

MASTER'S THESIS

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Tenant entrepreneurs Incubators' network and Internationalization

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Preface

The Master's thesis is a final requirement for a Master's degree in business studies at the Nord University School of Business in Bodø. The thesis consists of 30 credits and is written in the area of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management.

The thesis deals with Norwegian business incubators and their relation to the internationalization of small enterprises in Norway. I have come into touch with a variety of dedicated people who have inspired me to further pursue this business field. I thank the advice and conversations I have had with my supervisor Espen Isaksen. I am also very grateful to the incubator leaders and the entrepreneurs for agreeing to do the interview and helping get information from other sources. helped me to analyze the subject about their incubator.

Abstract

This study contributes to the literature on Norwegian incubators and small businesses that intend to internationalize.

To study this issue, I have developed a research question: *“How can an incubator’s network help tenant entrepreneurs with the internationalization process?”*. This question helped me formulate the research model, which is the basis of the theoretical frameworks for this paper.

Internationalization is a critical factor in the sustainability of small enterprises. A small business typically finds it difficult to enter a global market because it lacks the requisite network and other infrastructure. Being a part of an incubator could help entrepreneurs gain access to all of these opportunities, easing their internationalization process.

Even though there is a variety of literature on different aspects of incubation and incubates internationalization. I realized that there has been very little study on the relationship between small business internationalization and incubator resource support. None of those studies were done from a Norwegian point of view.

A greater understanding of how incubators can provide relevant opportunities to businesses in their early stages of internationalization can also help to inspire more entrepreneurs to pursue internationalization. As a result, this study aimed to evaluate the contributions made by incubators' resource support to the internationalization of small businesses.

This thesis looked at different theoretical constructs from a variety of sources to better understand the occurrence, including incubators, resource support, social capital, network, entrepreneurial intention, internationalization, and resource dependency

I used the observational case study approach to address the research question, conducting semi-structured interviews with six informants to answer the research question. Two of those informants are incubator leaders in the Nordland region. And the other four are entrepreneurs in those two incubators leaders incubators. The finding of the study indicated that incubators network as well other resource support can help incubatees to internationalize. After the incubated entrepreneurs reach a certain level of growth they might leave the incubator. But by

that time they also become part of the valuable network of the incubator. And other incubatees inside the incubator can gain from the relationship that the incubator has with the entrepreneur.

This finding adds to the current body of knowledge and lays the groundwork for further research. The study's results can also be used to aid in the internationalization of small businesses.

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1. Introduction:

This chapter introduces the background of the research problem and research question, limitations, scopes of the study, etc.

The structure of this chapter is as follows : (1.1) Background, (1.2) Problem statement, (1.3) Purpose of the Study, (1.4) Research Question, (1.5) Theoretical and Practical Implications, (1.6) Limitations, (1.7) Structure of the study.

1.1. Background:

This study is about how incubators can help their tenant entrepreneurs to get access to various social resources, such as networks, and how that can both influence their intention to internationalize and help them to internationalize.

With the constant reductions in policy restrictions and relentless innovations in technology global economy is expected to be more connected through the internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

The world economy is projected to become more connected by the internationalization of small and/or medium-sized businesses as policy barriers are continually reduced and technological advances continue (Lu & Beamish, 2001). Furthermore, internationalization has been said to bring out better survival possibilities for SMEs in some studies. It is also suggested that the risk of failure for small businesses does not increase going to an international market (Lee et al., 2012). For most businesses, expansion from the home market to abroad seems an obvious step towards growth. However, expansion of the international market is a very important decision for SMEs due to its usual scale of investment, local market focus, and the restricted geographical scope of their investments. (Lu & Beamish, 2006). The possibilities of internationalization expand worldwide rapidly across digital communication networks and modern transportation options. Due to domestic decline, companies face insufficient growth and sustainability (Gomathi & Gopinathan, 2019). International theories indicate that once firms get a solid advantage they tend to internationalize, to create a business niche, or due to complexities of the industrial system (Aharoni, 1996; Cavusgil, 1981; Johanson & Vahlne, 1977).

Often small businesses need a lot of support to achieve internationalization (Gomathi & Gopinathan, 2019). It is possible to create an environment to encourage the advancement of

projects and improve chances of success. Rather than requiring business activity to develop from the competitive natural market which may require a long time.

Instead of waiting for economic competition to emerge from a dynamic natural environment, which is time-consuming, it is possible to build an ecosystem that encourages project progress and increases the likelihood of completion. (Engelman, Zen, & Fracasso, 2015).

Even though small or start-up businesses are exposed to some degree, they can benefit from attending a business incubator, and incubators are considered to offer a safe atmosphere in which emerging small businesses may pool money, exchange expertise, and form alliances with others. (Smilor and Gill, 1986; Barrow, 2001).

Two theoretical frameworks are commonly used to explain the internationalization of small businesses: the Uppsala model and the born-global approach (Noémie Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017). The Uppsala model, introduced by Johanson and Vahlne in 1977, suggests that firms need to take a step-by-step approach to international markets to reap the benefits of their learning. According to the authors, firms face a shortage of expertise and market-specific expertise when they plan to internationalize. This lack of consumer understanding is mostly caused by disparities in language, schooling structures, management practice, history, and business growth. (Noémie Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017). So it is understandable that they want to approach a foreign market after gaining a certain level of learning.

Born global firms, on the other hand, are young start-up businesses that begin international business soon after their launch (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). For this paper, we will use both of these internationalization theories to identify the level of internationalization in SMEs.

1.2.Problem statement:

While previous research works and or journals have talked about the connection between incubators and internationalization (Engelman et al., 2015) or how business incubators can support entrepreneurs by focusing more on social capital to build up networks for the betterment of their own company. (TÖTTERMAN & STEN, 2005). However, none of them have focused on the connection between incubators' resource support, especially networks and internationalization. Moreover, none of these studies has been done from a Norwegian perspective. Even though, incubators and incubator support system in Norway is quite different from most other countries. Thus, making such a study necessary.

Lender (2003) noted that incubators could play a big role in network development. He discovered that they could be used as a network hub for relationships with important different external consultants i.e. tax accountants, patent and other lawyers, business consultants, marketing, etc. (Lender, 2003). Such relationships can be crucial to the development of the firms.” The networked incubator incorporates and encourages mechanisms that make it easier for incubator companies and other external parties to collaborate, facilitating technology and talent transfer and laying the foundations for long-term relationships. (Hansen, Chesbrough, Nohria, & Sull, 2000).

Therefore, further exploration of incubator networks and their impact on the internationalization of the tenant business enterprise is deemed necessary.

1.3.Purpose of the Study

This thesis aims to analyze the role of incubators in the early internationalization process and to study how and if this can be useful to encourage more entrepreneurs to get to the foreign market. In addition, this study wants to offer an improved understanding of how incubators can support those companies in their early internationalization phase with relevant resources.

1.4.Research Question:

In this paper we will focus on the following question:

How can an incubators’ network help tenant entrepreneurs with the internationalization process?

This research question tries to find how entrepreneurs can get access to various resources, notably network, through incubators and how that helps them to step out to the international market. It might be difficult to pinpoint the level of internationalization for SMEs and small businesses. Therefore, we have also considered entrepreneurs' intention to internationalize.

A qualitative study has been done to gain more insight into this subject matter. Two incubator managers and four tenant entrepreneurs have been interviewed to collect relevant data. And then the data is analyzed to get an empirical understanding of this.

1.5.Theoretical and Practical Implications:

Many SMEs are interested in the International market. But they are afraid to approach it because they do not have access to enough resources or information or support. This paper intends to stimulate research in this direction and possibly help to find out more helpful information on this subject matter. So that there will be more knowledge in this area which will facilitate the process of small businesses internationalization.

1.6. Limitations:

This study is restricted in its geographical area to Norway, i.e., all businesses and incubators surveyed are in Norway. Because this analysis studies the current role of incubators concerning early internationalization, the businesses chosen are young. However, at this stage perhaps the intention for internationalization will be a better measure than the actual internationalization. Lastly, the research is not to measure the amount of success of incubators' support to the performance of the tenant incubators' internalization processes.

1.7. Structure of the Study

This thesis consists of six chapters as 1) Introduction, 2) Theoretical background, 3) Research Design and Methodology, 4) Empirical Findings, 5) Analysis and Discussion, and 6) Conclusion.

The introduction chapter presents the topic to be discussed in this paper. Then the second chapter provides both the literature and theoretical background of all the relevant studies.

Afterward, the third chapter consists of a philosophical view of the study, research design, and data collection methodology. It also shows how the interview guide was developed and the interviews were conducted. The empirical findings of the study are discussed in chapter four within two-part. Firstly, the introduction of the informant's general information is presented and then the main empirical findings regarding the research topic are discussed. The empirical findings chapter is followed by a discussion chapter, where I discuss my findings by relating them with my theoretical framework. And at the end, a discussion of findings will be summarized by depicting revise the research model. Finally, the conclusion and implications

chapter summarizes the whole thesis shortly with the answer to the research question according to the findings. The chapter concludes by discussing the theoretical contribution of the study and practical implications to different parties and recommendations for further study.

2. Theoretical Background

To get more idea on the subject matter/Research question we are going to look at relevant literature and theory. The focus of this chapter will be on Incubators, Network/Social capital, Resources based theory, Entrepreneurial Intention, and Internationalization

The structure of this chapter is as follows : (2.1) Incubators, (2.2) Preparation to data collection (including description of recruitment of informants and interview guide, (4.3) Data collection, (4.4) assessment of the quality of the study, (4.5) ethical considerations, (6) summary

2.1. Incubators

The success of incubators is regarded as a crucial factor; the success of businesses during the incubation process will improve their chances of survival because of them. (Schwartz & Göthner, 2009) Let us first establish the definition of a business incubator. Considering the different perspectives and viewpoints of previous studies, Hackett and Dilts (2004) have defined the business incubator as: *“A business incubator is a shared office-space facility that seeks to provide its incubatees (i.e. “portfolio-” or “client-” or “tenant-companies”) with a strategic, value-adding intervention system (i.e. business incubation) of monitoring and business assistance. This system controls and links resources to facilitate the successful venture development, while simultaneously containing the cost of their potential failure.”* (Hackett & Dilts, 2004, p. 57)

Incubators have become an omnipresent trend in many parts of the world and are viewed as a tool in stimulating economic growth, creativity, and technology-based businesses (Bergek and Norrman, 2008). Nevertheless, there were also concepts of conceptual uncertainty in the creation of incubation activities (Lindelof & Lofsten, 2002; Hackett & Dilts, 2004; Phan et al., 2005). For this research, this paper will reserve the incubator concept as “shared spaces that provide storage and organizational tools, monitoring and business support to start-ups. (Engelman et al., 2015).” During the incubation period, their growth and expansion of the market are sought and promoted by the new businesses, thus increasing their chances of success. In an incubator enterprise, companies can also share their experience and network with other incubator enterprises (Engelman et al., 2015). The incumbent should be seen as a network of people and entities (for example incubator managers and workers, incubator firms, local Colleges, and their community leaders, business associates, attorneys, accountants, consultants, and marketers) Hackett and Dilts (2004) argue. In this respect, Bøllingtoft and Ulhøi (2005) refer to the incubator as an enterprising organization, which involves the

opportunity for more than one person to participate in creating a new company, as well as the potentials of synergies and complementary skills among individual entrepreneurs within a team of entrepreneurs. Furthermore, the authors note that the ultimate goal is to enhance entrepreneurial capacity by providing entrepreneurial actors with services and support complementing their existing skills and resources.

2.1.1. Types of Business Incubators:

Numerous different types of incubators have developed over time which is most likely the effect of the evolution of business needs and specifications (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005). However, if we look from a more general point of view then we can divide incubators into four different types described by Grimaldi and Grandi (2005), which overall can be categorized into two entities: public and private.

The public incubators are either university business incubators (UBI) and/or business innovation centers (BIC) that are usually non-commercial. On the other hand, the private or commercial incubators are corporate incubators (CPI) and isolated incubators (IPI).

As far as the assignment of incubators in these two groups is concerned, the most relevant guideline is to look at ownership. IPIs and CPIs are profit-oriented, initialized by private actors, e.g. private individuals, or enterprises, while BICs and UBIs are non-profit, initialized by government officials or universities with the primary objective of fostering regional growth (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005). The institutional partnership with the owners often affects the idea creation, which determines whether the incubator is will have a more internal or external focus. (Grimaldi and Grandi, 2005).

For CPIs and UBIs with formal shareholders, such as companies and colleges, the development of innovations is more inward-looking based on an institutional mission. The emphasis is on exploring expertise inside the parent company to build both business spin-offs and academic spin-offs. Conversely, BICs and IPIs rely mainly on the development of external concepts. Focused on their unaffiliated nature, they are more outwardly searching for new ideas (Halm & Mörke, 2019).

A good way to understand the incubation process is by observing how the incubator runs and who they want to support (Chan & Lau, 2005; McAdam & McAdam, 2008). According to Von

Zedtwitz (2003), start-ups are chosen through a broad set of standards by a private incubator. The process is much similar to venture capitalists' investment decision-making. Commercial incubators would thus concentrate on choosing mature startups since they typically have a shorter time frame than government-funded and university incubators for market entry (Mrkajic, 2017).

When defining incubators' choice of procedure and operation, (Bergek & Norrman, 2008) pointed to their purpose Private incubators, on the other hand, have various goals and priorities, with the benefit being more important. Furthermore, they are characterized as being more knowledgeable than public ones (Barbero et al., 2012). Different types of incubators would have different goals and reward strategies (Barbero et al., 2012). On the one hand, a public incubator aims to reduce the costs of launching a company for entrepreneurs while still providing logistical support. The primary goal of university-affiliated incubators is to commercialize science. This is mostly accomplished by programs such as schooling and networking opportunities (Barbero et al., 2012).

Let us now compare the two major types of incubators: public and private incubators.

a) Public Incubators:

Public incubators mainly benefit from the charges for their services and public support from local, national, and international schemes. (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005). The key goal of public incubators according to Grimaldi and Grandi (2005) is to reduce the market expense by the procurement of office space, equipment, and advisory facilities for incubators. The authors however note that the essence of the services provided can vary and be tailored to reflect the needs of the incubatee's themselves. E.g. administrative advice, assistance with business plans production, and technical skills could provide more complex resources.

b) Private Incubators:

There are a variety of ways in which private incubators can make profits. These strategies may include investing in or charging services to, their tenant entrepreneur for services every hour (Chinsonboon, 2000; Hansen et al., 2000)

As described above, private incubators are characterized as profit-driven and initialized by either private individuals or organizations. (Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005). In addition, Hansen, Berger, and Nohria (2000) state that the goal is to start up new businesses in a quick way and

to take an interest in their equity as a cost. Incubators provide funding for their incubators through a variety of early-stage contributions. In addition, they provide a range of services, ranging from access to their network to wider market advice. In addition, they assist their incubators in terms of linking them to external partners to obtain funding and skills. (Grimaldi and Grandi, 2005).

One thing is for certain. Both public incubators and private incubators exist to serve the incubates. The main services that most incubators provide to are entrepreneurs are:

2.1.2. Incubator Services/ Resource support by incubator:

The incubator helps the incubates to get access to resources such as Infrastructural resources, Expert advisory, Group sessions or training, etc. That is why getting a general idea about resources appears necessary for this paper. Also, even in difficult or demanding conditions, resources can lead to superior results. (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004)

This resource support can be broadly divided into two categories: **tangible** and **intangible**. Tangible resources include a good atmosphere, office space and telephone systems, and business infrastructure, equipment, and service, while intangible resources include the peer environment. (Bøllingtoft & Ulhøi, 2005). Immaterial resources are the most possible drivers of high performance since they are not readily obtained and repeated on factor markets. While companies are packages of intangible resources and tangible resources, it is extremely unlikely that a corporation can compete with only one intangible resource. (Kamasak, 2017).

The combination of these resources or services can be further broken down. Maximilian von Zedtwitz, (2003, page 178-179) has found that incubators, in general, provides all or most of the five services mentioned below:

- a) **Infrastructural support:** Incubators have physical services such as office rooms, equipment, recreational facilities, a computer network, 24-hour surveillance, and other physical infrastructure and real estate amenities. Incubators with poor performance have placed too much emphasis on their position as landlords, neglecting other services listed further down.
- b) **Office support:** Incubators also have general office support, for example, clerical service, fax and copying services, reception services, computer network support, etc. Incoming start-ups expect a turnkey setup, which means they just must come in to get

to work. These programs are not very sophisticated or technologically innovative, but they do mean that simple organizational tools are in order and save time and money for entrepreneurs who want to get started right away. While these services can be taken for granted while they are functioning well, a lack of adequate bookkeeping or timely IT assistance, for example, may be a significant obstacle.

- c) ***Financial resources support:*** Incubators also have access to investment capital, which is either a mix of private equity and outside capital from corporate angels, venture investors, or local institutions and businesses. Due diligence and start-up selection are also based on venture capital requirements. In general, incubators seek to get a very early stage, often pre-seed capital, start-ups to the next round of funding. Business angels, as well as early-stage venture capitalists and investment banks, are natural rivals.
- d) ***Entrepreneurial support:*** Incubators assist founders in navigating the steps that a newly formed enterprise must follow, often also assisting in the development of a business plan, but most frequently offering consulting services such as accounting, legal counsel for incorporation and taxation matters, and the creation of ownership and employee choice plan arrangements. Incubators also provide valuable management consulting, assisting entrepreneurs in developing and applying leadership and management expertise. The majority of entrepreneurs in an incubator are beginning their first company, while the incubator has been through the process many times and will pass on the knowledge gained from previous start-ups to new entrepreneurs.
- e) ***Access to networks:*** Good incubators can find and use key persons to help start-ups succeed. The network an incubator has taken years to build is normally not available for new entrepreneurs. Incubators can be essential to a startup's business, including, but not limited to, board consultants, required experts, prospective investors, etc. The key instrument for making the right calls at the correct moment is Incubator Director contacts, and his or her instincts.(von Zedtwitz, 2003)

How many of the said services will be provided by the incubator on the incubator's focus area and the type of agreement the incubator has with the entrepreneur. However, Zedtwitz (2003) even stated that incubators that offer less than four of these services are no longer considered incubators because they lack so many incubation features. (von Zedtwitz, 2003)

Another relevant matter here is that, while getting access to all the services or resources by the incubator can be beneficial for the entrepreneur, it can also cause a certain level of resource dependency in them.

Resource dependency theory: (Hernández & Carrà, 2016)

According to Pfeffer and Salancik's (2003) the concept of resource dependency theory lies in the ability for other resource-owning organizations to take advantage of leverage, i.e., power over an entity that requires resources. Resource dependence suggests that the external environment of an organization contains all the needed resources; thus, interdependencies with other organizations in such environment constitute an important issue for an organization (Pfeffer, J., Salancik, 2003). Resource dependency proposes that some organisations are more efficient than others in the sense that they have more leverage of resources that other organizations need, and they can limit resource interdependencies (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). Interdependence divided in three broad areas, as vertical, horizontal and symbiotic (Pennings, 1981). *Vertical* interdependence occurs when organizations may share resources; *horizontal* interdependence occurs where organizations have identical structures; and *symbiotic* interdependence occurs where organizations may complement one another's resources (Denktas-Sakar and Karatas-Cetin, 2012).

Incubators and incubated entrepreneurs resource dependence with each other falls under the symbiotic resource dependence since they kind of complement each other with each other's resources. Again, entrepreneurs may not get access to all of the services offered by the incubator throughout the whole incubation process. Because every entrepreneur entering an incubator goes through several phases of incubation and the type of services may vary in different phases of the incubation process. Let us see what the general phases of incubation are and what are the properties of each phase.

2.1.3. Phases of incubation

Azih & Inanga (2014, p4) has described the three phases of incubation. From the figure 1 below we can see that the first of three stages of the incubation program is Pre-incubation. This is the start-up creation phase. The incubator provides entrepreneurs with free business accommodation and resources to help them explore and decide how they expect to develop. Which lets them develop a sound business plan outlining the business potential being sought. Figure 1 shows that at this phase incubator also helps businesses with innovation assessment,

training, etc. Pre-incubation assists developers in designing their entrepreneurial ideas to sell their goods.

The early-stage or incubation begins the second phase (figure 1). The process is heavily subsidized, and the development of an organization is tested against its ability to support the firm during a start-up storm. The incubation program includes regular monitoring and review, accompanied by documentation, to verify that the experts address the issues which have been found. Information symmetry is important during the incubation process. The free flow of knowledge from management towards entrepreneurs leads to solving entrepreneurship challenges and allows small and medium-sized businesses to expand and thrive.

The third and final stages of assessment include learners connecting them to spaces and resource suppliers to support them when exiting the incubation centre. This takes the form of tracking and reviewing the company's operations and ensuring that all the support facilities continue to be delivered in a highly financed manner for business continuity. In the figure1 we can see that this phase also includes international support.

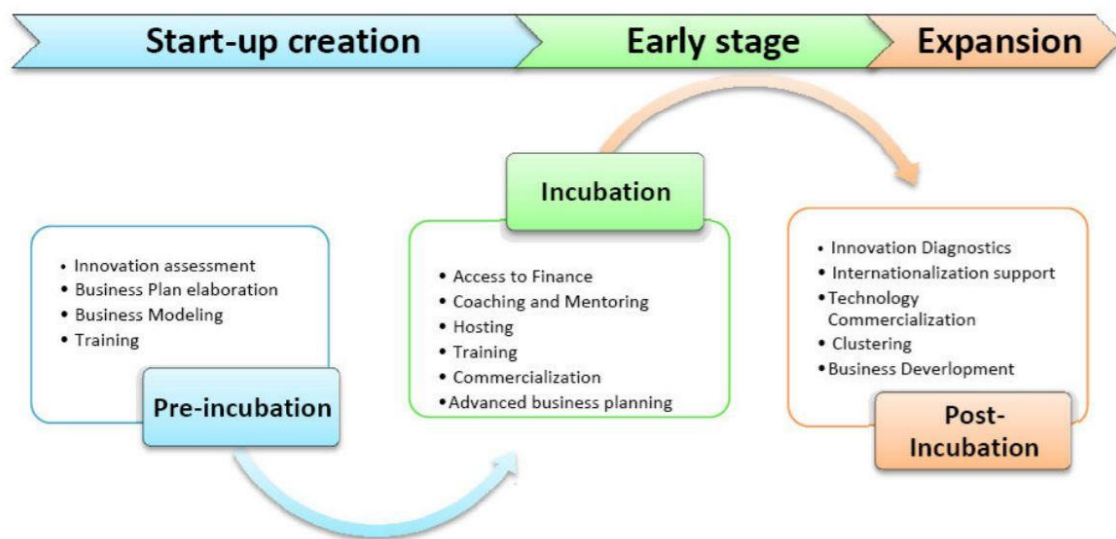


Figure 1 phases of incubation (Azih & Inanga, 2014) p 4

2.1.4. Incubators support system in Norway:

Generally, incubators can be both private and publicly supported. However, in Norway, almost all of them are publicly supported. Moreover, the government runs many supporting programs to ensure the success of the incubation systems in Norway.

The Siva Incubation program:

The state-owned company Selskapet for Industrivekst (SIVA) controls most of the incubators in Norway. They form separate programs and guidelines for controlling the operation of the incubators. SIVA is owned by the Ministry of Trade and Industry of Norway (SIVA, 2013b, n.d.)(SIVA, 2015c, n.d.). SIVA runs development programs to ensure better business development for start-ups (SIVA, 2013b, n.d.). SIVA is trying to improve connectivity between incubators so that business ideas can be guided to the appropriate incubator. By facilitating the linkage of business ideas, business prospects can be enhanced by providing a broader understanding of business ideas around the country. Company innovations and inventions that cannot be commercialized on their own, for example, can be supplemented and used in an appropriate incubator (SIVA, 2010a, n.d.). SIVA plans to expand the internationalization of national business concepts, in addition to industry-specific and general incubators targeted at geographic science and business growth (SIVA, 2010a, n.d.).

Accelerators: Some incubators in Norway have become accelerators within a certain industry. They're also in charge of collaborating with other incubators in the industry, both domestically and globally, to help clients internationalize (SIVA, 2010a). Accelerator programs should not be mistaken for acceleration programs. Accelerators are, in a nutshell, industry-specific incubators or private firms with structured capital and reduced time spans than traditional incubators. Clients can be grown to a broad foreign market even quicker than they could in a conventional incubator program (Lewis et al., 2011; Clausen and Korneliusen, 2012). The accelerator programs are often focused on only the incubation stage

Innovation Norway: Norwegian Government's most important tool for Norwegian business and market growth and innovation, according to the Norwegian government. They work with help to improve competitiveness of businesses and stimulate innovation in them. By fostering profitable market growth across Norway, Innovation Norway creates value. Their main goal is create more competitive entrepreneurs, more scalable businesses, and more creative industry (Innovation Norway, 2020).

Incubators' support is very much necessary for a smooth internationalization process of the tenant entrepreneur.

2.2. Networks and Social Capital

Networks and social capital are assumed to one of the greatest resources that an entrepreneur gets access to when he/she joins an incubator. Therefore, it is necessary to have elaborate knowledge about them to complete this study

Business Network

Business networks can assist an entrepreneur in overcoming challenges and, if necessary, in forming new networks. (Lee and Osteryoung, 2004). According to Rice and Matthews (1995) an incubator's network in general offers access to resources and know-how that entrepreneurs generally the network of an incubator provides access to services and know-how that entrepreneurs frequently lack but need. Still, without the help of incubator staff, an entrepreneur can have difficulty identifying the right people. As a result, the incubator staff has a critical role to play in facilitating and encouraging the creation of value-added network relationships (Rice, 2002).

Lyons (2002a) has divided incubator networks into two different categories, *internal* and *external*. Both these types are critical when they assist an entrepreneur in gaining access to the right networks (Lyons, 2002a). An incubator and its internal networks are particularly useful to social capital building because they enable resource pooling, which eliminates availability and affordability obstacles by permitting multiple enterprises to share resources

An incubator and its internal networks are especially beneficial to the development of social capital. Because they allow for resource pooling, which removes supply and affordability barriers by allowing different businesses to share resources (Lyons, 2002a,b). An incubator and its external networks are useful to social capital building because they link client tenants with service providers and with other local businesses for partnership purposes. Incubators external networks are beneficial to the development of social capital because they connect client tenants with service providers and other local businesses for the purpose of forming partnerships (Lyons, 2002a,b). Duff (1994) defines an incubator's external networks as individuals drawn from the ranks of professional business service providers, as well as seasoned businesspeople and educators able to provide guidance and assistance to entrepreneurial enterprises.

In general, the network of the incubator provides tenant entrepreneurs with a pool of opportunities. And as mentioned above, incubator network is highly connected with Social Capital.

Social Capital

Social capital has several dimensions, putting additional strain on researchers who are interested in the subject. However, depending on Nahapiet & Ghoshal, (1998) model, which describes the three dimensions of social capital could be one way to approach social capital.

The sum of several available actual and potential resources in and accumulated by an individual or social unit network of relationships is described as social capital by Nahapiet & Ghoshal, (1998) . Here the authors have mentioned three interconnected aspects of social capital (Figure 2):

1. **Structural dimension** of social capital, presented in Figure 2, refers to the patterns of connections in social relations network, i.e., the presence or absence of social interaction ties (Puhakka, 2001; Yli-Renko, 1999). Essentially, it describes the ability or potential of new entrepreneurs to have access to knowledge, services and help (Liao & Welsch, 2005). Good social connections and relations are valuable and useful resource for companies. Frequent and near social encounters help the actors in the social network to know each other, exchange crucial details and establish shared points of view. (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998)
2. **Cognitive dimension** cognitive dimension covers elements of information, representation, perception and meaning structures among the actors in the social relations network. Examples of such cognitive dimension might be, shared language and codes as showed in Figure 2 (Yli-Renko, 1999) . According to Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), a common language affects the mix of resources and the sharing of resources between the participants of a certain network. Likewise, Prusak & Cohen, (2001) has mentioned the significance of understanding and behaving according to the expectation of the other members' in the network. Prusak & Cohen, (2001) also claimed that conversation connects societies and develops social capital. In this way, discourse consists of gossip, tales, shared exploration of concepts, exchange of standards and goals and expressions of sympathy, rejection, misunderstanding and understanding.
3. **Relational dimension** refers to how an individual has formed relationships via a sequence of interactions (Granovetter, 1992). It reflects on the consistency and relationships of actors and people such as respect, trust, faith and sociability. (Windasari et al., 2017).

The "structural" component of social capital, presented in Figure 2, corresponds to the models in which actors contribute, i.e. participation or lack of social contact. (Puhakka, 2001; Yli-Renko, 1999). The basic component of social capital theory is that network can provide access

to resources. So individuals with insufficient network connections are required to rely on third-party access to obtain essential services. (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998)

STRUCTURAL	COGNITIVE	RELATIONAL
Network ties Network configuration Appropriable organization (devoted to its purpose)	Shared language and codes Shared narratives	Trust Norms Obligations and expectations Identification

Figure 2 dimensions of social capita source (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998)

In short, social capital is a major way for businesses to get access to networks and that network could prove valuable to get access to other resources for the incubated entrepreneurs. Now a combination of all or most of the factors above can help a small business to get to the foreign market or reach internationalization.

2.3. Internationalization

Internationalization has been defined in various ways by various authors. Internationalization is a time-consuming, complex process that requires considerable capital to initiate as well as expand post-entry in established and new markets. It is especially difficult for early internationalizes due to the risks associated with being new. They are initially disadvantaged in their internationalization due to a lack of resources such as financial capital, human resources, etc. Also, early internationalizes often have higher capital requirements once they enter the industry, as they usually begin to look for potential growth prospects and expand into new markets abroad (Bembom & Schwens, 2018).

The two most used theory for internationalization is the Uppsala theory and the Born global theory. In this paper, we will keep both these theories in mind while considering the internationalization of small businesses.

a) Uppsala:

The Uppsala Model Internationalization is one of the traditional models of internationalization. It says that businesses internationalize gradually and steadily because of a lack of awareness of foreign markets, high-risk avoidance, potential instability, and similar factors. In many cases, empirical figures have supported the view.

One of the popular forms of internationalization is the Uppsala Style Internationalization. According to the study, since new businesses lack knowledge of global markets have a high-level of risk, possible uncertainty, and many other factors, they tend to internationalize gradually and slowly (Jan Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). It is argued that markets are partnership networks in which companies are connected in a variety of dynamics. As a result, insiders in related networks are needed for effective internationalization, but there is also a risk of outsiders (Jan Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Empirical analysis shows that some companies take an incremental approach: when they gain ownership of distant markets, they expand and steadily increase their ability to use the expertise and experience they've acquired.(Noémie Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017)

Small businesses often aim to do business outside of its country of origin, which is the most common form of internationalization. Following the traditional Uppsala model it can be assumed that these businesses move towards a foreign market in a slow and steady way. Markets are interdependent networks and the more a business gains the more possibility it has to reach a foreign market. Taking from the theories above, a business incubator can be a possible source of such a network along with other social resources which helps an infant firm to grow and internationalize.

b) Born Global's:

The tendency of new, entrepreneurial firms to intentionally pursuing customers in foreign markets is known as "born global" firms. They were characterized as young, entrepreneurial start-ups that initiate international business (typically exporting) soon after their inception

The phenomenon of young, ambitious companies targeting clients in international markets on purpose is referred to as "born global" firms. They were defined as young, entrepreneurial start-ups that began international business soon after they were established (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). In countries with smaller domestic economies, such as Norway, young companies are more likely to initiate early and rapid internationalization(Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). This form

of early and accelerated internationalization can also be linked to "international entrepreneurship," or the creation and utilization of markets beyond a company's home market in search of competitive advantages (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000). A host of recent developments, according to Knight & Cavusgil (1996), have resulted in the rise of born multinational companies.

- In niche markets, there is a growing role and appetite for advanced or customized products.
- significant advancements in communications systems such as faxes, blogs, and the internet network
- (WWW), allowing small companies to engage in profitable small-scale complex component manufacturing.
- the benefits of small businesses' speed of response, flexibility, and adaptability.
- global networking trends that promote the development of mutually beneficial relations with foreign partners; and
- internationalization of content, tools, facilities, and organizations that promote the transfer of technologies and access to financing.

There is no doubt that these economic trends had a significant effect on globalisation in general, not just for 'born global' businesses.(Oviatt & McDougall, 1994, 1997).

2.4. Intention to Internationalize theory:

All the above factors and facilities may not be enough to encourage an entrepreneur to internationalize if he or she does not have the intention to go to the international market in the first place. On the opposite hand if the entrepreneur has the intention to internationalize, he/she may seek the help of the incubator to get to their goal. Also, the intention to internationalize may be closely related to the born global theory mentioned above.

Entrepreneurship generally is intentional (Krueger et al. 2000) and that intentions are a central element of an inactive cognitive process that combines beliefs, perceptions, and other factors and leads to the entrepreneur having the intention to act and finally to the action itself

Attitudes, expectations, and other stimuli etc. are the key component of an inactive neural pathway that incorporates intentions, that eventually contribute to the entrepreneur's decision

to act on something (Ajzen 1991). Intentions, not surprisingly, have been shown to be the single strongest indicator of actions, while behaviors, on the other hand, have a significant effect on intentions (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980; Ajzen 1988). According to Ajzen (1991) the motivational factors that affect behaviour are reflected in intention. Intention was found to be a very good forecaster of behavior.

Now considering the research question and all the theories discussed above a research model can be formed.

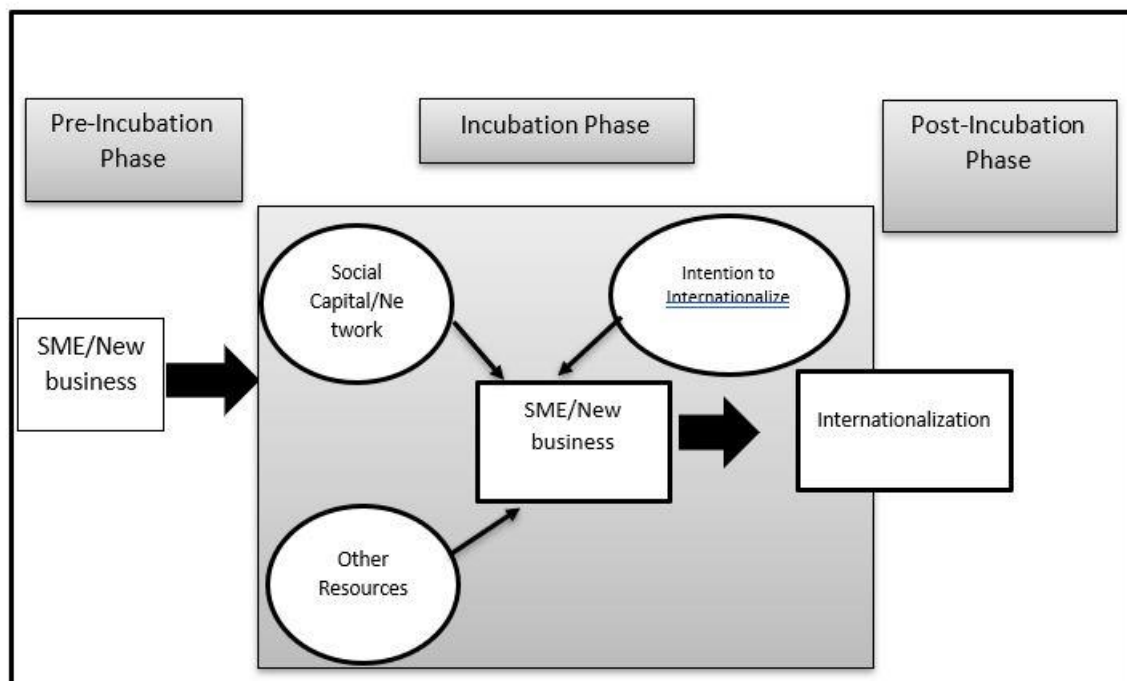


Figure 3 Research Model

2.5. Summary and research model :

Any business goes through three phases of incubation. The pre-incubation phase, which includes the search for information and help of the entrepreneur which eventually leads them to the incubator. Then there is the incubation phase. This is the most important phase. During this phase, the entrepreneur gets access to various internal and external resources. These resources could be both tangible and/or intangible. One of the most important resources that the business gets access to be the Social Capital/Business network. We are assuming that all these factors somehow affect the entrepreneurs' intention and leads them toward internationalization. Based on the information in this paper a research model can be prepared:

From the model, we can see how by being inside an incubator a business gets access to a network and other tangible and intangible resources such as funding, expert opinion/advice, etc. All these resources help the business to move toward internationalization.

3. Research design and Methodology

Research design in general is the plan a systematic way to figure out how the research question will be answered (Saunders, M. Lewis, P., and Thornhill, 2016). Accordingly, this chapter presents the methods applied in the research study to fulfill the research purpose. The chapter starts with the philosophical approach that has been used in connection with the research purpose to interpret the study. Then and I have explained the research design which consists of data collection and data analysis methods of this thesis paper. And at the end, the ethical justification of this study is given.

The structure of this chapter is as follows : (4.1) Scientific method, (4.2) Preparation to data collection (including description of recruitment of informants and interview guide, (4.3) Data collection, (4.4) assessment of the quality of the study, (4.5) ethical considerations, (6) summary.

3.1. Scientific method

3.1.1. Research philosophy:

The philosophical approach is an important part of each study. It helps to define how research should be organized and performed, a. Therefore, to achieve a satisfactory quality and study result, it is important to know about the philosophical role of the researcher (Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, 2015). Three main reasons to emphasize the importance of philosophical foundation have been mentioned by Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, (2015, pp. 46-47) First, a scientist has a responsibility to feel his position in research methods. Second, it makes the research design more understandable. Third, philosophic awareness allows researchers to construct a concrete result.

a) Hermeneutical Approach:

This study contrasts the empirical results with the theoretical context and hence the hermeneutical approach has been considered most fitting because it is important to understand their relationship. Hermeneutical studies are the branch of social sciences that are designed to understand something by interpretation (Robinson & Kerr, 2015). Usually, hermeneutic approaches are best suited to interpret the empirical findings from a study and then to put it into a theoretical framework. This type of study helps to clarify the context of the topic that is being discussed and relate it to the philosophic structure. By analyzing the data, the goal is to

reduce the complexity of the subject and place it to provide more details in a complete sense (Collis & Hussey, 2013).

Consequently, the theoretical and empirical observations are then presented along with figures to explain the similarities and differences, thus making the research process simpler.

3.1.2. Qualitative Research Method

The research question for this paper is: *How can an incubator's network help tenant entrepreneurs with the internationalization process?* To understand this topic more clearly two incubators have been selected and a total number of 6 in-depth interviews have been done. Four of the interviewees were, incubates (tenant entrepreneurs) and two of them were incubator leaders. Now because data collection is done through interviews so, a qualitative research method is reasonable and is in line with the thesis.

While collecting data through primary sources, e.g. interviews, a qualitative research method is preferable to quantitative methods. Qualitative research involves experiments not attempting by a numerical description or evaluation to measure their findings. Qualitative studies typically include without formal measurement interviews and observations. A case study is a type of qualitative analysis that involves an in-depth analysis of one subject. Qualitative analysis is often used to generate hypotheses for a quantitative study (Geoffrey Marczyk, David DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005)

3.1.3. Justification of research method

This thesis aims to explore the role of incubator networks during the early internationalization phase. That is why it is necessary to get a deeper understanding of how each company has experienced its time as incubates. It is often more desirable to use a qualitative method of study when studying a very certain area in internationalization (Rialp & Knight, 2005). Therefore, a qualitative research method has been selected for this thesis, as it is believed to be the best approach to fulfil the purpose of the thesis.

3.1.4. Research Approach

Our research relies on an abductive approach referred to as systematic combining presented by Dubois and Gadde (2002). This approach implies moving between theory and empirical observation iteratively. Eriksson & Kovalainen (2011) describe the abductive approach as *"the process of moving from the everyday descriptions and meanings given by people, to categories and concepts that create the basis of an understanding or an explanation of the phenomenon described"* (p. 24). Abductive research is an exploratory, imaginative, speculative, and interpretive method, and procedure.(Earl Rinehart, 2020) As abduction does not depend on either theory or empirical results but rather draws from both, it supports an easier understanding (Alvesson, M., Sköldbberg, 2008).

Earl Rinehart (2020) has mentioned three conditions necessary for abductive analysis. First, it takes time for the abduction process to familiarize itself with the study. The researchers require pauses for deliberation and reflection in the research report and to continue reading: to become experts in their proof, to resist any fast conclusions, and also to put theoretical proposals into play. Second, during the research process, researchers need to be open to noticing, understanding and reacting to prompts, tuning in, and valuing influences. Third, Researchers performing abductive research must trace the logic-in-hindsight to the backward map, using proof to demonstrate a path to some new information.

An abductive approach is applied in this paper since it highlights both the theoretical and empirical data structure. Additionally, the hermeneutic scientific approach of this study is considered to be compatible with the abductive approach, since the alternation of theory and empirical content enhances the comprehension of the hermeneutic circles (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008).

3.1.5. Developing the theoretical framework

This study's theoretical framework was created using primary and secondary sources. Several science articles from tertiary sources were gathered using relevant search terms in order to provide a unique insight and analyze previous research. Articles and schoolbooks, on the other hand, are examples of secondary sources since they record materials provided by another source. A tertiary source, such as an internet archive or encyclopedia, is a source with both

primary and secondary data that can be searched using search words(Saunders, M. Lewis, P. and Thornhill, 2016).

3.2 Preparation for data collection

a) Sampling:

The sample is a subgroup of the population to be analyzed (Collis & Hussey, 2013). The selection of sample for this study was guided by the research question, which involves both the incubator managers and their incubatees. While doing qualitative data collection it is required to do a non-random selection of samples.

Three main types of non-random sampling methods are snowball sampling/networking, judgmental/purposeful sampling, and normal sampling(Collis & Hussey, 2013). Experienced participants are used in the snowball sampling process and further asked to suggest people who have had a similar experience. In judgmental sampling, respondents are selected based on the researcher's personal preference and gut feeling. And ultimately, in natural sampling researchers would not be able to select who will be included in the survey. (Collis & Hussey, 2013). In this paper, both judgmental and snowball sampling has been used to conduct sampling. The scope of the research was limited as has been mentioned in this paper (Collis & Hussey, 2014). In addition, the purposive sampling method has been used as it facilitates more strategic sampling so that the samples are vital to the research issue.

We have chosen two different types of interviewees for this interview. The selected sample is entrepreneurs who are inside a Norwegian incubator and are doing business or intend to do business in the international market and also their respective incubator leaders. Two different sets of questionnaires were prepared for this purpose. It is believed that the incorporation of both sides has strengthened the empirical study (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Two criteria were used while choosing the incubator leader's for the interview: they

- a) are leading a business incubator inside Norway,
- b) are supporting entrepreneurs who are doing/wants to do international business inside their incubator

Again, while choosing entrepreneurs for the interview three criteria have been applied. They

- a) are small business owners inside Norway
- b) are part of an incubation program inside any business incubator in Norway

- c) want to do/are doing international business

At first, judgemental sampling was done, and incubator leaders were contacted. After that snowball sampling took place as the incubator leaders were asked for contacts of entrepreneurs inside their incubator who matched the criteria mentioned above. The final sample consists of 6 respondents. two of them are incubator leaders and the rest 4 are tenant entrepreneurs.

b) Preparation for the interviews:

The date of the interview was confirmed 2 to 3 weeks before the interview, by email. The topic of the interview was made known to the interviewees at the same time. Before the interviews, two general interview guides, one intended for incubator leaders and one intended for entrepreneurs, were planned with anchoring in the literature findings. For each interviewee, the general interview guide has been updated.

3.3 Data collection

There are four typical methods of data collection in qualitative research methods. They are

1. Participation in a scenario
2. Direct observation
3. In-depth interview and
4. Analyzing documents and other materials (Catherine Marshall, & Rossman, 2016).

Two of these methods were used while collecting data for this paper. Primary data for this paper were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with the incubator managers and the entrepreneurs involved with those incubators. Due to corona infection spread in the country, none of the interviews were taken in person. Rather other digital tools such as Skype, zoom, and meeting were used according to the participant's convenience. All the participants were contacted via email before the interview to ask for permission for the interview. They all signed a written consent form (prepared according to the guideline given by NSD and approved by NSD) before the interview took place. The interviews lasted for about 30-40 minutes on average. They were recorded and transcribed afterward. Only two of the interviews were not recorded due to some difficulties. So, notes were taken during those interviews.

The main sources of secondary data were incubators', businesses' and other relevant (Innovation Norway, SIVA, etc.) websites, documents from the incubators, various related literature, etc.

a) Semi-Structured Interviews

To allow for a flexible interview process, semi-structured interviews were designed with mainly open-ended questions. (e.g. flexible order, leaving out questions, adding follow-up questions). This type of interview enables the researchers to listen to interviewees' answers and build upon them. This way they can collect relevant and valuable insights which had not been foreseen (Bryman & Bell, 2011). With semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions, interviewees had the freedom to express themselves better and present their interpretations. The interview guide for this study was designed according to Bryman and Bell's (2011) guideline. Regarding semi-structured interviews. This interview approach provides the requisite framework while also allowing for flexibility in the behavior and use of follow-up questions, resulting in more comprehensive data collection (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The semi-structured interview guides were structured in "interview topics" (Bryman & Bell, p.437) which were based on the research question. For each topic, interview questions were formulated to capture the topics.

Since there are two different sets of interviewees two different sets of interview questions were prepared (Interview question set A and Interview Question set B). Both sets followed the same pattern and consisted of 7 questions each. The basic structure was four parts:

- (1) Introduction,
- (2) General information and background,
- (3) Incubation,
- (4) Closure (for a full outline of the interview guide, please refer to Appendix ...).

It is to be noted that although the interview guide lists only 7 questions for each question, the questions served rather as a conversation starter and had scope for follow-up questions in between depending on the interviewees' response. So it left room for flexibility depending on what was shared by the interviewee.

3.4. Data collection

a) Conducting the interviews:

Empirical data collection was done through 6 semi-structured interviews. At the initial stage, the interviews were planned to be face-to-face. However due to the recent problems regarding the COVID 19 virus the scope of meeting people became limited. So, the interviews were conducted over the mobile telephone, Skype, and Microsoft Team. Four of the interviews had been recorded and transcribed. However, two of the interviews was not recorded due to some technical error and therefore hand notes were taken during those interviews.

Table 1 Respondent's list and interview information

Respondent code	Role	Interview date	Record method	Interview/Communication type	Interview run time
IL1	Incubator leader	06/04/2020	Audio record and transcription	Skype	43.56 minutes
IL2	Incubator leader	20/04/2020	Audio record and transcription	Microsoft Meeting	17.44 minutes
En1	Entrepreneur	**/03/2020	Handwritten notes during the interview	Mobile	Approximately 30 minutes
En2	Entrepreneur	31/03/2020	Audio record and transcription	Skype	22.40 minutes
En3	Entrepreneur	06/04/2020	Handwritten notes during the interview	Mobile	17.04 minutes
En4	Entrepreneur	25/05/2020	Audio record and transcription	Microsoft Meeting	Approximately 40 minutes

b) Data Analysis

Marshall & Rossman (2006, p. 237) stated that “*the most fundamental operation in the analysis of qualitative data is that of discovering significant classes of things, persons and events, and the properties which characterize them and also in the qualitative studies, data collection and analysis go hand in hand to build a coherent interpretation*”. Therefore, for a successful study, I have analyzed the collected data seriously in different steps to make it relevant and meaningful for this thesis paper.

Initially, I transcribed the interviews of informants that I had documented during the interview session. Where necessary, I contacted informants to request more details about my research that they had overlooked during their interview. As a result, I was able to identify new concepts and insights through the research process, and this transcribe section became a tentative aspect of data analysis. I submitted this to the informants after I finished transcribing the interview so they could verify what they said was written in the transcript.

After transcribing the data, I carefully read it a few times while analysing the analysis questions to ensure that I have a clear grasp of how to organize the data and maintain control over the information. Then I began selecting correct and appropriate data, editing it, and then double-checking to ensure that I had gathered all of the data I needed to review my research report. I have removed some unnecessary information from the interview transcripts and prepared them for use.

While presenting the empirical findings, I tried to relate the information found from the interview to the theoretical background and the research model of the study. For each section, I presented both incubator leaders' and the entrepreneurs' points of view on the subject matter. Then I summarized the information in a table for a better understanding of the reader. The for the analysis section I tried to find a connection between the empirical findings and the theory I have used for this paper. Finally based on the analysis I came up with a revised research model and a conclusion.

3.5. Validity and reliability

The Degree to which results can be extended is determined by research validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Validity is often split into two divisions of qualitative research: internal and external validity. “Internal validity” refers to how much a study's findings represent empirical

evidence (Bryman & Bell, 2015)(Bryman & Bell, 2015). Instead of searching for pre-selected themes, (Miles, M.B. & Huberman, 1994) proposed looking for contradictory evidence of the themes to ensure internal validity. This was achieved by first objectively reviewing the data, then comparing and sharing the conclusions. Observational evidence thus omitted any of the ideas from the theory, and the contrasting perspectives fuelled discussions on confirmed topics.

The term "external validity" implies to what extent scientific results can be applied in a social environment (Bryman & Bell, 2015). A significant move in explaining was to better clarify questions to the respondents to improve the test validity. Another approach used in the study to deal with authenticity was to ask follow-up questions to explore further and expand on the initial questions (Saunders et al., 2009).

A crucial point in maintaining research validity is the choice of interview subjects and the analysis process itself. However, we looked for incubators and start-ups that were relevant to our purpose and research question. And the information provided by them were all proved fruitful.

Researchers conclude that qualitative methodology can preserve trustworthiness and precision by meeting the criteria of integrity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, rather than ensuring reliability and validity (Sheldon et al., 1986).

Internal validation is prioritized in *credibility*, which ensures that the empirical findings conform to fact. (Shenton, 2004). I ensured credibility by interviewing subjects with different positions in the incubators, i.e., incubator leaders, and tenant entrepreneurs. During data analysis, we compared respondent's answers against each other, to ensure that the data was convincing.

To enhance *transferability*, dealing with generalizability or external validity, we provide a detailed description of answers from the interview in the empirical finding chapter. So that the readers will get more context and they will be able to connect it to other situations and use it as convenient to them.

Dependability refers to how effectively a sample can be replicated in the same setting, with the same procedures and participants, and with no barriers to producing comparable results (Shenton, 2004). I ensured this by including a detailed approach overview and a high level of openness in our work process, which includes our interview guide and the evidence that our results are based on.

Confirmability, as a measure of objectivity, means that the conclusion is based on the interview subjects' views rather than our own expectations (Shenton, 2004). To ensure objectivity in the

findings, I have transcribed all of the interviews and interpreted the respondents' responses based on what they said rather than the emotions expressed by the interview subjects. In cases of confusion I have approached them again for clarity, reducing the number of misinterpretations.

3.6. Ethical considerations,

When conducting qualitative research through interviews, it is crucial to have an appropriate research role. Included in the positioning are values such as voluntary participation, secrecy, anonymity, fairness and accountability (Collis & Hussey, 2014). Voluntary participation is needed so interviewees do not feel forced to participate against their will. Interviewees should not be deprived of the information and time necessary on the subject. Participants should be granted anonymity because their public opinion will not be valued by them. In the dissertation, for example, participants can be selected. The researcher will be told before the interview and be frank with respect to the topic of the study, the context in which they will use the information and the contribution they will make to it. (Collis & Hussey, 2014).

All participants agreed to participate voluntarily in this study, without offering any rewards. To secure their views and the companies they serve, it was decided to keep all members confidential. In addition to this thesis, the information collected from the interviews will not be published anywhere and all participants were informed of the purpose of the study, both in the initial e-mail conversation and at the beginning of the interview.

Also, before collecting data approval from NSD was taken and the consent form was prepared according to the guideline given by them which was letter approved by them.

3.7. Summary.

The main objective of this study is “*How can incubator’s network help tenant entrepreneurs with the internationalization process?*?”. To achieve this goal, the qualitative approach was used in this study to enable participants to engage in, connect with, and collaborate with the research process. Two semi-structured interview guides were created (see Appendix a), and questionnaires began with general questions and ended with more subject-related questions. Total six interviews were conducted for data collection over skype, Meeting, and Zoom. Four of them were recorded for transcribing later. To ensure the quality of the study, relevancy, cross-checks of data, reliability can defend the study quality. In addition to that, ethical considerations also got importance during the study. Since the consent form mentions that the

informants' identity will be kept secret, that is why none of their names or workplace, or anything that could identify them is not mentioned in the paper.

4. Empirical findings

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part contains a brief introduction of the informants which will provide an overview of the informants to know who the informants are. Then the empirical findings from the research are presented linked to theories connected to the research model.

The structure of this chapter is as follows : (5.1) Introduction of the informants, (5.2) Presentation of Empirical Findings, (5.3) Presentation of Empirical Findings

4.1.Introduction of the informants:

The information about the informants has been collected from their interview questions, business websites, and incubators websites. Since the consent letter, they have signed mentioned that their identities will be kept secret so we are not revealing any information that might be traceable to them

IL1 (Incubator leader 1): IL1 is the Forretningsutvikler (business developer) of a business incubator situated in a small city in Northern Norway. With an MBA in Technological Administration, IL1 also has experience working in the information technology and services industry. IL1 is also skilled in other fields such as Electronic Payments, Credit Cards, Management, Payment Cards, Wearable Payment, and Mobile Payment.

The incubator IL1 works for is an incubator that is covering the region of the southern part of Nordland county. And it's part of the national incubator's network which is administered by SIVA. This regional innovation company has 15 employees in Mosjøen, Sandnessjøen, and Mo I Rana. They work closely with academia, business, and the public sector to develop and contribute to the increased growth of the city.

IL2 (Incubator leader 2): Incubator Manager / Senior Advisor at a large incubator in the Nordland region. This person holds a master's degree in economics from a Business School in Norway with a specialization in entrepreneurship and innovation. IL2 incubator works with Incubator Salten, Innovation Norway's mentor scheme, and NCE Aquaculture.

En1 (Entrepreneur 1): Founder of a dive center located in North Norway. En1 holds a bachelor's degree in nursing studies from Nord university with a passion for traveling, scuba diving, and caves. The diving center provides many services including accommodation and transportation to scuba divers from all around the world. They are working hard to give an unforgettable experience to their customers.

En2 (Entrepreneur 2): Founder of an Information Service company that works to diminish the cultural diversity in the workforce. En2 has a master's degree in migration and integration management. Plus, many years of experience in working with different countries and different organizations for helping with the management of migration and integration issues.

En3 (Entrepreneur 3): Pediatric nurse who has worked for more than 10 years with premature and sick newborns. En3 loves quality management and is very serious about it. This person has completed the Qinord internal quality assurance education at the Nordland Hospital and has participated in various similar projects. Now, En3 is working to create a modern and enhanced approach to handle donor milk/breastmilk.

En4 (Entrepreneur 4): Founder of a Norwegian edutainment platform for early learning. Is an environmentally conscious person who loves to read. One day when trying to teach En4's child's about the environment through books discovered that there are no interesting books that teach children about the environment. So, this person went ahead and made one. And that is how the business started.

4.2.Presentation of Empirical Findings

This segment presents the information about the main research questions that drove the writing of this paper. It starts with the incubation of small businesses. Then moving on to see what kind of support the businesses got from the incubators. It will then try to find the driving force behind the entrepreneur's intention and finally see why they decided to pursue the internationalization of their business.

4.2.1. Incubation:

Most small businesses tend to take part in an incubation program in the first place because they lack the expertise to start and manage a business on their own and need third-party help. Most of these business owners have an idea but they don't have experience, business expertise necessary connection, etc. For instance, En3 said that,

“And I have discovered a need for a new solution, milk banks. And that's the outcome for the business establishment. I am working on a new solution haha. And I have no experience from the business world, but I have done some quality improvement projects in the hospital, and that's a bit entrepreneurial.”

So, to fill the gap, the business look for a solution. They look for a way to get help. Which eventually leads them to the incubators. Sometimes they get to the incubator by searching by themselves. Sometimes they reach the incubator through a third-party recommendation.

En1 said that,

“We needed help with ... but we didn't know anyone. So we searched on the internet for help. And found the incubator”

According to En3

“umm... Because I spoke with the innovation of Norway and I talked about the idea and they thought it was a good idea and they asked me to get in contact with Kunnskapsparken in Bodø. And then I called the Kunnskapsparken and they were amazed about the idea and they offered me a deal with the inkubator.”

“I met this woman that at this career center. And when she looked at my background, she asked me to go to this ... co-working space”

When we get the point of view of the incubator leaders on this matter they also express similar thoughts. They added that sometimes the businesses find them. But there are also times when they actively try to find businesses that need incubation. They do so by holding different ... etc.

IL1 described their incubators selection process like this

“So we need to have a wider view on how to select businesses. And the ground rule is that there is supposed to be something new. You are doing something that no one else does. So it's like some kind of invention umm... level of the invention over the company. Or you set up things in a different way that no one else has done, so you try to distinguish yourself from others. And if you are part of the incubator you must at least be??? case national market or original market. You can't just set up a case for a municipality. You need to set up a business that wants to take a part in the national or international market. So that's kind of the criteria.”

From this description, it is also noticeable that some incubators actively search for business that has the aim to hit the international market. Also, organizations like Innovation Norway have a big hand over incubators' selection of entrepreneurs. Because they encourage and/or discourage investment in some specific type of business from time to time.

IL2 said

“People know about us or they find information. So we don’t do much selling. Like we don’t really have to call them and tell them to join the incubator. Most of them contact us. And then we evaluate if they have the growth potential they need or we need for them to be part of it. And what we can help them with. And if we think that the idea is something they can do and the theme is good enough. We use a lot of Facebook to get people into the incubator and ideas. And we spend a lot of time with our partners like Innovation Norway and other who work with start-ups. So they send a lot of people to us.”

Social media pages are a good medium to connect incubators with potential entrepreneurs.

As it is mentioned above there are three phases of incubation, pre-incubation, incubation, and post-incubation. Now usually businesses start at the pre-incubation phase. But that may not be always true for every business. IL1 said that.

“So, I know there are a lot of incubators in Norway that have a rigid system where they start with one phase and then go to the next. And everyone has to go through the system. If you are in stage 4/5 in your business, they have to jump back to stage 1, 2 and 3 and kind of fast forward through those stages. But I think we kind of lose some of the start-ups. If someone is really good at market and comes to us and says that we know the customers and they know market and they have been in the business for many years and now they started a company themselves. We kind of ask them to do a thorough market research. They will lose interest and won’t want to be part of the incubator. So, you need to find out what is the essential need of this person or this company and help them with that not something they don’t need help with.”

Also, IL2 said that

“So, most of the companies that we work with they are first pre-incubator. And then the incubation if they want to proceed with the project and we have seen the progress that we want. But some companies come straight into the incubation period because they have worked a lot on the project before and knows that there is a market.”

Although not all the incubators are the same level of flexibility but more or less all of them try to do the best for the entrepreneurs. So, it can be assumed that depending on the business's ability they may sometimes skip the phases of incubation and jump forward.

4.2.2. Resource support (including network and social capital) from the incubator

Incubators try to create a protective environment for the new business by trying to provide them with what they need. This of course is different from business to business. Some businesses may need a good office space to work at, some need financial advice to get funding.

Il1 said that

“It's hard to say that we have this range services. We kind of talk to them and try to find out what they need.”

Tangible resources provide by incubators can be office space, various technical equipment etc.

En3 said that

“Also, in the beginning, I had like a landscape office but now I got my own office. So the company pays a small rent for this. So it's valuable because we don't have a lot of money in the startup so it's good to be in the incubator. To have a working space”

Being in the incubator-provided office can also be beneficial for companies in many other ways. Since working there let them mingle with other small businesses and the incubator advisors and build a strong social network. Again tangible resources like these can also be connected to the **structural dimension** of social capital. While the network they form being inside an incubator can be named as **relational dimension**

IL1 said that

“I: Can you think of any resources that the business gets access through the incubator?”

IL1: Yeah, it's of course the employees of the incubator. We are 7/8 different people in the company. And then it's all the other ... because we are not just this incubator. We are this regional innovation company, Kunnskapparken. So, we have a lot of other kinds of projects that with tie to incubation with our other company and business. So, we have really large network, we know a lot of other companies. And different skills and different people”

So, in a way, the **tangible** and **intangible** resources are inter-connected while they are both connected to the **social capital** sometimes. On a related note,

From the interviews of the entrepreneurs, it can be identified that the main type of intangible resources they need seems to be advice and guideline. The subject of the advice may vary in a wide range of areas. Some business needs advice on how to apply for funding while other may need legal advice. For example, En1

Provides service to divers that visit an underwater cave in a small city in Nordland Region. But the road that leads to the cave belonged to some private company and they had to pay each time they used it. So, they needed help with legal advice regarding that matter. That is why they came to an incubator for help.

On the other hand, En2 had said

“I mean you have to take into account that for me this is a completely new area for me. This startup ..um .. I was and I am still not very comfortable with this field of work. So the first ..umm.. probably like the one positive thing is the support they gave me into understanding better the field clearly into the planification.”

One major resource support that all the interviewees seem to agree on is that the **network connection** they gain from the incubator.

According to En3

“I would never ever have that network today if I wasn't a part of the incubator. I have my network at the hospital and umm.. how do you say it? The hospitals across Norway and that one. But business network I don't have so yeah... been important”

Even the incubator leaders agree with this. Echoing En3's words above, IL1 said that,

“We are 7/8 different people in the company. And then it is all the other ... because we are not just this incubator. We are this regional innovation company, Kunnskapparken. So, we have a lot of other kind of projects that with tie to incubation with our other company and business. So, we have really large network, we know a lot of other companies. And different skills and different people.”

Government organizations, especially SIVA play a big part in connecting the incubators and creating a big incubator network.

IL1 informed that,

“So, there are different stages in the SIVA program. It's supposed to help small and medium business to do projects within the company or set up new businesses. So, it's a network through whole of Norway. Lots of business in whole of Norway. So, we have this network where we meet together and here about what other incubators are doing and sometimes, we help companies that have offices in different parts in Norway. they can be connected to many incubators and more.”

Intention to internationalize.

Entrepreneurs' intention to internationalize can have a huge impact in their internationalization. What makes an entrepreneur interested in internationalization is not easily predictable. It could be that the entrepreneurs' background can nudge them to reach for the international market. For instance, En2 has a master's degree in migration and integration management. This person has also worked the past several years for different countries, different organizations helping them manage migration and integration issues.

Some entrepreneurs are interested in the international market even before their product goes to market. For example, EN3's product hasn't launched in Norway yet and this person is already looking into the international market

"I: But will your market be local or international?"

En3: International. Yeah yeah. Norway is too small haha

I: So from day one you'r aiming to go for the international market

En3: Yeah, my aim is international. a solution for everyone yeah,

I: And what made you interested in international market?"

En3: The need haha..."

From this statement, it is also clear that the aim to get to the international market is driven by the need to get to a larger market. Incubators also try to encourage businesses that have a will or potential to go to the international market. IL1 said that,

"I see that a product has more value in the international market then we always recommend them to go in that direction. But we try to make the entrepreneurs decide on their own. They need to make the decision. Where to go. So we can guide them but they need to make the decision about what they want to do."

So clearly the business's own motivation behind internationalization is very important. And the incubator can play a big part in enhancing that motivation and guiding them in the right direction.

Internationalization

Internationalization is a big step for a small business. The proper combination of Incubation, Network and other resource support and entrepreneurial intention can help an entrepreneur to step into the international market. A lot of entrepreneur reaches internationalization following the **Uppsala Model**. Meaning they gain experience in the local market and gradually move to the foreign market. IL 2 said that

“Most of them start in Norway and then they scale up to different countries. It’s easier to get a product out in Norway first”.

However, all the entrepreneurs interviewed for this paper were **Born Globals**. So they were ready to go international from day one.

What makes a business become born global is not clear all the time. However, sometimes the internationalization opportunity is already there. For example, En1’s 80% *customers were international from the beginning of the business*. Also, for En 2 the main focus of their business was to integrate a foreign workforce into Norway. En 2 said that

“my business case is based on people. We are very few people are international, so we don’t want to close it to a group of people or a specific region of any countries.”

Since this entrepreneur's main target market was foreign workers who were trying to integrate into Norway’s labor market there was no other way for her to start a business without internationalization.

So, internationalization is different for different entrepreneurs. It depends on their product type, opportunities, and many other factors.

4.3. Summary of empirical findings:

Here is an overview of the empirical findings from the paper:

Table 2 Summer of Empirical findings

Topic	Summary
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Incubation	<p>Most small businesses take part in an incubation program because they need help with their business and incubators can offer a support system for them.</p> <p>Entrepreneurs can actively search and become part of an incubator, or the incubator can hold search for entrepreneurs by various methods. Also, organizations like Innovation Norway have a big hand over incubators' selection of entrepreneurs. Because they encourage and/or discourage investment in some specific type of business from time to time. Social media pages are a good medium to connect incubators with potential entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Phases of incubation:</p> <p>There are three phases of incubation, pre-incubation, incubation, and post-incubation. Most businesses start at the pre-incubation phase. But some start at the second phase due to their existing knowledge or expertise.</p>
Resource support from incubator	<p>Incubators try to create a protective environment for the new business by trying to provide them with what they need. The business need, of course, is different from one to another. Some may need a good office space too, some need financial advice to get funding, etc.</p> <p>The different tangible and intangible resources business provides can be interconnected connected sometimes. They can also be connected to social capital. One major resource support or social capital that all the interviewees seem to agree on is that the network connection they get from the incubator. Government organizations, especially SIVA plays a big part in connecting the incubators and creating a big incubator network.</p>
Intention to internationalize.	<p>Entrepreneurs' intention to internationalize can make the biggest difference in their internationalization process. The driver of intention is not always crystal clear. But many factors can be identified and connected to their intention. Such as entrepreneurs'</p>

	<p>background, existing market opportunities, etc. The business's own motivation behind internationalization is very important. And the incubator can play a big part in enhancing that motivation and guiding them in the right direction.</p>
<p>Internationalization</p>	<p>Finally, the internationalization of the business depends on a mix of factors, such as existing market opportunity, target market, entrepreneurial intention to internationalize, proper support from the incubator, including but not limited to, important network support. Incubators also try to encourage businesses that have will or potential to go to the international market. Sometimes govt. organizations also encourage investments in businesses that want to go to the foreign market. So, internationalization is different for different entrepreneurs. It depends on their product type, opportunities and many other factors.</p>

5. Analysis and Discussion

The main aim of this Master's thesis was to find out how by being part of an incubator the entrepreneurs get access to resources and its network and how that helps them with internationalization. Based on the theoretical principles used in this paper and the results of semi-structured interviews with incubator leaders and entrepreneurs in Norway, this chapter will include a discussion on the key topics relevant to the research issues: Incubator, Resources, Social capital, and Network, Entrepreneurial intention, and Internationalization.

The structure of this chapter is as follows : (6.1) Analysis (6.2) Discussion and revised research model

5.1. Analysis

a) Incubator:

Incubator increases the chances of survival for small businesses (Engelman et al., 2015). So new businesses look to be a part of a business incubator. And when a business becomes part of an incubator it goes through different phases of incubation as mentioned by Azih & Inanga, (2014). Although it is not the same for every business. The incubator decides, depending on the business's competency, which phase of incubation the incubators start at.

There are many ways for a small business to become part of an incubator. They contact the incubator themselves, and if the incubator likes their idea they can be selected to become an incubatee. Another way can be by an active search by the incubator for entrepreneurs. Social media pages, news portals can play a part here. Because the incubator uses these mediums to reach the potential incubatees. Additional major part is played by various government organizations such as Innovation Norway, SIVA, etc. Because these organizations support and guides incubator as well as businesses regarding which field to invest in and what direction to go to.

b) Incubator Resources:

Most small businesses start with just an idea. But often the entrepreneurs behind the business lack ability to run a business skilfully. Having the support of a business incubator can make a world of differences to them. Incubators can give the initial support and resources that the business so desperately needs. And as stated by Knight & Cavusgil (1996) resources can even make a difficult situation survivable.

Most incubators offer's a common working space for businesses. This gives the new businesses to mingle and help each other. Which also allows them to mingle with other entrepreneurs and incubator advisors. That gives them access to a larger network and grows their social capital.

c) Resource dependency

Now as the small businesses start to rely on incubators for resources it may create resource dependency where the incubator holds a certain amount of power over the business (Pfeffer and Salancik, 2003). In this case, the dependence created will be vertical since the small business rely on the incubators (Denktas-Sakar & Karatas-Cetin, 2012)

Also, even after the business leaves the incubator they seem to be in touch with the incubator leaders most of the time. This might be due to the reason that they have an emotional dependency on the incubator.

d) Network

Through the network, it is possible to access e.g. local knowledge regarding the market of matter, which could be crucial when establishing a product or service in that particular market. For firms not having any previous experience or contacts, this resource is especially important.

There is no doubt that incubators connect businesses to larger and advantageous networks. The type of network here is both internal and external. (Bøllingtoft & Ulhøi, 2005; McAdam & Marlow, 2008). If we consider the other type of network then whether the network will be private or professional depends on the dynamic of the entrepreneur and the other parties of the incubators' level of relationship and it may vary from one to another. (Wikipedia). (UCI, n.d.).

e) Social Capital/Networking:

If we talk about the three dimensions of social capital inside the incubator we can see that the office space provided by the incubator for the small businesses is the perfect example of *structural dimension* Nahapiet & Ghoshal, (1998). This gives the incubators the perfect place to mingle and connect with other businesses. This brings us to the *cognitive dimension*. Through the incubator, the businesses with similar goals have a chance to meet and exchange ideas. Then comes the *relational dimension*. This means that business and businesses and also business and incubator forms a valuable relation with trust, norms, etc.

entrepreneurs seem to think that one of the most important resources during the early internationalization process is the network. En1 mentioned that she joined the incubator because she needed help and didn't know anyone who can help. En2 has also mentioned that being completely new to the business was difficult and having only an idea was not enough.

When a start-up is developing their network, having experience of being an incubatee can be a significant benefit as their business idea and product already have been carefully investigated and thus, a certain level of quality can be assured. Since the incubator has carefully inspected the firm's business concept and strategy, institutions and organizations have additional incentives to believe in the firm's work and vision, a statement several interviewed incubators agree with. One of the incubators explains that firms participating in their program are more likely to receive state-funded subsidies and loans since prerequisites are already achieved.

Furthermore, three of the firms interviewed also believe incubators can help provide networks and thus create opportunities, which could be essential when internationalizing. They state that firms applying to an incubator usually do not possess an extensive network, and finding appropriate contacts on their own may slow down the internationalization process, as this is typically a time-consuming process. Incubators can moreover provide opportunities to participate in international programs and collaborations, which can further increase born global knowledge and understanding in terms of internationalization as well as the possibility to receive international validation for their product or service. At the same time, they can form new contacts and meet other firms in the same stage of development.

f) Intention to internationalize:

Since entrepreneurship, in general, is intentional (Krueger et al. 2000) it is assumed to be an important way to predict an entrepreneur's behavior. Now from the empirical findings, we have seen that some entrepreneurs already have a strong intention to internationalize. Their behavior can also be enhanced by the incubator through various motivational factors.

g) Internationalization:

Four out of the four businesses that have been interviewed were ready to or at least intended to, get to the international market from the beginning of their business. So the *born global* model (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004) seems to have a stronghold on this area. Although a sample of only four businesses is not big enough to properly represent the whole scenario of Norway. But it still gives us an idea of the Norwegian small business that wants to go to the international market.

5.2. Discussion and revised research model:

Among the tangible resources, the incubates seem to prioritize the office space since it gives them a stable place to work and connect with different people and other businesses from the incubator. This is also relevant to the structural social capital a business incubator provides an entrepreneur.

When it comes to intangible resources, business advice on complex matters, such as finance management, technical know-how, and important network connection inside and outside the incubator is prioritized by the interviewed entrepreneurs. Incubators network connection with other incubators and different govt. and non-govt. organizations are also highly useful for incubatees. Again the business advice that the incubatees get from the incubator can be connected to the cognitive dimension of social capital and the network connection formed because the incubator can be categorized as a relational dimension of social capital.

Although differentiating between tangible and intangible resources is not so easy. Mainly because many times they seem to be interconnected. Proper support can create the proper environment for an entrepreneur to venture into the international market. And the incubator leader agrees that when their incubated business goes to the international market then other businesses inside the incubator seem to gain from it too. Especially since those businesses can bring valuable connections to the incubator. This can work even after the incubation period. And almost all the incubator seems to be in touch with their incubated business even after they are out of the incubator. Because they are a valuable personal and professional network for them.

So according to this conclusion, the re-adjusted business model would be.

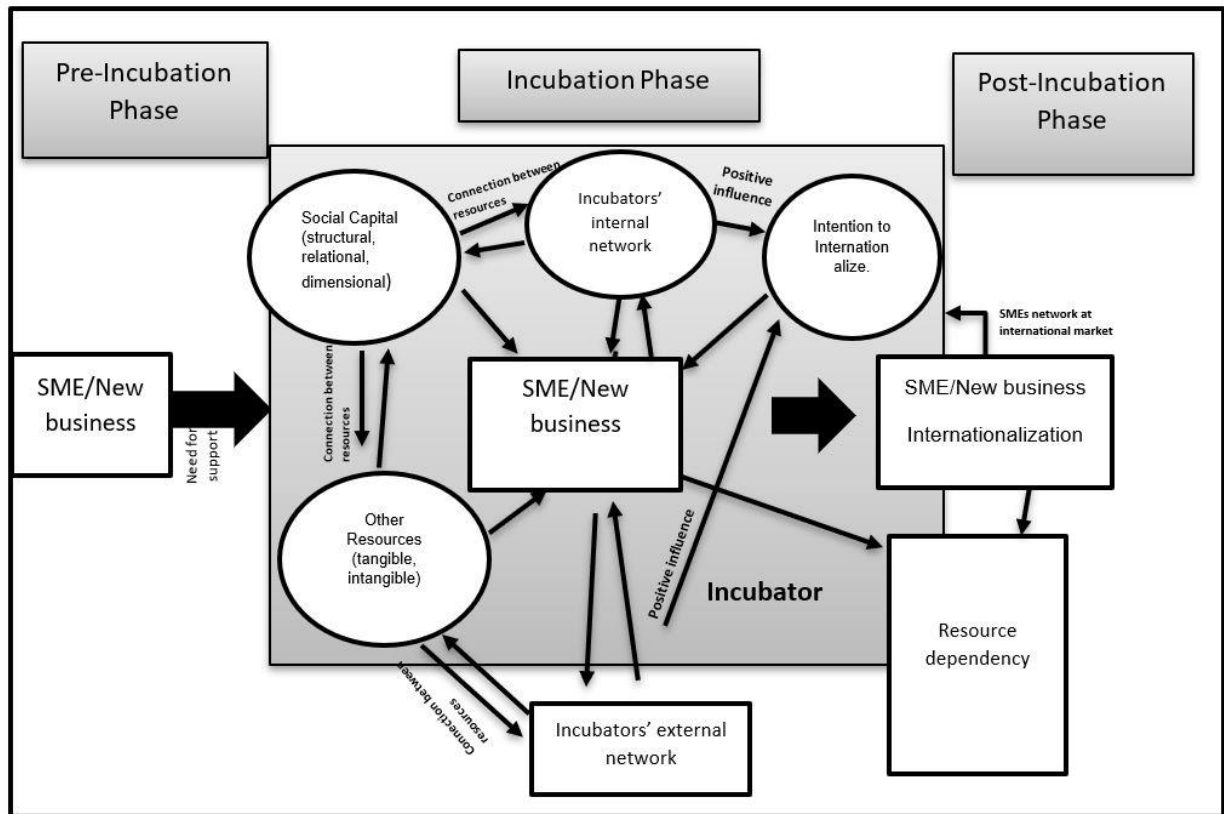


Figure 4 Revised research model

From the model, we can see how by being inside an incubator a business gets access to the incubator's internal and external network and other tangible and intangible resources (office space, help to find funding, expert opinion/advice, etc.). These resources are different but also connected. For example, office space can be categorized as a tangible resource and it can be also be labeled as a structural dimension of social capital.

All these resources support helps a business grow and could be an encouraging factor that helps them move toward internationalization. Another important factor that impacts business internationalization is its entrepreneurial intention. Entrepreneurs' intentions can be affected by many factors, including their background, existing market opportunities. However, being inside an incubator and its resource support can positively impact an entrepreneur's intention.

The combination of all these factors can help a business to get to the foreign market.

After entering the foreign market and reaching a certain level of growth the business might eventually leave the incubator, hence starting the post-incubation phase. On the other hand, if

the business does go to the international market, it gets access to a larger network and other resources. The incubator also can access these resources through the business. So eventually the internationalization of the tenant entrepreneur also can help incubators to grow.

6.Conclusion:

This chapter contains the answer to the research question that I have discovered after my research. It also contains different implications of this paper, the scope for further research, and a final remark.

The structure of this chapter is as follows : (7.1) Conclusion, (7.2) Implications of the paper, (6.3) Practical implication, (6.4) Research Limitation, (6.5) Future Research, (6.6) Final Remark

6.1. Conclusion:

The final section provides a conclusion, which is based on the analysis. Furthermore, the research question will be answered. Finally, the chapter ends with suggestions for further

The research question that we pursue here is:

How can an incubator's network help tenant entrepreneurs with the internationalization process?

.Based on the analysis above it is possible to say that there is a positive relationship between the incubation of a business and its internationalization. Although many factors might affect the internationalization of a business. However, if a business has a pre-existing intention to internationalize, especially a born global business, then being inside an incubator seems to nurture and help with that intention by providing access to various tangible and intangible resources.

6.2.Implications of the paper:

The purpose of this study was to investigate the incubators of internationalization and get a better understanding of incubators' support activities regarding SME needs. This thesis contributes to how incubators can support SMEs' development and early phase of internationalization by providing necessary resources. The findings of this study show that network, knowledge, and capital are resources SME's are in particular need of, which concurs with previous research (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005; Knight & Cavusgil, 2004; Laanti et al., 2007). Based on our empirical findings we would like to suggest that plays an important role in born SMEs' early internationalization process. Furthermore, the network appears to be the best-provided resource, with the majority of the firms believing they received appropriate counseling and advice during their time as incubates. Moreover, all the SMEs highlighted and appreciated the entrepreneurial atmosphere created at the incubators, which encourage incubated firms to share knowledge and experience.

6.3. Practical implication:

The findings from this research have some practical implications for various stakeholders of the internationalization of small businesses.

The first stakeholder, in this case, is the entrepreneur itself. Based on my analysis of the empirical findings combined with the relevant theories it is quite safe to suggest that if a new business is planning to internationalize and but it lacks the required resources, network, and social capital. Hence it is not confident enough to go try to get to the foreign market alone. Then getting inside an incubation program will improve its chances at internationalization.

The second stakeholder can be the incubator. Now, since we discovered that the internal networking inside the incubator can benefit all the incubatees which will eventually benefit the incubator itself. Taking more action to stimulate that the networking process will be beneficial for the incubator.

Thirdly, various government support organization's such as Innovation Norway could also be considered as a stakeholder for this. Since these programs always try to encourage business to internationalize. So a good idea would be that they try to enhance the network connection between incubator to incubator.

6.4. Research Limitation:

This research has tried to shed light on the relation between the incubator network and the internationalization of the incubated SME's. However as this is a quite broad area, and the scope and time limitation for doing a Master's thesis has limited this research have not been able to cover every relevant aspect, i.e. entrepreneurial ecosystem,

6.5. Future Research:

Future research can be done to get an even deeper understanding of this subject matter, such as how the entrepreneurial ecosystem affects the internationalization process of small enterprises. Another interesting thing would be to explore the network system between incubators and their effect on the incubatees. Also, the number of participants is rather scarce and can make generalizations. That is why quantitative research could give more decisive information on the current research matter of this topic. Moreover, that extensive research regarding the specialization of incubators would be beneficial to further understand the concept of transitioning incubators into narrower business areas and what such effects would have on SME's.

6.6. Final Remarks:

The topic of the thesis is *Incubator Networks and their contribution to incubatees internationalization*. This thesis aimed to assess the contributions made by incubators towards the internationalization of small businesses. Therefore, the research question used for the study was "*How can an incubator's network help tenant entrepreneurs with the internationalization process??*". To answer the research question, I have conducted the study by using the qualitative case study method through semi-structured interviews with six informants. Two of those informants are incubator leaders in the Nordland region. And the other four are entrepreneurs in those two incubators leaders incubators. The finding of the study indicated that incubators network as well other resource support can help incubatees to internationalize. While the incubatees become part of the incubator network too and they also contribute in helping other new entrepreneurs inside the incubator later to gain different advantages.

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Appendix a: Interview Guide

Interview Questions Set A (For Incubator Leaders)

1. Can you tell me about the background of your incubator?
2. How do you select clients for your incubator?
3. What type of support do you provide during in the incubation phase and post incubation phase of the clients?
4. How do you measure (growth/success etc.) the clients in the incubation phase (business development phase)
5. Do you encourage your entrepreneurs to internationalize? If yes, then how do you do that?
6. How government support organizations (such as SIV, Idelab) fits into the whole picture?
7. Is there an internal network that connects all the incubators in Norway?

There will be follow up questions or more new questions according to response

Interview Questions Set B (For Entrepreneurs)

1. Say a bit about you and your business
2. Why and how did you choose this incubator?
3. What type of resources did you get access to via the incubator during the incubation phase and post-incubation phase?
4. Did the incubator help you get access to a larger network?
5. What made you interested to internationalize?
6. Do you think the incubator support affected your intention to internationalize?
7. Do you think your internationalization has helped your incubator?

There will be follow up questions or more new questions according to the response

Appendix b: Consent Form

Informed consent for the processing of personal data about participants in research projects.

Do you want to participate in the research project on how incubators help tenant entrepreneurs with internationalization?

This is a question for you to participate in a research project whose purpose is to explore how being tenant inside an incubator can help entrepreneurs to get access to many resources such as network and how that helps the business to internationalize . In this paper, we provide you with information about the goals of the project and what participation will mean for you.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to understand the connection between incubator network and their contribution in helping the tenant business/entrepreneur. Business incubators are a booming industry. These organisations have become the hot new way for developing and the start-ups. These offer new firms a number of benefits, usually in exchange for capital shares. Figuring out how incubators can help the tenant SMEs/businesses to get access to social resources such as, network and how that can help them with internationalization can be beneficial for both the incubator and the small business. Because internationalization helps the firms grow and such growth also helps the incubators grow. In this paper we will focus on the following research question: *How incubator help tenant entrepreneurs with the internationalization process?* The information is being collected for a master's thesis paper and that is all it will be used for.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The department of Innovation and entrepreneurship from the HHN of Nord University is responsible for the project.

Why are you asked to participate?

The research project requires further information on incubators and their tenant entrepreneurs. I chose to reach out to the two incubators that were closest to my university. I got the contact of incubator leaders from the incubator's website. I reached out to them and asked them if they had any tenant incubators that were doing business in international market or interested in

doing so. They both agreed to co-operate and also helped me to get in touch with their tenant entrepreneurs who fit the criteria.

What does it mean for you to participate?

If you choose to participate in the project, it means that you agree to take part in an interview. The interview will take approximately 30-45 minutes. I will take audio recordings and notes from the interview. There is two set of questions (Set A and Set B) for the semi structured interview. Set A is intended for the incubator leaders and set B is meant for the tenant entrepreneurs. Set A contains questions about the incubator, entrepreneur selection criteria, support provided by the incubator in varies phases of the small business etc. Set B contains

question about the business, the type of support they get from the incubator, their intention to internationalize etc. I will also use the incubator's, and all the business's websites and other internet pages to get more relevant information

Voluntary participation

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw your consent at any time without giving any reason. All your personal information will then be deleted. It will not have any negative consequences for you if you do not want to participate or later choose to withdraw.

Your privacy - how we store and use your information

We will only use the information about you for the purposes we have stated in this letter. We treat the information confidentially and in accordance with the privacy policy.

- Only me, Ananna Das and my supervisor, is Espen John Isaksen will have access to this data
- I want to replace your name and contact information with a code stored on your name on a list separate from other data (for example Incubator leaders will named as IL1, IL2 and Entrepreneurs will be named as E1, E2 etc. The audio recording for their interviews will be named in the same way).
- The participant will not be recognized in the publication in any way.

What happens to your information when we finish the research project?

The information is anonymized when the project is completed, which is according to plan on 17th May 2019. The personal data and audio recordings will be stored for a year after the end of the project because of verifiability and/or further research. After that it will all be deleted. All the information will be stored in anonyms form.

Your rights

As long as you can be identified in the data material, you are entitled to:

- get insight into which personal information is registered about you, and to obtain a copy of the information,
- obtain personal information about you,
- get your personal information deleted and/or changed, and
- send a complaint to the Data Inspectorate regarding the processing of your personal data.

What gives us the right to process personal information about you?

We process information about you based on your consent. On behalf of Nord University, NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS has considered that the processing of personal data in this project complies with the privacy regulations.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the study, or wish to exercise your rights, please contact:

• Nord University by Ananna Das, email: (anannadas@hotmail.com) and/or Espen John Isaksen (project supervisor), email: (espen.j.isaksen@nord.no). In a student project, contact information for the supervisor / project manager must appear, not just the student

• Our Privacy Ombudsman:

Data Protection Officer, Nord University, email (personvernombud@nord.no),

Phone +47 74 02 27 50.

If you have any questions related to NSD's assessment of the project, please contact:

• NSD - Norwegian Center for Research Data AS by email (personvernt services@nsd.no) or by phone: (10:00-14.00): +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)..

With best regards

Espen John Isaksen Ananna Das

(Researcher / Supervisor)

Consent statement

I have received and understood information about the project on how incubator network help tenant entrepreneur with internationalization and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I agree to:

to participate in the interview

that my personal data is stored after the end of the project, for a year.

I agree that my information will be processed until the project is completed

(Signed by project participant, date): Consent form