification – that is global awareness, (social) opportunity identification and opportunity development.

Our case analysis confirmed that these competences are indeed relevant to internationalising social entrepreneurs. **Global awareness**, that is the motivation and understanding for addressing social opportunities on a global level (Zahra et al., 2008a, and others), was prevalent in those organisations that tackled social issues in rural communities. For example, from the very beginning of their activities, the founders of ColaLife adopted the mindset of solving the lack of diarrhoea treatment for children not only in the rural areas of Zambia, but on a global scale. This awareness served as a key motivator for the founders to pursue internationalisation and develop a scaling model that emphasises reach over control.

Social opportunity identification in an international context refers to the skill of creatively identifying opportunities in international markets, whereas opportunity development means the implementation of these opportunities by turning them into operational concepts that are viable both with respect to their impact as well as commercially. Both types of competences were visible in our material. For example, the case of ColaLife illustrates the importance of being able to develop multiple creative and strong value propositions, such as co-packing Zinc and ORS and the initial idea to use spaces in Coca-Cola crates as means for transportation.

The case serves even more as an illustration to the importance of the competence of **international opportunity development**, which is essentially a concept of learning and ability to find a path to adjust one's offerings to novel, sometimes contradicting market feedback (Eller et al., 2021; Sanz-Velasco, 2006). After implementing the idea, the team learned over time that neither the co-delivery with one distributor, nor the use of crates were parts of their offering that the market responded to well. In spite of these surprising finding (after all, the product design had won dozens of awards), the team let go of these features and developed their opportunity further by experimenting with other forms of distribution and embracing the elements that were viable. With respect to internationalisation, opportunity development lead to a similar pivot in 2017. In spite of the successful scale-up in Zambia, the entrepreneurs decided against branching or licensing this successful model in similar forms to other countries. Instead, they used their

knowledge and credibility for taking a more radical and ambitious internationalisation approach through lobbying and advocacy work, as well as to openly disseminate their venture's operations and learning.

Of course, the development of international opportunities does not always require such drastic changes. For example, after having identified the opportunity to export coffee beans to selected European markets, BeanVoyage evaluated and seized the opportunity through price sensitivity analyses, developing more elaborate plans and eventually piloting their export operations.

Competence	Description
Global awareness	The competence of cultivating an awareness, motivation and understanding for addressing social opportunities that arise on a global level.
International opportunity identification	The competence of creatively identifying opportunities in international markets, by leveraging various sources of creativity and working together with other actors.
International opportunity development	The competence of responding to international opportunities by turning them into viable concepts – including the formulation of a business plan, the ability to comprehend the market, attract investors, create a vision for the organisation and drive the firm forward.

Table 13 – Competence area 1: International opportunity identification and development

6.1.2. Area 2: Diagnostic and Strategic Competence

For social entrepreneurs, scaling impact – particularly in the long-term – is associated with a number of challenges. Scaling across borders may prove even more challenging, which is why entrepreneurs must carefully engage in strategic considerations in order to successfully navigate these barriers (Yang & Wu, 2015). Our literature review identified two competences, diagnostic competence and strategic competence, as important for designing appropriate and sustainable internationalisation strategies.

Throughout our case analysis, we found support for the importance of both competences. For the competence **diagnostic thinking** – which we defined as the skill to effectively analyse the current situation of the social venture (by also leveraging knowledge at hand), including the analysis of economic characteristics of the target market – our analysis did not show any prevalence for a specific scaling approach. Instead, social entrepreneurs across the scaling types dissemination, export, and franchising emphasised on the importance of diagnostic thinking. For example, the founder of the Austrian-based social enterprise atempo remarked that it was a crucial task to understand the own product, and being able to analyse strengths and weaknesses of their value proposition, before engaging in any international franchise agreements.

The second skill we identified – **strategic analysis** – refers to the ability to critically evaluate the social enterprise's competitive environment, while designing long-term strategies for the organisation's international growth. In the overall context of our case analysis, we find strategic thinking to be among the most commonly reported skills. Notably, informants across all scaling types reported strategic thinking to being crucial for international expansion.

In the course of our analysis, we further found that internationalising social entrepreneurs engage in what we label **strategic planning** – that is the ability to operationalise and implement internationalisation strategies by developing concrete process and business plans. For our case organisations, strategic planning was naturally associated with the previous step of strategic analysis. For example, iziBac's founder reported that they intensely evaluated the competitive environment for the international target markets, while they simultaneously developed and implemented a strategy for entering said markets.

As outlined in Section 3.2.2, tools such as Dees' "5 R's" (Dees, 2004) as well as commercial management concepts (e.g. the External Factor Evaluation Matrix, PESTEL analysis) can help in the development of all three competences, by providing useful frameworks to guide self-diagnosis and strategy development for internationalising social entrepreneurs.

Competence	Description
Diagnostic thinking	The competence to effectively analyse the current situation of the social venture (by also leveraging knowledge at hand), including the analysis of economic characteristics of the target market.
Strategic analysis	The competence to critically assess the competitive environment of the social venture and to design long-term strategies for international growth.
Strategic planning	The competence to operationalise and implement internationalisation strategies by developing concrete process and business plans.

Table 14 – Competence area 2: Diagnostic and strategic competence



6.1.3. Area 3: Financial and Performance Management

Social enterprises traditionally combine commercial and social objectives at their core, making them often subject to tensions arising from the need to cater to both (Mair & Martí, 2006). Often, social enterprises are deeply embedded in complex and strongly regulated funding ecosystems (e.g. donations, philanthropy, B2C clients), which are organised along the bounds of federal or state-level administrative units (Angulo-Ruiz et al., 2020). While our literature review indicates the importance of financial competences for internationalising (social) entrepreneurs, our case analysis points towards the same direction.

The first theme we identified in our literature review is **financial management** – meaning the competence to attain and manage financial resources for international scaling. Generally, this includes tasks such as fundraising, financial planning and financial management. One of the most important themes that emerged during our analysis is the importance and challenges related to obtaining funding for internationalisation. Therefore, competences related to fundraising were frequently named and – although the different scaling approaches imply a wide source of different funding options – appeared throughout all types of scaling. Firstly, several informants reported challenges resulting from a lack of financial resources – particularly in the very early stages of the social venture – making the competence to attract investors an important starting point for social entrepreneurs. Conversely, other informants explained that, although investors appeared to initially support the social cause, plans for internationalisation often did not receive support from investors. In light of these barriers, the competence to attain and manage financial resources was named among the most critical competences for internationalising social entrepreneurs.

As the quantitative analysis in Section 4.2. underlines the importance of these competences, in particular with respect to funding from philanthropy, public agencies, angel investors and venture capitalists. These funders are frequent supporters of internationalising social entrepreneurs – and even more frequent than among commercial entrepreneurs. Trainings and VET interventions aimed at supporting internationalising social entrepreneurs should thus make sure to pay attention to these important institutional players, their roles and unique perspective in social enterprise internationalisation funding.

Related to the first theme, we identified **performance management** as a relevant competence for internationalising social entrepreneurs. Performance management refers to the ability to effectively define and measure the attainment of social and financial objectives on an international level. Throughout our analysis, one common theme that emerged in this context was associated with *setting realistic goals*, for both social and commercial objectives. Similarly, the element of international *quality management* appeared to be highly relevant for social

entrepreneurs in strongly regulated fields – such as medical access, for example. Performance thereby can refer both to internal and external activities. For organisations who internationalise mainly through building new operational units or via partners, it can thus be an integral part of managing their network (Competence area 7).

Taken together, our findings from the case analyses appeared nonetheless throughout all types of international scaling and suggest that performance management may be relevant across different dimensions.

Competence	Description
Financial management	The competence to attain and manage financial resources for scaling to foreign markets, including the skill to design and implement effective structures for strategic and financial planning.
Performance management	The competence to effectively set, measure and manage both social and financial objectives on an international level.

Table 15 – Competence area 3: Financial and performance management

6.1.4. Area 4: Human Resource Management and Leadership

Scaling abroad holds implications for an organisation's internal structure and team set-up, with social entrepreneurs in need to effectively mobilise human resources (Weber et al., 2015). Moreover, new challenges and objectives due to the internationalisation efforts can necessitate a change of organisational processes and structures, including the role of the social entrepreneurs themselves. Based on our analyses, we identified three important competences in this area: human resource management, leadership, as well as organisational structures and teamwork.

First, we identify building adequate **organisational structures and culture** as key competence. It refers to the implementation of effective organisational structures and processes for internationalisation while strengthening teamwork and collaboration. Especially interview partners from organisations engaging in franchising activities described the need to restructure processes and organisational roles with growing numbers of franchise partners. For example, in the case of atempo, the growing size of the network required building more intermediary structures (e.g. fixed meetings and communication channels) and replacing relational communication with more automatised and decentralised forms of knowledge sharing. Moreover, Wiener Tafel described the need to adapt its operations to more complex partner and funding structures resulting from its membership in an international network organisation.

The second key competence is **people management**, which is understood as the ability to attract and hire a suitable mix of individuals, as well as understanding personnel planning, recruiting, assessment and remuneration planning. Our interview partners described a variety of challenges, with especially organisations involved in modes of internationalisation with higher involvement (e.g. franchising, branching) emphasising the role of finding team members matching the organisation's needs. Also, for disseminating Wiener Tafel, setting up a team of volunteers to cover adequate competences proved to be an important measure.

The complexity of human resource management for internationalising social entrepreneurs was also underlined by our quantitative findings. Here, more internationalising social entrepreneurs expressed a strong need to receive external support in "find and keep good talent and staff" than other social entrepreneurs as well as internationalising commercial entrepreneurs.

Supplementing the dimensions we previously identified in the course of our literature review, we add **leadership** competence as a third dimension. In our case analyses, leadership competences were frequently mentioned as an important ability to support internationalisation effort. Several respondents also highlighted

the need to adapt leadership styles over the course of the internationalisation process. In general internationalisation processes can benefit from an entrepreneurial leadership approach, defined as “leadership that creates visionary scenarios that are used to assemble and mobilize a ‘supporting cast’ of participants who become committed by the vision to the discovery and exploitation of strategic value creation” (Gupta et al., 2004, p. 243). Several respondents however also stressed the need to adjust leadership style over time, especially if more open internationalisation modes are employed, such as franchising or dissemination. For example, our interview partners from atempo and ColaLife stressed that entrepreneurs should not only be able to convey people around the organisation’s social mission and vision, but also be ready to take themselves back and refrain from taking too much control, credit and attention for themselves. Moreover, the ability to build these practices with cultural issues in mind can contribute to successful internationalisation.

Summarising the above, we identify the following three competences in the area human resource management and leadership:

Competence	Description
Organisational structures and culture	The competence to build adequate organisational structures and processes for international scaling, while fostering a culture enabling collaboration with organisational members on a national and international level.
People management	The competence of attracting and hiring the right mix of individuals on a national and international level – including the skill to make decisions on personnel planning, recruiting, performance assessment and remuneration planning.
Leadership	The ability to adapt the individual founders' role and leadership style to larger, more complex organisational contexts spanning national boundaries.

Table 16 – Competence area 4: Human resource management and leadership

6.1.5. Area 5: Marketing and Communication

Internationalising social entrepreneurs are commonly faced with decisions as to how activities, services, or products should be marketed in foreign contexts. One of the key challenges for social entrepreneurs scaling abroad is associated with reaching foreign customers or communities – as they may potentially be very different with regard to cultural or market characteristics than the home country (Yang & Wu, 2014). Similarly, a key task for social entrepreneurs is the decision of whether to highlight the organisation’s social mission, the market mission, or both at the same time towards its stakeholder groups (Smith et al., 2013).

In the course of our case analyses, the importance of **marketing** competences – meaning the ability to generate sales and ideas through developing and implementing an international marketing strategy or direct interaction – was frequently mentioned. More precisely, marketing competences appeared throughout the international scaling approaches of exporting, franchising, and branching. Interestingly, marketing competences were rated as particularly important among the exporting social entrepreneurs, which likely mirrors the fact that the export of products requires social entrepreneurs to directly connect with potential customers in foreign contexts. Yet, our cases did not only show the importance of such a traditional understanding of marketing, as our data suggests that international social entrepreneurs – such as the franchising social enterprise atempo – may be also required to “market” their scaling approach towards potential partners in different countries. Although illustrated in the literature review, our informants did not specifically refer to the importance of traditional marketing activities such as creating sales pitches – instead, marketing was displayed through regular interactions with the organisation’s stakeholders.

The second competence in this area, **communication**, was initially described as the ability to connecting to and persuading international customers and partners with shared values by communicating compelling stories of the social mission. Firstly, we find that communication is indeed a critical competence for internationalising social entrepreneurs. For instance, BeanVoyage’s professional marketing presence paved the way for international partnerships, while ColaLife’s compelling narratives through various communication channels helped in ensuring stakeholder engagement. Yet, our case analyses suggest that communication also closely relates to interpersonal relationships between social entrepreneurs and their partners. While illustrating a convincing narrative of the social mission is a relevant element for international marketing activities, communicating in an empathetic and mutually reinforcing way emerged as second common theme across our cases. Notably, we find these communication competences to prevail across the disseminating social entrepreneurs who tend to engage more intensely

in personal interconnections with partners for knowledge transfer and capacity building.

The importance of marketing and communication was strongly underlined in our quantitative analysis of entrepreneurs in the Impact Hub network too. Not only was it the single most frequently quoted area, in which internationalising social entrepreneurs perceived a need for external support, but the need was also significantly more frequent than on all other groups. This suggests, that in terms of prioritisation, marketing and communications might be the most distinct and important areas for VET providers aiming to support internationalising social entrepreneurs.

In addition to the two competences identified in the review of the literature, we add a third element to the framework – namely, **language skills**. Somewhat surprisingly, the importance of language skills was explicitly only mentioned once. Abhinav, the founder of BeanVoyage, explained that obtaining language skills was critical for engaging with the local smallholder women in Costa Rica. Therefore, we believe that language competences may be critical for internationalising social entrepreneurs – and in particular those who closely work with foreign communities.

It is further worth mentioning that some of our informants pointed towards competence gaps related to marketing – for instance, in the form of how to digitally market in different cultural settings – which underlines the need for tailored training programmes in this context. For marketing and communication, we identify the following three competences:

Competence	Description
Marketing	The competence to generate sales and ideas through developing and implementing an international marketing strategy or direct interactions with key stakeholders - including the ability to convey a good image of the venture and to adapt the firms' offerings to its audience.
Communication	The competence of connecting to and persuading international customers and partners who hold the same values as the social entrepreneur by communicating compelling stories of the social mission, and by empathically considering cultural differences in language and communication.
Language skills	The competence of using foreign languages for listening, reading, writing and speaking with foreign customers, partners, or communities.

Table 17 – Competence area 5: Marketing and communication

6.1.6. Area 6: Intercultural Competence

Widely recognised in (social) entrepreneurship internationalisation literature (Zahra et al., 2008, Marshall, 2011, Tucker & Croom, 2021), the importance of intercultural competence is also highlighted by our case analysis. As indicated in our review of literature (see Section 3.2.6.), we argue that intercultural competence serves as a “bridging competence” that relates to a variety of activities and competences needed for social enterprise internationalisation. Indeed, seven out of eight interview partners explicitly stressed that intercultural sensitivity and awareness contributed to the success of their organisations’ internationalisation – albeit in different ways. Moreover, our case analysis supports the role of tangible knowledge about economic, legal and administrative issues in the target country recognised as competence for scaling abroad. Thus, in this competence area we define two major competences needed – intercultural competence and awareness, and economic, legal and administrative knowledge.

Intercultural competence and awareness refers to the ability to acknowledge and navigate cultural differences between an organisation’s home country and its potential target markets. Our interview partners described the importance of understanding unofficial rules, negotiation and communication habits as well as taboos, routines and general ways of life. In addition, they highlighted potential differences in work ethics and education among prospective team members and partners which internationalising entrepreneurs should be sensitive for. Our informants described a variety of ways to proactively translate intercultural competence into action. Among others, Husk Power Systems’ Manoj Sinha shifted to a less forceful negotiation style in target countries, while Bean Voyage implemented internal trainings to create awareness of differences between Central American and European cultural habits.

Our case analysis also emphasised the role of **economic, legal and administrative knowledge** regarding potential target markets. While this includes being familiar with the role of civil society or information on relevant policy for an organisation’s products or services, more hands-on knowledge was mentioned by our interview partners as well. Questions of how to transfer money into or out of international markets or how to set-up a supply chain and deal with customs on a different continent were raised when entering new target countries. Thus, we identify attaining knowledge about foreign countries’ various relevant systems and, consequently, developing strategic approaches to successfully enter new markets as further competence within this area.

In light of the above, we identify two competences within the competence area intercultural competence:

Skill / Competence	Description
Intercultural competence and awareness	The competence of acknowledging and navigating foreign cultural characteristics.
Economic, legal and administrative knowledge	The competence of attaining knowledge on foreign social, economic, and legal systems and to find appropriate strategic and operation responses to meet these needs.

Table 18 – Competence area 6: Intercultural competence

6.1.7. Area 7: Network Management and Advocacy

The external environment of social enterprises comprises of a wide diversity of heterogeneous stakeholders – such as non-profit organisations, governments, competitors, or clients. Thus, navigating the broader external environment of their organisation may be a highly complex task for social entrepreneurs (Austin, 2000; Austin et al., 2006).

The first competence we identified in the literature review refers to **relationship and network building** – which we defined as the skill to find suitable partners and to effectively build and maintain these relationships across national contexts with a diverse variety of stakeholder groups. In an international context, social entrepreneurs are exposed to unknown regulatory and competitive forces, which is why collaborative partnerships may help them in accessing context-specific insights (Marshall, 2011). Indeed, research suggests that relationship management proves particularly important in terms of scaling a social venture's business model (Bloom & Chatterij, 2006).

During our analysis of the case studies, the sphere of relationship and network building emerged as the most critical competence for internationalising social entrepreneurs – as all social entrepreneurs we interviewed for this study mentioned the importance of competences in this context. Across all approaches to international scaling, social entrepreneurs relied on the establishment of partnerships for international market entry. One of the themes in our data specifically points towards the challenges social entrepreneurs face in the pursuit of acquiring international partners. Commonly, our informants reported that they perceived the success of their market entry to be strongly dependent on partnerships with local organisations, especially in order to reach local communities abroad. For example, one of our informants mentioned that their business model is so much dependent on local partnerships for market entry, that they would dedicate their future activities almost exclusively to building partnerships with a few selected organisations and institutions. Finding the right partnerships was perceived as an especially demanding factor, given the geographical distance between home market and target communities. Commonly, our informants remarked that they struggled in evaluating potential partnerships, which would fit both, the social and commercial objectives of the organisation.

The second competence identified in the course of the literature review is **relationship and network management** – defined as the skill to effectively balance dependence and control over the social venture, in favour of attaining valuable resources for cross-border operations. Together with relationship and network building, managing alliances was described as the most critical competence among all informants. For discovering hands, for example, one important consideration in the international franchising set-up was the notion of how to deal with

"flexibility versus structure" arising from international partnership agreements. In a similar vein, some of our informants reported on the importance of understanding existing international relationship networks, and on difficulties enforcing contractual obligations among partners. Consequently, some of our informants reported that partnerships they initially believed to be fruitful failed in the end. Taken together, our findings point towards the importance of building and managing international networks and indicate the need for adopting a differentiated perspective on the relationship networks of internationalising social entrepreneurs. In sum, the cases suggest that relationships are important to all internationalising social entrepreneurs, although the nature of these relationships can naturally vary across organisational backgrounds, objectives and the scaling approach that is chosen.

Lastly, we define **advocacy and lobbying** as an important competence for internationalising social entrepreneurs. This competence was broadly described as the ability to successfully advocate for government actions that favour the social enterprise, for building a positive reputation and legitimacy in foreign markets. One prominent theme that emerged during our analysis is the *analysis of regulatory and legal frameworks* before entering a foreign market. Several interviewees stated that for them, local policy requirements can be a significant challenge – as, for instance, local regulations might prevent them from bringing in resources (for example, when providing medical equipment to local communities) or from setting up subsidiaries in certain areas. A compelling reason for this is that the fields of activities of social enterprises are often heavily publicly regulated or embedded in local contexts (Angulo-Ruiz et al., 2020). Therefore, regulatory frameworks are perceived as an important criterion as to how and why future markets for scaling are selected. One of our branching informants even argued favourable government policies to be the most crucial element for evaluating opportunities of foreign market entry. In addition to the evaluation of regulatory frameworks for market entry, some of our informants indicated to actively manage entry barriers – which was the case for iziBac, who decided to form an association with local EdTech providers to overcome existing regulatory barriers in e-learning.

A second theme that emerged for the competence of advocacy and lobbying relates to the organisation's *active engagement to instigate political change*. Probably the most successful example for the relevance of political activities for this is the case of ColaLife, who managed to achieve systemic change in the global policy environment for co-packaging of ORS and zinc through global advocacy. Overall, our findings suggest that social enterprises could be even more vulnerable to facing regulatory barriers for scaling than commercial firms – as these challenges frequently seem to relate to the social mission and the nature of the business. This variety of challenges related to policy and regulatory factors reflects the importance of networks and advocacy for internationalising social entrepreneurs, which is why we identify the following three competences:

Competence	Description
Relationship and network building	The competence to find suitable partners and to effectively build and maintain these relationships across national contexts with a diverse variety of stakeholder groups.
Relationship and network management	The competence to effectively manage relationships and to balance dependence and control over the social venture, in favour of attaining valuable resources for cross-border operations.
Advocacy and lobbying	The competence to successfully evaluate and respond to foreign regulatory requirements as well as to advocate for government actions that favour the social enterprise.

Table 19 – Competence area 7: Network management & advocacy

6.2. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Our analysis shows that the **competences needed for internationalising social enterprises are manifold**. Overall, we found that competence needs can be both – internally oriented as well as related to the external surroundings of an organisation. While, in general, the theoretical framework provided in Section 3 was supported by both empirical studies, the case studies still allowed identification of further competence needs. In this regard, the ability to adequately adapt leadership styles to more complex international surroundings emerged during the qualitative analysis. In a similar vein, not only having a strategic approach and develop an effective mode of internationalisation, but also being able to transfer the strategy into concrete action (e.g. via business plans, process plans) was highlighted during our case analysis. Lastly, the framework was complemented with the competence to communicate in foreign languages.

Our integrated competence framework maps the broad variety of competences that emerged during our studies. Yet, our study points towards the importance of additional findings. Firstly, we recognise that **many competences** may be **important** for success **irrespective of the international scaling approach** (i.e. dissemination, franchising, export, or branching). Overall, social entrepreneurs across all cases prescribed a lot of importance to collaborative relationships in internationalisation – which is coherent with the understanding that social entrepreneurial scaling is shaped by partnerships for the sake of overcoming entry barriers (European Commission, 2015). This finding is also consistent with the more generally recognised role of networks in international entrepreneurship to “help entrepreneurs identify international opportunities and establish credibility” (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005, p.54) and to overcome the liabilities of outsidership (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009) – indicating that an internationalising firm suffers most fundamentally from being an outsider in the target market, which can make foreign business activities nearly impossible.

Secondly, we find that **different scaling approaches may indeed lead to varying competences needed**. On the one hand, differences became evident with regard to the degree of commitment in a foreign country (Dees et al., 2004). For example, social entrepreneurs that chose a more committed form of scaling, such as branching, commonly reported on challenges resulting from finding the right talents and building teams abroad. On the other hand, social entrepreneurs who comparatively chose a lower form of commitment (in this case, dissemination and franchising) mentioned that they faced backlash or lost funding support once they turned their attention towards commercial activities. Additionally, although relevant for all modes of scaling, franchising social entrepreneurs stated the need to change organisational roles and team structures. Overall, the results of the quantitative analysis in Section 4 further indicate differences in support needs resulting from different scaling approaches.

Interestingly – and contrasting the notion that some organisations of the social economy are born global by nature (Zahra et al., 2008) – almost all of the social entrepreneurs we interviewed reported that they **entered foreign markets sequentially**. This understanding is coherent with the Uppsala model developed by Johanson and Vahlne (1977, 2009), which prescribes that organisations enter foreign markets in a sequential manner. Correspondingly, some of our informants remarked that they regarded it as necessary to opt for a gradual internationalisation approach, given their lack of experience in foreign markets. However, some of our findings also point towards a consistency with the **born global approach** to internationalisation, which claims that many firms internationalise rapidly and not long after their founding (Chetty & Campbell-Hunt, 2004). Overall, our findings reflect that social entrepreneurship internationalisation, in comparison with commercial entrepreneurship internationalisation, comes along with distinct challenges.

Taken together, our findings highlight the specific characteristics of competence needs for internationalising social entrepreneurs. This suggests that some of the competences mapped in the integrated framework are likely to differ from the competences of local social enterprises or international commercial entrepreneurs – which, in turn, underlines the **need for targeted and tailored support**. Indeed, the results of the quantitative study point towards these differences and indicate that internationalising social entrepreneurs seek a considerable amount of support from others. In sum, the integrated competence framework for internationalising social entrepreneurs suggests that a broad variety of competences is relevant to internationalising social entrepreneurs. Naturally, however, our study is not without limitations, as our qualitative data is not comprehensive of all possible forms of international engagement among social enterprises.

Taken together, our findings have wider implications for the internationalisation of social enterprises and the support needs that are associated with scaling abroad. From our study, we find that there is **not a “one size fits all” model to all internationalising social enterprises**. Instead, differences in challenges, competences and subsequently, support needs become evident.

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8. Appendix: Guideline for Qualitative Interviews

General questions

- Would you please introduce yourself and your business – what is your role within your organisation?
- Why and how did your company / organisation come to be involved with the present business / operation?
- Could you walk us through your internationalisation process and help us understand the steps of your internationalisation journey? For us, it is especially important to understand the critical events and milestones you went through.
 - o How and why did your company / organisation make the decision to expand your operations internationally?
 - o Who was involved in the internationalisation process?
 - o In what way have you internationalised your business (e.g. export, greenfield investment, ..), and why?
 - o What were the criteria for choosing new markets / countries to enter?
 - o Did you rely on external support / networks? If so, in what way did you collaborate?
 - o Did you receive any training(s) for going international? If yes, what kind of training(s)?
 - o Did you have any prior experience with the target markets / countries? If yes, did your experience prove helpful with the internationalisation process? Why?
 - o What were the outcomes of the internationalisation process?

Benefits and challenges

- What are the benefits of having internationalised your business? Could you please provide an example?
- Were there any challenges of internationalising? If so, what were the challenges and how did you cope with them?

Competences, skills and gaps

- Specific to your organisation, which competences and skills were the most critical for internationalising? Could you give us an example?
- Did you develop / learn any critical skills and competences in the process?

- Looking back at the internationalisation process, what competences or skills were you not able to learn, but wish you would have had? In hindsight, why do you think these competencies or skills would have been helpful?
- If you were to internationalise your company / organisation again, what would you do differently, what would you do similarly?
- Do you have any gaps in skills or competencies? If yes, are you currently addressing, or plan to address, these gaps – and how?

Closing

- Is there anything we did not talk about, or anything else you would like to add?
- Would you be ok with sharing some documents with us that help us understand your internationalisation journey?
- Is there anyone else we could talk to?

For further information contact:

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