

**The Uppsala Model as a framework to explain the internationalization
process of Algerian companies.**

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Abstract:

This study investigates the applicability of the Uppsala internationalization process model as a framework to explain the internationalization pattern of Algerian companies. The Uppsala model suggests a gradual and incremental process of international expansion that is driven by experiential learning and an increasing commitment of resources to foreign markets. Using a qualitative approach, this research analyzes the international trajectories of a selection of Algerian companies across various sectors. The findings indicate that the Uppsala model effectively illustrates the gradual nature of market entry through the accumulated knowledge and experience of Algerian companies in foreign markets.

Keywords: Internationalization Theories, Uppsala Model, Foreign Markets Entry Modes, Psychic Distance, Experiential knowledge.

Jel Classification Codes: XN1, XN2.

1. INTRODUCTION

Economic globalization and the liberalization of goods, services, and capital flows present both new opportunities and new challenges for companies seeking to expand beyond their domestic markets.

In today's era of open borders and increased international trade, intense competition has become a reality, compelling companies to seek innovative ways to maintain their competitiveness. One effective strategy for achieving long-term profitability and survival is international expansion, also known as business internationalization. It is essential to understand that the motivations for internationalization are significant not only for company management but also for policymakers. Governments allocate substantial resources and create legislation to support the internationalization of local

businesses and to promote exports.

Despite the various motives and benefits associated with business internationalization, there is a notable lack of presence of Algerian companies in international markets compared to the available opportunities. Furthermore, it has been observed that most Algerian companies engaging in international markets favor exporting as their primary mode of entry to markets with close psychic distance. The initial concepts of the Uppsala model expected firms to start the internalization process through exporting to the neighboring countries before moving gradually to distant markets. They first acquire knowledge of the target foreign markets before proceeding to commit to those markets. This phenomenon leads to the central research question:

To what extent does the Uppsala model explain the internationalization process of Algerian companies?

To address this main question, we have formulated the following sub-questions:

- What is meant by internationalization, and what are the different theories of internationalization?
- What are the various motives for internationalization?
- What internal and external factors influence the choice of entry mode?
- What are the different modes of entering international markets, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of each mode?
- What are the primary reasons why Algerian companies choose exporting as an entry mode to international markets?

Research Objectives

The aim of this study is to assess the consistency between the Uppsala model of internationalization and the internationalization pattern of Algerian companies. This will be accomplished through:

- Defining and highlighting the importance of internationalization for firms.

- Explaining various theories of internationalization, with a focus on the Uppsala model.
- Highlighting the different motives and reasons for international expansion.
- Understanding the internal and external factors that influence the choice of entry mode.
- Presenting various entry modes used in international expansion, along with their advantages and disadvantages.

Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive-analytical methodology. In the descriptive section, we discuss various theories of internationalization, placing particular emphasis on the Uppsala model, which is the core subject of our research. We also cover the different motives and modes of internationalization. To address the research question, we conducted interviews with managers from ten companies across three industries: electronics and appliances, pharmaceuticals, and food and beverages. Following the organization and analysis of the interview responses, we compared them with the elements of the Uppsala model to evaluate its relevance and applicability to the internationalization patterns of Algerian companies, ultimately leading us to a conclusion.

2. Theoretical Framework

In recent decades, the topic of firm internationalization has garnered significant interest within academic circles, leading to discussions from various angles and perspectives. This section aims to provide definitions of internationalization and explore traditional and modern theories that attempt to explain this phenomenon. These theories are essential for understanding the motivations, strategies, and patterns that companies follow when engaging in international business activities. We will discuss some of these theories, highlighting their main features and focus.

2.1. Definition of Internationalization

Johanson and Vahlne define internationalization as "the gradual

acquisition, integration, and use of knowledge about foreign markets and operations, along with successively increasing commitments to foreign markets" (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, p23). Another definition describes internationalization as any form of "involvement or engagement in cross-border activity, such as foreign trade and/or investment" (López Morales, 2020, p88). In contrast, Calof and Beamish define internationalization as "the process of adapting firms' operations (strategy, structure, resources, etc.) to international environments" (Calof & Beamish, 1995, p116).

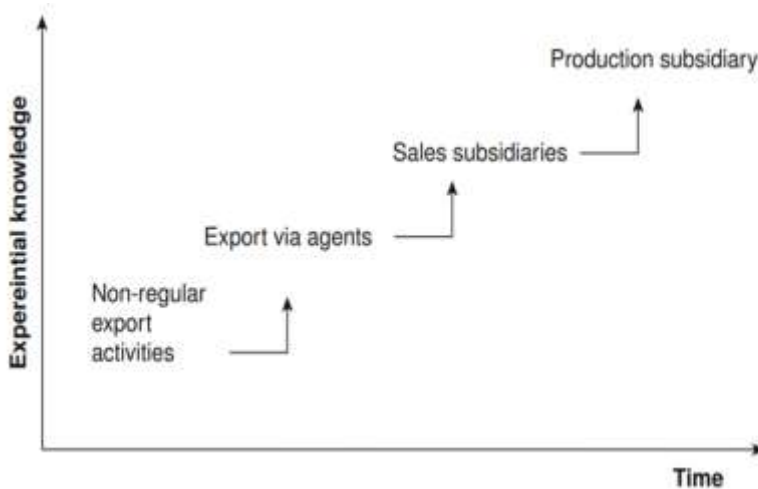
2.2. Uppsala Model:

The Uppsala model, developed by Johanson and Vahlne in 1977, has become one of the most extensively researched frameworks in International Business Studies. The model emerged from a study of four Swedish manufacturing firms as they sought to internationalize their operations. It explains the internationalization process as a gradual increase in involvement in foreign markets, characterized by a progressive commitment of resources. As a firm gains deeper insights and knowledge about a foreign market, its commitment to that market increases (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977, p23).

To assess the applicability of this model in the Algerian context, we can highlight three key elements: entry mode choice, psychic distance, and drivers for internationalization.

Entry Mode Choice: When choosing an entry mode for foreign markets, firms typically follow a step-by-step approach. The initial step is often indirect exporting through a local representative. Once a firm has acquired some knowledge about the market, the next stage involves establishing a sales subsidiary in the foreign market. This step signifies a significant increase in commitment due to the establishment of a physical presence. The final stage is the establishment of operational facilities in the foreign market, representing the highest level of commitment, driven by a deep understanding of the market nuances.

Figure 1. Stages of Internationalization.



Source: Zucchella and Magnani, 2016, p 49.

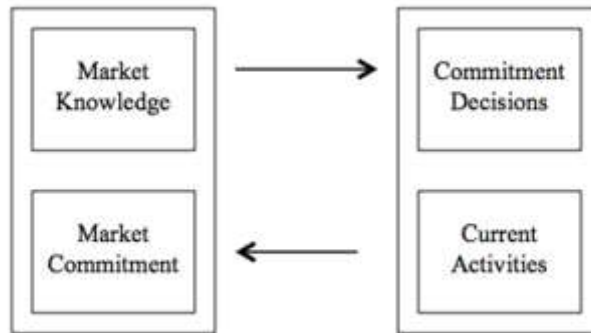
The Psychic Distance: Psychic distance is a key factor that influences a firm's choice of foreign markets. It encompasses various elements that hinder and disrupt the flow of information between firms and markets. This concept suggests that companies typically expand into countries with low psychic distance, which considers not only geographical proximity but also differences in language, culture, development levels, political systems, and education. By choosing markets with low psychic distance, firms can minimize the risks and uncertainties associated with international expansion. As a firm gains experience in its initial market, it gradually starts to expand into countries with higher psychic distance.

Drivers for Internationalization: According to the Uppsala model, knowledge is the primary driver of internationalization. The authors of this model identified a positive correlation between market knowledge and commitment to foreign markets. This means that a firm's international expansion occurs incrementally, with its commitment to a foreign market increasing as it gains more knowledge about that market over time. This process creates a cyclical relationship between experience and commitment.

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The stages of this process may include exporting, licensing, establishing sales subsidiaries, and ultimately opening production subsidiaries in the foreign market. The authors developed a model illustrating the positive correlation between market knowledge and market commitment, which is represented in Figure 2 below.

Figure2: correlation between market knowledge and market commitment



Source: Johanson and Vahlne, 1977, p26

2.3. Other Internationalization Theories:

2.3.1. The Eclectic Paradigm Model

The Eclectic Paradigm, also known as the OLI Model, was developed by British economist John Harry Dunning in the 1970s. This framework explains the factors that influence a company's decision to expand internationally and the level of involvement and commitment required. According to this paradigm, three criteria determine a multinational enterprise's decision to invest through foreign direct investments: ownership advantage, location advantage, and internalization advantage.

Ownership Advantages: These are firm-specific competitive advantages that a company possesses over its competitors in foreign markets. They often include intangible assets such as technological capabilities, brand reputation, exceptional managerial skills, and access to specific resources.

Location (L) Advantages: Location-specific advantages answer the questions of where firms choose to locate their value-adding activities,

as well as why firms produce in one country rather than another (Glowik, 2020, p27). These refer to the benefits and opportunities that a foreign market offers, making it attractive to the firm. This may include the availability of specific resources, low labor costs, developed infrastructure, and a favorable business environment.

Internalization Advantages: These advantages arise from a company's ability to retain control over its ownership-specific advantages by keeping them in-house rather than transferring them to foreign entities through licensing or franchising. It is more profitable for the firm to utilize its advantages directly rather than selling or licensing them to a foreign firm (Hollensen, 2020, p78).

According to this theory, a firm's decision to enter a particular foreign market and select an entry mode depends on a combination of the three advantages mentioned above, which are essential conditions for successful expansion. Therefore, the eclectic paradigm serves as a valuable analytical tool for managers aiming to identify the most suitable entry mode in a foreign market.

2.3.2. The Network Theory of Internationalization

The network theory of internationalization is a framework that explains how firms expand their activities internationally by leveraging relationships within business networks, including connections with customers, suppliers, and competitors. This theory highlights the crucial role of relationships and networks in a firm's international expansion. Johanson and Mattsson (1988) were among the first to emphasize the importance of network dynamics in the internationalization of businesses. They argued that a firm's position within its network (or market) is the primary driver of internationalization.

Firms' internationalization can be categorized into four types, based on the degree of internationalization of their domestic market, also referred to as network internationalization, in relation to the firm's overall internationalization. The four categories are:

The Early Starter: These firms have few or no relationships with entities in foreign markets and operate within a domestic network that has limited

connections to international players. As a result, they possess little knowledge of foreign markets, which presents significant challenges when initiating international business. Typically, these firms begin their internationalization cautiously, often collaborating with agents in geographically close markets to reduce risk and uncertainty while leveraging the agents' knowledge and networks.

The Lonely International: This type of firm is highly internationalized and possesses strong knowledge and relationships with actors in foreign markets. However, it often struggles to find suitable local partners or support for its international operations, leading to a sense of "loneliness" in its endeavors abroad.

The Late Starter: Firms in this category operate in an environment where competitors, suppliers, and collaborators have extensive international relationships. Nevertheless, these firms themselves lack sufficient knowledge and experience regarding foreign markets.

The International Among Others: In this category, both the firm and its external actors have significant experience and knowledge of international markets. They utilize these networks to gain competitive advantages and achieve success both locally and internationally. Due to their high level of expertise, these firms can swiftly establish their presence in new foreign markets.

2.3.3. International New Ventures Theory (Born Global Theory)

Unlike the Uppsala model, which suggests that firms internationalize gradually by allocating resources and increasing commitment over time, the International New Ventures (INV) model posits that some firms are born for international markets from the very beginning or shortly after their inception. These firms are referred to as "Born Globals." The term was first introduced by McKinsey & Co. in 1993. Later, Oviatt and McDougall (1994) developed the INV theory to provide a formal academic framework for this phenomenon. Born global firms often bypass traditional internationalization processes by operating in global markets and serving international customers from day one (Mathews & Zander, 2007).

Many researchers have explored the reasons behind the emergence of born

global firms (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). According to Madsen and Servais (1997), the rise of born global firms can be attributed to three key factors: (1) new market conditions, such as the increasing specialization in knowledge-intensive products and services; (2) technological advancements, particularly in information and communication technologies; and (3) the capabilities and experiences of the entrepreneurial founders of these firms.

3. Motives for Internationalization

Firms decide to expand internationally for various reasons. The motives for internationalization can be traced back to the work of John H. Dunning, who identified four main categories (Benito, 2015, p18):

3.1. Market-Seeking: Some overseas markets grow rapidly, providing enticing opportunities for firms looking to expand. Market-seeking firms aim to find new customers to increase profits and revenues by leveraging their existing resources and capabilities to access larger international markets.

3.2. Resource-Seeking: Companies pursue international expansion to access resources that may not be readily available at home or that can be obtained at a lower cost abroad (Hollensen, 2020). This may include the search for physical resources, such as raw materials, minerals, and agricultural products, as well as human resources that help achieve the company's goals.

3.3. Efficiency-Seeking: Firms expand internationally to reduce costs associated with their operations. This strategy aims to rationalize existing activities in various locations. For example, companies can take advantage of different factor endowments or engage in value-adding activities that are labor or resource-intensive, often in developing countries (Dunning, 1993).

3.4. Strategic Asset-Seeking: Companies go abroad to acquire strategic assets that may be critical to their long-term strategy but are unavailable at home. Strategic assets include intangible resources related to technology and human resources, such as patents, knowledge, skills of employees, and raw materials essential for developing competitive advantages (Dunning, 1993).

4. International Market Entry Modes and Factors Affecting the Choice

The decision to expand operations internationally is strategic and involves determining which market to enter and how to enter it. This decision is based on an assessment of the market's long-term profitability and is influenced by several factors that determine its attractiveness. These factors include the economic, political, socio-cultural, and legal environments. Additionally, considerations such as the size of the market, its potential for future growth, the suitability of the products for that market, and the nature of local competition are also crucial (Hill, 2015, p443).

Once a firm identifies a target market abroad, the next question is how to enter that market. An international market entry mode is the institutional arrangement necessary for a company's products, technology, and human capital to enter a foreign country or market (Hollensen, 2020, p312). There are three main categories of market entry modes that firms can choose from when entering foreign markets: export modes (both direct and indirect exporting), contractual modes (including licensing, franchising, and management contracts), and investment modes (such as joint ventures and wholly-owned foreign subsidiaries).

4.1. Factors Affecting the Choice of Entry Mode

The factors influencing the choice of international market entry modes can be divided into internal and external factors (Hollensen, 2020, p318).

4.1.1. Internal Factors

Internal factors relate to the company itself, its core competencies, and its objectives. These include:

Company Size and Resources: A firm's size often indicates its competitive advantage in financial, physical, human, technological, or organizational resources (Lin and Ho, 2019, p33). Increasing resource availability supports greater international involvement over time (Hollensen, 2020, p319). Generally, small and medium enterprises with limited resources tend to favor exporting as an entry mode because they lack the necessary resources to exercise a high degree of control and commitment to international markets.

International Experience: International experience encompasses the knowledge and skills a firm accumulates from operating and engaging in international markets over time. This experience enhances a firm's understanding of foreign market risks and returns, improving its confidence in making strategic decisions. Companies lacking international experience typically prefer exporting as a low-risk entry mode to gain exposure. However, firms with significant international knowledge may become less risk-averse, opting for higher-control modes such as joint ventures and wholly-owned subsidiaries. Moreover, a high level of international experience often reinforces the use of previously successful entry modes in future market decisions (Swoboda et al, 2015).

Need for Control over Core Competencies: The ideal entry mode for a company largely depends on the nature of its core competencies and the skills it transfers to the foreign market. These competencies may include technological know-how or management expertise. If a firm's core competence is centered on proprietary technological know-how, it is generally advisable to avoid licensing and joint-venture modes due to the risk of losing control over that technology.

Product Characteristics: The nature and characteristics of the product can also dictate the choice of entry mode. For high-tech products that require advanced technology, a direct presence in the market is necessary to ensure quality control, technical support, and after-sales service.

4.1.2. External Factors: These factors pertain to the specific targeted foreign market.

Geographical, Cultural, and Social Distance: Cultural distance involves ethnic, religious, linguistic, and social differences between the host country and the home country (Ghemawat, 2001, p140). Sociocultural differences between a firm's home country and its host country can create internal uncertainty, which in turn influences the mode of entry. The greater the cultural and social distance between the two countries, the more likely a company will opt for contractual modes like licensing, franchising, or even joint ventures. Such approaches allow firms to leverage local partners' expertise and knowledge of the local culture and market.

Market Size and Potential Growth: The demand for the company's product in the target foreign market is another crucial aspect in selecting an entry mode. In markets with high demand and growth potential, companies are more inclined to commit substantial resources and maintain close relationships with their customers by using investment modes such as wholly owned subsidiaries or majority-owned joint ventures. Conversely, if the market is small, it may not require significant attention or resource allocation, making options such as exporting or licensing more suitable (Obadia and Bello, 2019, p180).

Country Risk and Business Environment: This encompasses all factors related to the political, economic, and legal environment. For instance, in countries with high political risk and uncertainty, companies typically adopt less risky modes such as exporting and contractual arrangements. The risks stem from frequent changes in laws and regulations impacting trade barriers, business ownership, and capital flow. Conversely, countries with stable laws, regulations, and political systems create an attractive environment for foreign companies to commit significant resources and investments (Obadia and Bello, 2019, p179).

Intensity of Competition: When competition in the host market is intense, companies often opt for entry modes that require lower resource commitment and risk due to the high level of uncertainty they face. In such cases, exporting and licensing are typically the best options. Conversely, if the degree of competition in the host market is low and there is an opportunity to fulfill a market gap, companies are more likely to employ investment modes such as joint ventures and wholly owned subsidiaries to establish a significant market share.

4.2. International Market Entry Modes: The choice of entry mode is a strategic decision that involves balancing various factors such as the level of control, risk, and resource commitment. It also requires weighing the benefits against the risks of entering a foreign market. This section will cover the different entry modes and outline the advantages and disadvantages of each.

4.2.1. Exporting: Exporting is the simplest way to sell a product to customers in another country. It typically entails the least risk and requires the lowest level of resource commitment, although it also offers the lowest profitability and control. Exporting can be categorized into two types: indirect exporting and direct exporting.

Indirect Exporting: In this approach, the company does not have direct contact with the foreign market, instead relying on other companies to export its products. This method is commonly used by small companies that have limited knowledge of foreign markets and wish to avoid the complexities of export procedures. There are five main modes of indirect exporting (Hollensen, 2020, p335): export buying agents, brokers, export management companies/export houses, trading companies, and piggybacking. The most common intermediaries are export management companies (EMCs) and trading companies (Parboteeah and Cullen, 2018, p 256).

Direct Exporting: This mode of exporting involves a more hands-on approach, where the manufacturer or exporter sells directly to an importer or buyer, acting as an intermediary in the foreign market. After gaining confidence from using indirect exporting, companies may choose to undertake their own exporting tasks. Direct export modes include exporting through foreign-based agents and distributors (independent intermediaries) (Hollensen, 2020, p339).

Both direct and indirect exporting offer several advantages. Exporting involves a low level of engagement in foreign markets, resulting in lower risks and costs compared to foreign investments. Companies relatively inexperienced in international markets often start with exporting as a way to test foreign markets and gain insights. However, exporting have some drawbacks. First, transportation costs and tariffs can decrease competitiveness in foreign markets. Second, due to the lack of control over marketing mix elements apart from the product itself, pricing, promotion, and distribution decisions are made by representatives. This situation can lead to inconsistencies in the marketing mix across various international markets. Lastly, without a direct presence in the foreign market, a company

may find it challenging to understand local customer preferences and cultural nuances, receiving limited feedback from final customers.

4.2.2. International Licensing: A licensing agreement involves a licensor granting rights to intangible property to another entity (the licensee) for a specified period. In return, the licensor receives a royalty fee from the licensee. Intangible property can include patents, inventions, formulas, processes, designs, copyrights, and trademarks (Hill, 2015, p451). The royalty is typically calculated and paid based on each product unit sold by the licensee, as outlined in the contract.

Licensing is often favored by companies that wish to avoid the costs and risks associated with overseas operations since the licensee bears most of these burdens. Additionally, licensing allows the licensor to circumvent various costs and barriers linked to exporting. However, this entry mode also has its downsides. By licensing technology and know-how, companies can lose control over these assets, and the licensee might eventually become a competitor. Furthermore, licensing does not provide tight control over manufacturing and marketing, which could lead to inconsistencies in product quality and brand image across different international markets.

4.2.3. International Franchising: Franchising is a variation of licensing. A franchise agreement is a contract between two independent firms wherein the franchisee pays the franchisor for the right to sell the franchisor's products and/or use the franchisor's trademark at a specific location and for a defined period (Lafontaine, 1993, p258). Most international franchise operations require franchisees to adhere to strict guidelines and procedures, ensuring a standardized product or service.

The advantages and disadvantages of franchising as an entry mode are quite similar to those of licensing.

4.2.4. International Joint Ventures: After companies gain experience and knowledge about international markets through exporting and licensing, they often look to implement other modes of entry that require greater resource commitments and presence. An international joint venture is a business arrangement in which two or more companies from different countries establish a new, separate legal entity to pursue a specific project

or business objective by sharing resources, expertise, capital, risks, and profits (Yan and Luo, 2001, p3).

A joint venture may be necessary or desirable for economic or political reasons. The foreign firm might lack the financial, physical, or managerial resources needed to undertake the venture alone, or the foreign government may require joint ownership as a condition for entry (Kotler and Dubois, 2000, p605).

Entering a new foreign industry through an international joint venture offers several advantages. First, the company benefits from the local partner's knowledge of the host country's business environment, culture, competition, and customer needs. This helps to accelerate market entry and compensates for a lack of international experience (Kuo and Chang, 2012, p. 253). Second, the company shares the costs and risks associated with establishing the joint venture in the host country, making it an attractive mechanism for investing and expanding in risky markets. Third, in many countries, political and legal considerations make joint ventures the only feasible entry mode. Research suggests that joint ventures with local partners face a lower risk of being subject to nationalization or other forms of adverse government interference (Hill, 2015, p453). However, despite these advantages, joint ventures have several disadvantages. International joint ventures typically do not last long due to conflicts over objectives, disagreements on operational strategies, and cultural clashes. Moreover, with a joint venture, a company risks sharing its technology and know-how with the local partner, who may become a strong competitor in the future. Lastly, it can be very difficult and costly to dissolve a joint venture agreement if the partnership is unsuccessful, due to the legal and contractual obligations involved.

4.2.5. Wholly Owned Subsidiaries: This is another type of foreign direct investment mode where the company owns 100 percent of the subsidiary located in a foreign market. Establishing a wholly owned subsidiary in a foreign market can be done in two ways. The firm can either set up a new operation in that country, often referred to as a greenfield venture, or by merger or acquisition of an established firm in that host nation and use that

firm to promote its products.

When a firm wants to enter a foreign market rapidly and yet retain maximum control, direct investment through acquisition should be considered (Onkvisit and Shaw, 2004, p260). Acquisitions and mergers usually have the advantage that the firm can join its own resource advantages with those of the acquired foreign firm. The firm can benefit from technological knowledge, foreign market knowledge, and a skilled labor force. However, mergers and acquisitions can be challenging due to difficulties associated with the integration of different systems, processes and management styles.

With Greenfield investment, a company can build its desired subsidiary from the ground up. This approach allows the firm to select the best location for its needs, start fresh, hire its own workforce, and adapt to the new business culture at its own pace (Cheng, 2006). However, the main disadvantage of Greenfield ventures is that they take time to establish and are risky due to the uncertainty surrounding future revenues and profits.

When a company chooses to enter a foreign market with wholly owned subsidiaries, it benefits from several advantages. Full ownership provides tight control over operations, marketing strategies, and decision-making. Additionally, it reduces the risk of losing its core competencies and technological know-how, which can occur in licensing agreements and joint ventures. However, establishing a wholly owned subsidiary in a foreign country represents one of the highest costs among all market entry strategies, requiring substantial funds through either Greenfield investment or acquisition. Furthermore, a lack of knowledge about the local culture, business practices, and political landscape exposes the company to a high level of uncertainty.

5. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Our research findings align with the Uppsala model, which explains the characteristics of a firm's internationalization process. This model views internationalization as a gradual learning experience, where knowledge and experience gained over time are crucial. Companies typically start with less risky modes, such as exporting to foreign markets that have a close psychic

distance. As they gain knowledge and experience, they may then engage in riskier strategies in markets that are further away psychologically.

First, our survey revealed that the majority of firms use exporting as an initial mode of entry into foreign markets. Companies with only a few years of exporting experience typically rely on agents and distributors from the foreign markets they are entering (direct exporting) or resort to export trading companies (indirect exporting). In contrast, companies with more extensive experience in exporting have begun establishing their own sales branches in foreign markets. For example, Cevital, which has subsidiaries in various industries, has navigated through all stages identified by the Uppsala model. After several years of exporting products such as sugar and cooking oil to African, Arab, and some European markets, Cevital made the transition to foreign direct investment by acquiring companies in Europe. Notably, in 2013, it acquired the French company OXXO, which specializes in aluminum products like doors and windows. Additionally, in 2014, Cevital acquired the French electronics company Brandt.

Secondly, all the interviewed companies agreed that the initial markets they targeted for export were in Africa, Arab countries, and some European Mediterranean regions. They continue to view these markets as the most attractive, with the highest potential for growth and success. Their choice is justified by the geographical and cultural proximity, where products require minimal adaptation, coupled with a low intensity of competition in these markets. This finding aligns with the Uppsala model, which posits that the internationalization process usually starts in foreign markets that are psychologically closer to the domestic market.

Finally, one of the most intriguing findings from our research was the responses regarding the preference for exporting over other entry modes, such as investment. Most interviewees cited their limited knowledge and experience in international markets as the reason for this preference. There is a consensus among managers that they would be open to committing to riskier modes once they acquire the necessary knowledge and experience. For instance, Condor began exporting to West African countries in 2017 and has since opened its own sales branches in Tunisia, Mauritania, Senegal,

and Benin. This move illustrates a greater commitment to these markets after gaining years of market knowledge.

In conclusion, our findings are consistent with the three elements of the Uppsala model: entry mode choice, psychic distance, and drivers for internationalization. Therefore, the Uppsala model serves as an effective framework for explaining the internationalization patterns of Algerian companies. However, we must acknowledge that our study faces some limitations. One limitation is the number of firms and diversity of industries represented used in this research. Another shortcoming is the small number of examples of Algerian companies that utilize foreign direct investment as an entry mode into international markets. Both of these limitations may affect the generalizability of the findings.

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