

Cheers! A teaching project for exploring the opportunities and challenges of internationalization in a small local Brewery.

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Internationalization can play a pivotal role in the success of small firms. This learning project was aimed at upper-level undergraduate or graduate students studying international business or internationalization. Acting as consultants and project managers, students were required to identify and address potential opportunities and challenges for small firms in the internationalization process. The project combined classroom learning with a field trip to enable students to contextualize their theoretical knowledge. The project spanned three weeks, with tasks before, during, and after the field trip. Working in teams, students developed cultural, social, and creative problem-solving competencies. A local microbrewery was selected as the context in which to implement this project. However, the project's principles could be applied to various regional and local small businesses that produce specialized craft products.

Keywords: Internationalization, Field Trip, Small Business, Microbrewery, Craft Products

The submitted work is original and the authors' own work. This work is not currently under review by any other journal.

1. Introduction

This consultancy project was designed for a final-year undergraduate or graduate course focusing on internationalization and intended to help students understand the role of project management in the internationalization process. Internationalization refers to the process of identifying and evaluating opportunities to conduct business activities across national boundaries (Hisrich, 2015). It is one of the most complex strategies that a firm can undertake and it is likely to become increasingly necessary. Even small firms that traditionally focus on local and domestic markets should consider uncontested international markets as a strategic option (Dimitratos et al., 2010; Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017; Kim & Mauborgne, 2014; Manolova et al., 2002). Since project management skills are integral to consultancy practices internationally (Nieto-Rodriguez & Sampietro, 2017), they formed a key component of the research and practice required of students in this project (Söderlund & Maylor, 2012).

In designing this project, we considered the importance of complementing theoretical knowledge with practice (Forest & Rayne, 2009). We adopted an alternative pedagogical approach to advance the significance and impact of business and management scholarship (Söderlund & Maylor, 2012). For example, current approaches to management in higher education do not adequately support students' consultancy and project management skills (Nieto-Rodriguez & Sampietro, 2017). Developers of university curricula assume that graduates will be provided with on-the-job training by large consulting firms; thus, innovations in course delivery in this area trail behind other subjects (Adams & Zanzi, 2004). However, we consider that students interested in working with SMEs or starting their own firm would benefit from a more holistic approach to management, especially in an international context.

Addressing such challenges is essential in business and management education. Practice-oriented projects allow students to gain a comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena, including internationalization (Ashta & Mor, 2018; Hibbert, Siedlok, & Beech, 2016). Thus, in this project, the students applied their theoretical understanding of internationalization to a specific context: a local microbrewery. However, the project combined elements of consultancy and project management as key concepts that facilitate internationalization (i.e., the project incorporated transferrable skills and was not

specific to the microbrewery context). Hence, we are confident that our approach could be applied across a diverse range of small business settings.

We considered the importance of complementing theory with practice when designing the activities that formed part of this project. Such activities included a field trip, as well as dynamic discussions concerning the application of mainstream and emerging internationalization models in various industries (Buckley et al., 2017; Hisrich, 2015; Morais & Ferreira, 2020). These activities balanced students' divergent cultural expectations, interests, and communication styles to support students to understand complex processes (Janssens & Brett, 2006). Such an approach was particularly crucial as we allocated the students into multidisciplinary teams to support the development of their project management and consultancy skills (Dakhli et al., 2018). Moreover, the project was designed to enable students to develop their critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills, as well as their adaptability and ability to take cultural and social considerations into account (Ashta & Mor, 2018).

2. Theoretical Foundations

The internationalization of small firms is increasingly important worldwide. Today, the global marketplace is as much the terrain of small firms as it is of multinational corporations. Internationalizing has become a vital part of the growth strategy of many small companies. By adopting such an approach, small firms can mitigate the effect of decreasing sales in domestic markets, extend the life cycles of their products, and improve their competitiveness by becoming more customer-oriented (Dimitratos et al., 2010; Kim & Mauborgne, 2014). Small firms are affected by many factors, including cultural norms and behaviors, that are not reflected in general theories and models of internationalization (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2012). Thus, the theoretical component of this project aimed to inform students of the benefits of internationalization for small firms, including the potential for growth and access to new markets for their products or services. Upon reading and engaging with the literature presented in this project, students understood that even the smallest firms have the potential to internationalize. The project supported students to apply models and theoretical perspectives to analyze a product or service, identify a target market, evaluate and exploit an international opportunity, and develop an internationalization strategy

for a small firm.

Previous studies have found that small businesses internationalize for various reasons (Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017; Manolova et al., 2002). Some move into foreign markets because their domestic sales have dropped (Discua Cruz et al., 2020). Others experience an increasing demand for products among foreign customers, while others realize that their future success depends on their ability to expand to international markets (Kauppinen & Juho, 2012; Morais & Ferreira, 2020). Internationalizing gives SMEs an edge in today's highly interactive, fast-paced global economy, and a failure to cultivate a global market can be a lethal mistake (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2012). A critical notion that emerges from the literature used in this project is that small and large firms have adopted different internationalization approaches due to their different financial and managerial resources, as well as attitudinal differences (particularly in terms of risk aversion e.g Manolova et al., 2002). Diverse factors can influence internationalization in small firms, including their owners' motivations, changes in the environment, increased international sourcing or importing, or unexpected purchases from overseas clients (Knudsen & Servais, 2007; Manolova et al., 2002). In the small business context, firms are increasingly relying on diverse modes of internationalization, and thus projects examining internationalization should consider different theoretical perspectives and models.

A consensus has emerged in the literature that SMEs take varying paths to internationalization (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2012). Earlier studies suggested that the internationalization process for an SME may progress in stages, including exporting, licensing, opening a sales office in another country, or advertising overseas (Hisrich, 2015). However, subsequent studies have challenged this approach, understanding internationalization as an inclusive and integrated phenomenon. Contemporary perspectives have proposed complementary, rather than competing, explanations (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2012). These theories include incremental models (e.g. Vahlne and Johanson, 2017), network-driven initiatives (Coviello & Munro, 1997), contingent, rational, strategic or resource-based models (e.g Andersson & Evers, 2015; Arias & Discua Cruz, 2019; Beleska-Spasova et al., 2012; Ibeh, 2003; Reid, 1983) and entrepreneurial initiatives (e.g McDougall and Oviatt, 2000). Although some SMEs prefer to

internationalize incrementally, others progress through the process rapidly, leveraging their existing network relationships or entrepreneurial factors (Carter & Jones-Evans, 2012). Others may adopt a rational, strategic process involving a rigorous consideration of internal and external factors. For example, McDougall and Oviatt (2000) suggested that there is growing support for SMEs to strengthen the entrepreneurial and international orientation of owners and managers. A summary of the theories that focus on incremental internationalization (i.e., developmental models), network theory, and resource-based perspectives (including RBV, contingency, and international entrepreneurship) is shown in Table 4 and formed part of the readings provided to students in this project.

Understanding the opportunities and challenges involved in internationalization enables students to develop valuable skills should they work in a small firm or start their own business. Furthermore, successfully internationalizing requires an effective strategy, together with competent project management and execution (Söderlund & Maylor, 2012). Therefore, this project was designed to enhance students' analytical and research skills to strengthen their real-world performance (Ferrés & Piscitelli, 2012).

Moreover, SMEs that seek to internationalize face significant barriers (Paul et al., 2017). These include a perception by owner-managers that their firm is too small to export, a lack of information about getting started in global trade, and limited financial or human resources (Beleska-Spasova et al., 2012; Carter & Jones-Evans, 2012). Attitudinal, operational, and relational barriers may be encountered at different stages of the internationalization process (Hisrich, 2015). Firms' responses to such obstacles depend on the decision-maker (i.e., the owner-manager), as well as firm characteristics such as size, governance, international business experience, market research experience, and export interest involvement (Paul et al., 2017; Kontinen and Ojala, 2011; Manolova et al., 2002).

In this project, students were required to draw on relevant literature to provide advice to a local SME (i.e., a microbrewery) interested in offering its existing products on the global market. By focusing on a specific overseas market, students were able to tailor their recommendations to appeal to the similarities between the regions identified, recognize the differences in the two regions, and develop their

agility and adaptability. Students' identification of a specific target market informed their subsequent decisions about the most appropriate products and strategies to be proposed to the firm. This illustrated to the students the relevance of the different models and theoretical perspectives that they had studied.

2.1. A focus on a microbrewery

To implement the project, we focused on a local microbrewery. Microbreweries, which are defined as breweries that produce less than 15,000 barrels of beer per year and sell 75% or more of their beer off-site (Brewers Association, 2020), are increasingly considering new business models and opportunities to grow (e.g., appealing to tourists, merchandising, opening gift shops, and offering new beer flavors). They are also seeking to increase both capital investment and digital social engagement (Alonso, 2011; Heying, 2010). Such growth can be achieved by developing beers with appealing storylines, names, and connections to locations that resonate with local and international consumers (Fletchall, 2016; Hede & Watne, 2013). Hence, we considered that a local microbrewery offered an appropriate setting to deploy innovative pedagogies to help students understand internationalization.

We selected a specific local microbrewery in the northwest of the United Kingdom for several reasons. First, microbreweries are increasingly offering group visits to raise customer interest and increase awareness of their products' unique qualities. Such a setting provides a real-world opportunity for students to explore how artisanal craft beers are produced (Heying, 2010). Conducting a field trip to a microbrewery also enables additional social and educational activities (e.g., tasting events and tours) that complement students' learning experiences. Second, a microbrewery setting is an appropriate context in which to understand internationalization, given that the beer industry is facing changes in consumption and increasing commercialization around the world (Cabras & Higgins, 2016; Colen & Swinnen, 2016; Daneshkhu, 2017). Finally, the project took place in a brewery within the local community, allowing both local and international students to sample authentic local beer.

This project adopted a pedagogical approach that facilitated learning and skill development in three ways (Anderson et al., 2013). First, the project illustrated the practical application of

internationalization models and theories in the context of a small firm. Secondly, the project provided students with real-world experience through a field trip. Thirdly, the project developed students' project management and consultancy skills by requiring them to develop and present a proposed internationalization strategy.

3. Learning Objectives

Our learning objectives for this project were that, by the end of the project, students would be able to:

1. define critical concepts and perspectives related to the internationalization of small firms;
2. explain the opportunities and challenges of internationalization for small firms;
3. make recommendations for the internationalization of a local firm based on the studied concepts and frameworks; and
4. work in teams to manage a project, consult, and communicate their internationalization plan.

The primary pedagogical mechanisms that we applied to achieve these learning objectives were hands-on practice (Cavalcanti Junqueira & Discua Cruz, 2019) and service-learning approaches, which seek to enhance students' real-world business experience (Godfrey et al., 2005; Munro & Preece, 1998). The project required students to visit a small firm, attend a presentation by its founders and management team, analyze, apply mainstream theories and models, and make recommendations. The project concluded with students reflecting on the learning experience and internationalization more broadly. The skills that they developed included (1) industry analysis and discussion, (2) teamwork and joint decision-making, (3) project management, and (4) reflective practice.

4. Methodology

The project spanned three weeks, with tasks occurring before, during, and after the field trip to a local microbrewery. Table 1 shows the specifications for the learning experience and project. The following sections detail the activities that were conducted before, during, and after the field trip, as outlined in

Table 2. Table 3 lists resources that were provided to support students to explore market data, while Table 4 summarizes key theoretical perspectives and provides sources for further reading.

(Table 1 near here)

4.1. Number of students

We designed this project for a maximum of 20 students divided into 3–5-person groups. This measure worked well in our case study of a local microbrewery. If this project is implemented in larger classes in the future, we recommend increasing the number of groups, as well as checking how many students can be accommodated by the local firm that is the focus of the field trip. Classes of more than 20 students may need to schedule different times to visit the firm and may also require additional time for the presentations during Week 3. If safety regulations apply, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) may also be required.

4.2. Project composition

In the first part of this project, the students reviewed the required readings, as outlined in Table 1. During the three lectures and three workshops, we checked that students had adequately engaged with the theoretical perspectives presented in the literature by observing their exchanges and their ability to articulate thoughtful questions while participating in classroom discussions. Absorbing the theoretical information in the readings and examining the key success factors prepared students to understand how the complexities of the internationalization process might impact the microbrewery.

Before going on the field trip, we met with the brewery owner and discussed the project guidelines and site visit. We aimed to ensure that the field trip provided students with a comprehensive overview of the firm; this required the participation of key staff such as the director of operations and sales director, as well as the owner. Consistent with this project's knowledge-exchange approach, the owner and directors were committed to providing our students with relevant information about their firm's operational and sales processes. They also enlisted additional staff to provide guided tours of the facilities. Hence, the microbrewery team was well-prepared to interact with the students on the day of the field trip.

In the second part of the project, students went on the field trip and engaged with the business owner and staff at the microbrewery. Students then conducted additional relevant and purposeful research to prepare recommendations that were tailored to the client's circumstances.

The third part of the project reinforced the critical proficiencies obtained during this learning experience as students completed their presentations and reflected on the complex interplay between project management and the internationalization process.

4.3. Process, analysis, and evaluation

According to Hibbert (2013), in this type of professional activity, it is essential to utilize and analyze data from students' own research to inform the scope and focus of their assignments, presentations, and knowledge acquisition. The learning process should be noninvasive (Hibbert, 2013, p. 821) and should elicit knowledge insights drawn from the students' reading, observations, interviews, and practical experiences. This methodology facilitates students' ability to naturally use qualitative, narrative, and interpretive approaches in their analyses. The benefits of such an approach should be augmented by the careful design of the project, together with the evaluation of learning outcomes (Hibbert, 2013), debriefing discussion, and project management synergies.

In this project, the evaluation criteria included a comprehensive assessment of the students' trajectory, culminating with the final proposal and presentation. We tailored the assessment to reflect an actual project management undertaking and introduced tools and skills that are used in project management and consultancy processes. The project required students to deliver a presentation and write a report, including recommendations, to help their clients to explore opportunities to internationalize and mitigate their concerns.

5. Field Trip

Field trips and practical experiences have been proven to complement classroom learning at the university level and provide an opportunity for students to examine internationalization in practice (Fayolle & Klandt, 2006). When field trips are planned successfully (Falk et al., 1998), students can reinforce theoretical classroom discussions and advance their academic knowledge through the

observation of real-life practices (DeWitt & Storksdieck, 2008). Such an approach is particularly valuable when students have the opportunity to explore theoretical perspectives in a dynamic setting (Cavalcanti Junqueira & Discua Cruz, 2019).

5.1. Preparation before field trip

In the main lecture in Week 1, a review of existing theoretical models (e.g., Kauppinen & Juho, 2012; Morais & Ferreira, 2020; Steinhäuser et al., 2020) supported a general discussion of internationalization, as shown in Table 1. The key discussion questions posed at the beginning of the lecture were: Should a small local firm go international? How can the latest theories and models prepare us to suggest a way forward? The lecture emphasized that cultural awareness, action, and relationships are key components of internationalization. We also discussed why the microbrewery sector was an appropriate context for studying internationalization (Cabras & Bamforth, 2015; Hede & Watne, 2013; Heying, 2010).

During the first workshop, we led discussions on the internationalization-to-practice literature in the context of several local industries (e.g., cheese, chocolate, and beverages). At the end of the workshop, we provided students with the pre-field trip instructions and their team allocations (Table 2). We used the workshop time to examine the handout with students. Our goal in the pre-field trip workshop was for students to become more familiar with the beer industry and its connection to the internationalization literature. This preparation was essential as it enabled the students to formulate relevant questions to be asked during the upcoming field trip and reflect on the internationalization literature. The preparation served as the foundation for the students' development of a project management plan and their creation of a presentation based on their field trip (Table 2: Tasks 3, 4, 5).

(Table 2 near here)

The lecture in Week 2 focused on a review of theories related to internationalization. A core aspect of the second lecture was the importance of such theories. The lecture also considered the beer industry and provided examples of other products (e.g., beer, cheese, and chocolate) produced by small firms that have internationalized.

5.2. *Participation during the field trip*

For this project, we chose a microbrewery that produces less than 15,000 US beer bottles per year. The brewery is part of a small group of connected ventures, including a restaurant, hotel, and pub that distributes its products. The brewery also sells its products locally through pubs, supermarkets, and convenience stores. It has received inquiries from international customers that have visited the brewery or tasted its products in local pubs and taken the product back to their countries (e.g., Japan or Finland).

Instructors wishing to implement this project in the future should select the field trip destination based on proximity to their university, their existing professional relationship with the owners/managers, adequate physical space, and the availability of a field trip. We recommend arranging the visit at least one month in advance. Instructors should ask the firm's owners or managers to deliver a brief speech describing the business's history and current operations, followed by a guided tour of the production or retail facilities and a question-and-answer session.

During the field trip, students gathered information about the firm that was not publically available and questioned the owner and managers about the firm's history (e.g., the stories behind existing beer names). The students also asked the representative about their future objectives for the firm and the perceived barriers to internationalization. Next, the students observed the brewing and packing process during their guided tour of the facilities and interacted with other visitors in the on-site pub and restaurant. Finally, the students were able to sample the firm's products and discuss them with the brewery owners and other staff members. The microbrewery offered non-alcoholic craft drinks for students who preferred this option. During the field trip, we remained available to make classroom connections *in situ*.

5.3. *Post-field trip presentation and reflection*

During Week 3, the groups gave presentations on the university campus. The presentations had two key interrelated aims. First, the students were required to give their presentations and make recommendations as if they were addressing the microbrewery's management team. The teams were required to propose an internationalization strategy and associated project management approach. Working in teams

composed of students with diverse backgrounds is an effective way of making sense of a large amount of information from different sources (Dakhli et al., 2018).

To complete the report and presentation, students were encouraged to consider multiple resources, as shown in Table 3. These resources provided students with, for example, market opportunity data, which informed their strategic decision-making. Students used the resources to develop their recommendations and identify an initial target market based on a cultural and operational analysis.

(Table 3 – near here)

Given that firms may vary in terms of their size and appetite for internationalization, the students were required to discuss various theories and models and consider their applicability to the particular context of this project (i.e., the microbrewery). Second, the students learned the relevance of cultural awareness and the decision-making processes that small firm owners may need to engage in.

Finally, the presentations led to a dynamic reflection and debriefing session regarding the students' experiences on the field trip and how this learning opportunity had influenced or challenged their understanding of project management in the context of internationalization. For future iterations of this project, we envision groups presenting their recommendations to the management team of the selected small firm, and we encourage instructors to consider this.

6. Discussion of the Debriefing Session

Our interest in providing practice-oriented learning experiences enabled us to design a real-world experience that enhanced our students' understanding of the opportunities and challenges of internationalization in small firms. Hence, the debriefing session was an opportunity to revisit and reflect on this project's intended learning objectives.

First, we provided the students with several questions to encourage active and thoughtful discussion concerning the subject-matter of the project, as well as the interactions between team members during this project:

1. Based on the reading materials, how would you define the process of internationalization in the

context of small firms?

2. Based on your observations and reflections related to the field trip to the microbrewery, how would you explain the implications of internationalization for small firms?
3. Based on the studied concepts and frameworks, how would you advise a small firm to approach the process of internationalization?
4. Describe your learning experience of working in teams to plan and manage a project, consult, and develop and present an internationalization strategy for a small firm?

As described in Tables 1, 2, and 3, before the field trip, the students read a range of academic publications concerning internationalization. In the debriefing session, the students reported that this approach helped them to confidently make recommendations regarding the internationalization of the microbrewery. Nevertheless, we asked students to reflect further and, when necessary, guided the discussion if we considered that students had misunderstood the academic material.

Concerning Questions 1 and 2 above, most students initially considered that they had a good grasp of the concept of internationalization. However, after the first lecture and workshop, they identified gaps in their knowledge concerning the context of small-firm internationalization and changing industry conditions; they reported understanding internationalization mostly from the perspective of large firms. Hence, we provided the students with ongoing guidance during the three weeks of the project, to complement the insights gained through the theoretical readings and field trip. This approach stimulated discussion and knowledge acquisition regarding internationalization in small firms. Students reported that these discussions encouraged them to reflect, which strengthened their understanding of the topic, thus satisfying Learning Objectives 1 and 2.

The students raised many questions regarding the feasibility of internationalization as they researched the history of the microbrewery. Some questions were operational: 'Why did the microbrewery start producing their own bottles while deciding to expand to foreign markets? How are the two activities related?' The pre-trip questionnaire (Table 2) guided students to formulate questions for the brewery staff to investigate such issues. The students reported that this approach helped them to

understand the opportunities and challenges of internationalization and facilitated their understanding and awareness of the beer industry before the field trip.

During the debriefing, students also highlighted that collaborations within teams in the classroom often exhibit complex multilevel dynamics (Bennis & Biederman, 2007; Huxham & Vangen, 2005), which is consistent with the project management literature (Hibbert et al., 2016; Nieto-Rodriguez & Sampietro, 2017; Söderlund & Maylor, 2012). Students questioned whether a cohesive group decision or recommendation concerning internationalization was feasible. Nevertheless, students reported that working in a group produced robust problem-solving negotiations among group members, which supported the development of their internationalization strategy. For example, during the field trip, the microbrewery staff explained that their product could not be sold directly to certain countries. Hence, partnerships with neighboring countries might be necessary for the product to reach the target market. Students investigated which bordering countries might provide the best prospect for such a partnership based on existing trade agreements with the target countries and negotiated the selection of a partner country with their fellow group members, thus fulfilling Learning Objectives 2 and 3.

For the presentations in Week 3, we asked students to draw on the theoretical approaches they had studied during the project (e.g., project management) to support their understanding of internationalization strategy and firms' decision-making processes. Students reflected on their group dynamics and collaborations and delivered relevant recommendations to the microbrewery, thus fulfilling Learning Objective 4. Students were also asked to reflect on their initial assumptions versus the knowledge and practice they had at the end of the project. This practice would be beneficial if, for example, students decided to develop an internationalization strategy for specific local and regional products.

6.2. Variations

Future iterations of this project could be based on products developed by small local firms. This learning approach is particularly applicable in locations in which foreign tourists' appreciation for regional or local specialties (e.g., drinks, chocolate, cheese, or coffee) might prompt small firms to

consider expanding to international markets (Discua Cruz et al., 2020; Heying, 2010; Spielmann et al., 2019). Such variations could consider a diverse range of factors or modes of internationalization (e.g., international sourcing, exporting) adopted by small firms.

In our project, the first lecture emphasized that internationalization models and theories can be applied to a range of small firms, meaning that the implementation of the project is flexible. Although we visited a brewery and considered the internationalization of beer, future iterations could adopt an alternative product or field trip location on an individual or group basis if needed. For example, some students may not wish to visit a brewery due to their religious beliefs or abstinence from alcohol. In such cases, instructors could rely on the material used in our first lecture and select an alternative local small firm specializing in a regional craft product.

To date, this project has been implemented three times, involving a total of 57 students from different cultural backgrounds and disciplines (e.g., marketing, management, entrepreneurship, and finance). We intentionally created diverse groups to add a real-life perspective while advancing cultural, social, and creative problem-solving competencies. As a result, the students participating in this project discussed the significance of participating in multicultural and multidisciplinary teams and how these dynamics influenced their project management efforts. In the debriefing discussions, many students reported that their participation in this learning experience highlighted the importance of considering multiple analytical angles when implementing a project. However, to implement this project in courses with limited cultural or academic diversity, instructors could randomly allocate students to groups.

7. Conclusion

This project enabled us to teach students about internationalization in small firms by establishing a theoretical foundation, then contextualizing that foundation through a field trip. Each week of the project built on the previous content, from the solid theoretical foundation to the field trip's practical knowledge, thus achieving the learning objectives. The field trip strengthened students' awareness of the opportunities and challenges facing small firms in terms of internationalization and supported the development of skills that could assist students as the future managers or advisors of small firms that are attempting to penetrate

international markets.

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Table 1: Project specifications***Academic reading materials:***

In the case study discussed in this paper, students were required to read:

- Cabras, I. and Higgins, D. M. (2016), “Beer, Brewing, and Business History”, *Business History*, 58 (5): pp. 609-624.
- Colen, L. and Swinnen, J. (2016), “Economic Growth, Globalization, and Beer Consumption”, *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 67 (1): pp. 186-207.
- Hede, A. M. and Watne, T. (2013), “Leveraging the Human Side of the Brand Using a Sense of Place: Case Studies of Craft Breweries”, *Journal of Marketing Management*, 29(1-2): pp. 207-224.

Note: These materials may be adapted if a focus on a particular local product (e.g., food or drink) is intended.

Students also read:

- the materials listed in Table 3;
- information about the firm (e.g., website, printed, and social media) a local microbrewery; and
- the pre-field trip handout with possible exploratory questions.

Space and access:

Classroom – must be equipped with AV equipment to accommodate up to 30 students. The students should have access to the Internet, presentation software, and hardware.

Field Trip Location – A local firm that is interested in developing an internationalization strategy for their product. In this case, a local microbrewery was visited.

Time requirements:

Week 1 - lecture (2 hours), workshop (2 hours)

Week 2 - field trip (2.5 hours);

Week 3 – presentation, reflection, and Q and A session (2.5 hours or less, depending on the number of students and groups).

Number of students:

15 to 30 students, working together in 3–5-person teams.

Table 2: Pre-, during, and post-field trip activities—student handout.**Week 1 - Before the field trip**

Task 1: Read and review the information about the selected local brewery/small business (e.g., their website, print media, and social media accounts). What is the firm's approach to selling their product locally? Is there something unique about the product that would appeal to an international consumer?

Task 2: Read the required reading materials, including Table 3.

Week 2 - During the field trip

Task 3: During the visit, reflect on how the information provided by the firm's owners or management team supports or contradicts the information you read before your visit.

Task 4: During the Q & A session, ask the staff questions related to the topics you have identified in your reading that may be relevant for your presentation in week 3.

Week 3 – After the field trip

Task 5: Meet with your group and consider the following questions:

- To what extent do theoretical perspectives help us understand how (whether) the selected small firm can approach internationalization?
- What are the opportunities and challenges for the local microbrewery/small firm in terms of internationalization?

You should prepare a presentation (**10 minutes, with 5 – 7 slides**) based on these questions, including an internationalization strategy with recommendations for the firm. Support your reasoning using the material presented in class and the required reading.

Task 6: Drawing on the field trip experience and relevant academic literature, the group presentations will conclude with an opportunity for team members to reflect (**10 minutes**) on the entire learning experience during the three weeks.

Table 3: International trade information and resources

| Organization | Description | Link |
|--|--|---|
| US Department of Commerce | The Department of Commerce is responsible for export and investment promotion. | https://www.commerce.gov/issues/export-and-investment-promotion |
| globalEDGE Database of International Business Statistics (DIBS) | The globalEDGE DIBS contains over 5,000 variables from over 200 countries to aid in international business research. | https://globaledge.msu.edu/ |
| Export-U | Export-U delivers training for profitable global export sales. | https://www.export-u.com/index.html |
| World Trade Organization (WTO) | The WTO sets the global rules of trade between nations. Its primary function is to ensure that global trade flows | https://www.trade.gov/ |
| International Trade Center (ITC) | The ITC aims to help the United Kingdom create sustainable trade linkages with the developing world by sourcing high-quality products from these growing export markets. | https://www.intracen.org/country/united-kingdom/ |

Table 4: Theoretical resources for instructors and students. Source: Adapted from Carter & Jones-Evans (2012)

| Theory | Selected publications | General explanation |
|--|--|---|
| Incremental internationalization (i.e., stage of development) models | Johanson & Vahlne, 1990; Vahlne & Johanson, 2017 | This perspective describes firms' internationalization as a sequential, incremental, step-by-step process. The theory considers that firms begin as low-commitment exporters and incrementally develop to become committed exporters as they gain international marketing knowledge and experience. Firms are also believed to initially target neighboring countries that are psychologically close to them (i.e., that are closer in terms of culture, language, political system, and competitive factors) and subsequently enter foreign markets with more considerable psychic distance. |
| Network theory | Coviello & Munro, 1997; Kontinen & Ojala, 2011; Musteen et al., 2014 | There is a growing body of evidence concerning the role of network relationships in SME internationalization. This perspective positions internationalization as an interplay between increasing commitment and evolving knowledge about foreign markets, which is gained mainly through interaction with such markets. Network theory sees markets as a system of relationships between many players, including customers, suppliers, competitors, family, friends, and public and private agencies. |
| Resource-based perspectives (i.e., business strategy, contingency, and international entrepreneurship) | Andersson & Evers, 2015; Arias & Discua Cruz, 2019; Beleska-Spasova et al., 2012; Ibeh, 2003; McDougall & Oviatt, 2000; Reid, 1983 | These perspectives highlight that firms' level and quality of resources (e.g., the education level of their employees, their capital, and their capacity) are relevant in the success of SME internationalization. Firms' ability to find and utilize external resources depends on their own resources. The business strategy perspective sees internationalization as a rational approach; decisions to enter new markets are made in the context of a firm's overall strategic planning and guided by a rigorous evaluation of internal and external factors. The contingency perspective sees small-firm internationalization as situation-dependent and influenced by different factors. The international entrepreneurship perspective posits that SMEs have become more entrepreneurial in their pursuit of international opportunities, resulting in more rapid internationalization and more ambitious entry-mode behaviors. |

Note: the perspectives included above are simply a sample of the theories and models that may be considered by students. To better contextualize the approach to their particular setting, instructors should rely on recent systematic reviews (e.g., Kauppinen & Juho, 2012; Morais & Ferreira, 2020; Steinhäuser et al., 2020).