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**Network Relationships
in International Entrepreneurship:
A Multilevel Analysis**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Marketing

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Abstract

This thesis extends knowledge on the relationship between networks and internationalisation for innovative entrepreneurial firms, by exploring the phenomenon at country, industry, and firm levels. Through multilevel analysis, this thesis builds on the network approach to internationalisation, a theoretical cornerstone in the emerging field of international entrepreneurship research.

The globally-focused study investigates institutional and economic factors influencing the proportion of innovative entrepreneurial firms engaged in international business in 51 countries. Variables representing networks, at a country-level, are identified and tested. Findings illustrate that networks are positively and significantly associated with higher proportions of innovative entrepreneurial firms reporting substantial overseas engagement.

The industry-focused study argues industry-specific forces influence development of networks for internationalisation. This study synthesises 32 empirical articles on internationalisation of software small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Findings identify patterns of network influences on foreign market strategies (reactive/proactive), market selection, and entry mode decisions. Characteristics specific to the software industry also encourage the development of networks for internationalisation.

The firm-focused study explores network relationships used by New Zealand software SMEs for innovation and internationalisation. Using multiple case study methods, findings indicate network patterns relate to the founder's prior entrepreneurial and international experience, firm size, innovation type (incremental/radical) and internationalisation type (incremental/radical).

The integrated findings from this multilevel analysis provide insights into how networks create awareness, pathways, and competencies for internationalisation. In doing so, this thesis extends understanding of the interconnected, complex, and multilevel relationship between networks and internationalisation for innovative entrepreneurial firms.

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"Tenacity is what leaders are made of. Tenacity is when you start something you finish it without complaining. To be tenacious you have to believe in what you are doing. If you are tenacious it will get you far in life" (Nathan, age 10).

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