



## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

Interactive Research Development Workshop and Conference

### **Internationalization of SMEs in the Digital Age -Opportunities and Threats-**

Free University of Bozen – Bolzano, Italy  
April 29-30, 2019

**Submission Deadline: December 20, 2018**

The so called and partly overemphasized “*digital revolution*” is certainly affecting the way firms will be organized with regard to value creation and delivery (Tilson, Lyytinen, & Sorensen, 2010; Yoo, Boland Jr., Lyytinen, & Majchrzak, 2012), how they will efficiently manage their production and operations, and how they will engage with their suppliers and customers. With regard to internationalization it will, on the one hand, change the competitive and collaborative landscape dramatically especially through providing opportunities for new collaborative relationships with private and public organizations across the globe (Coviello, Kano, & Lish, 2017). On the other hand, it may render traditional international partnerships obsolete as it will enable newcomers and incumbents to circumvent previously necessary intermediaries and establish direct relationships with customers, suppliers, and complementors.

In particular, digitalization has the potential to impact the main elements of the internationalization process of firms, for example, in terms of timing, pace, and rhythm of internationalization, location and entry mode choices, learning and knowledge recombination, and accessibility of resources and capabilities in home and host markets. It will change firms’ ability to mitigate and manage the liability of foreignness and outsidership (Coviello, Kano, & Lish, 2017). This becomes especially apparent in the case of small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) that –fostered by digitalization– will find effective ways to compete with large firms on a global scale through reducing their liability of smallness, i.e. especially their lack of financial and human resources.

Previous research has studied the influence of internet and other computer-based information system technologies on the internationalization strategies of firms (Ekeledo & Sivakumar, 2004; Petersen, Lawrence, & Liesh, 2002) as well as the internationalization of iBusiness firms (Brouthers, Geisser, & Rothlauf, 2016), however, often without taking the comparison of existing SMEs with entrepreneurial and large firms center stage. Although the impact of digitalization on the internationalization of firms is a topic that received significant attention, there is ample evidence that many issues regarding the effect of the digital revolution on the internationalization process of SMEs are yet to be addressed by IB scholars from a theoretical but also practical perspective.

Important research questions that may be explored are for example the following: How will foreign entry mode choice or market management modes be affected by digitalization? In which way will digitalization change the organizational structure and the culture of an SME and subsequently its internationalization processes? Will export based on internet sites and platforms that are accessible globally reduce the need to establish foreign service units and operations or does it depend on the business model? Will digitalization ease or impede the search for international business partners? To what extent will digitalization change the way foreign subsidiaries are staffed and managed? Will Internet of Things (IoT) and Industry 4.0 alter the ways SMEs conduct business on an international level? How will SMEs cope with this challenge as they may suffer from a liability of smallness with this respect? Do SMEs have the financial resources to compete against MNEs as new electronic systems, software, and content has to be developed, adopted, and implemented?

We invite international scholars interested in the field of SME research, including senior PhDs and PostDocs, to submit their research and work-in-progress on the internationalization of SMEs -in the digital age- to our highly interactive conference. While digitalization is the theme of the second ISME conference at the University of Bolzano, we are open as well for new research that addresses the formulation and implementation process of internationalization strategies of SMEs, antecedents and success factors, or the impact of different institutional regimes (tax, intellectual property rights, financial support). As interdisciplinary research will be key in the future we explicitly invite researchers from different (sub)disciplines such as organizational behavior, human resource management, entrepreneurship, marketing, innovation management, family business research, economics as well as accounting to share their approaches and insights with colleagues. We are particularly interested in empirical and conceptual papers that advance already existing knowledge about the internationalization of SMEs. Although we encourage you to submit work-in-progress deriving from current research projects as well as controversial and provocative essays that addresses innovative research questions, we need to emphasize that your work must comply to scientific standards and has to be of high quality regarding application of theories, appropriate methods, comprehensive analyses, as well as formal requirements.

## **Submission Guidelines**

At first stage, we ask for submitting brief summaries (extended abstracts) that should not exceed two single-spaced pages and are limited to 1,200 words that address a specific SME-related internationalization topic preferably combined with digitalization. All submission will undergo a review process and those authors whose papers are accepted are invited and expected to present their research at the conference next year.

## **Deadlines & Dates**

Submission of extended abstracts:       ***December 20, 2018***  
Acceptance Notifications:                   January 31, 2019  
Preliminary Program published:           February 28, 2019

## **Keynote Speech**

*Prof. Farok Contractor*

'Distinguished Professor' in the Management and Global Business Department at Rutgers Business School – Rutgers University

*"On the importance of international strategic alliances for the success of SMEs internationalization"*

## **Program Committee**

*Farok Contractor*                   (Rutgers Business School)  
*Timothy Devinney*               (Leeds University Business School)  
*Marjaana Gunkel*                 (Free University of Bozen)  
*Antonio Majocchi*               (University of Pavia)  
*Michael Nippa*                   (Free University of Bozen)  
*Torben Pedersen*                (Bocconi and Copenhagen Business School)  
*Christian Schwens*               (University of Cologne)

## **Conference Organizers**

*Katharina Gilli*, [katharina.gilli@unibz.it](mailto:katharina.gilli@unibz.it)

*Marjaana Gunkel*, [marjaana.gunkel@unibz.it](mailto:marjaana.gunkel@unibz.it)

*Michael Nippa*, [michael.nippa@unibz.it](mailto:michael.nippa@unibz.it)

*Valerio Veglio*, [valerio.veglia@unibz.it](mailto:valerio.veglia@unibz.it)

Interested scholars may contact Prof. Michael Nippa or any other member of the conference organizers for any kind of request and may already attach a draft of their research idea.

Additional information is available on our website: <https://ios.events.unibz.it/>

We are looking forward to your submission and participation!