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Internationalization of Construction Service Corporations: Impact of Size and International Experience

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ABSTRACT The international services literature lacks research investigating the association between corporate size and corporate international experience with the internationalization. Using an integrated theoretical approach, this paper examines the internationalization of construction service corporations (CSCs) with specific emphasis on four dimensions: motives, firm-specific competitive advantages, home country-specific competitive advantages and locational considerations. A quantitative approach was adopted through a postal questionnaire survey. Out of 126 CSCS, 84 usable responses were analyzed giving 66.7% response rate. A comparative analysis was conducted using Mann-Whitney U test between the corporations having different sizes and international experiences. The findings show that CSCs of varied sizes did not concur over several firm-specific competitive advantages and home country-specific competitive advantages, whereas CSCs of varied international experiences were in disagreement over some locational factors. Small CSCs need to form joint ventures or partnerships in order to overcome their limitations. The government support is direly needed to promote internationalization of CSCs especially the younger and smaller ones which stand more vulnerable due to lack of opportunities in their domestic markets. The study will be helpful to managers and regulatory bodies towards creating a balanced playing field to develop the internationalization process for their service corporations.

INDEX TERMS Internationalization, construction services, motives, competitive advantages, locational advantages, size, international experience.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the business areas have seen remarkable changes due to globalization of previously closed economies and freedom of markets, consequently bringing new progressive settings of business for corporations [1]. An increasing number of firms of varied sizes have changed their orientation from local to worldwide markets, hoping to reap the benefits of cross-border trade [2], [3]. The construction service sector has been the most rapidly growing sector in international trade as well as a key motivating force in driving the global economy [4], [5]. The considerable development in service sector is observed in advanced countries as well as in emerging economies [6], [7]. In 2017, for instance, trade in services contributed 29% of the total of international trade where as 73% of total world outward foreign direct investment (FDI) was contributed by the service sector. Apart from the developed world, the service sector has seen significant outward FDI contribution from the developing countries [8]. Further, recent studies show that the service sector in some countries, particular USA, accounts for 80% of the gross domestic product (GDP) [9]. Despite such growth and development in internationalization of services, the main focus of international literature has been on the manufacturing while services sector has attracted less attention in international business research [10], [11]. Previous studies that have investigated internationalization of corporations from the construction sector, which is a prominent industry within the service sector, are even more limited [2], [12], [13].

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Though previous researches have meaningfully contributed to our understanding of the motives, competitive advantages and locational considerations underpinning the internationalization of corporations, very few studies have examined the association of these factors with respect to a corporation's size or its international experience [12]. Few scholars [14] identified that the propensity to internationalize increased with the size of corporation, while a few other scholars did not find this to be the case [15]. Lee *et al.* [16] identified that host-country effects are more significant for large firms than for small firms. In addition, other researchers [17] concluded that the tendency to internationalization intensifies with the foreign experience of corporations, whereas Estrin *et al.* [18] and others scholars found the exact opposite. A survey conducted by Aulakh *et al.* [19] shows that, in emerging economies like Brazil, Mexico and Chile, increase in the international experience escalated internationalization. Hennart [20] states that multinational corporations with greater international experience get better resources and are more flexible to change as compared to the counterparts having low experience, whereas other scholars found the opposite [12]. Hence, some wide-ranging views are put forward in previous research with little consensus on any specific approach or view point regarding the association between corporate size, international experience and internationalization [12], [15].

This study researched the internationalization of services particularly motives and competitive advantages of construction service corporations (CSCs), which specialize in multiple fields such as civil, petrochemical, mechanical and electrical work and are based in Pakistan's emerging economy. Pakistan, the research location is gradually becoming an important economic force in Asia because of its booming service sector and thriving SMEs [21]. Yet, there is limited research on service firms from Pakistan particularly those in the construction industry [22], [23]. The features of internationalization examined in this study are: motives; firm-specific competitive advantages; home country-specific competitive advantages and location factors considered before moving into foreign country. After reviewing the extant literature on internationalization, the anecdotal evidence on competitive advantages in internationalization provided the impetus to put forward the following four research questions for empirical testing:

RQ1. Do the motives of CSCs, for internationalization, vary significantly according to their size and international experience?

RQ2. Do firm-specific competitive advantages of CSCs vary significantly according to their size and international experience in undertaking the internationalization?

RQ3. Do the home country-specific competitive advantages of CSCs vary significantly according to size and international experience in undertaking the internationalization?

RQ4. Do the locational factors considered by CSCs before venturing into foreign country vary significantly according to their size and international experience?

Using the data from 84 corporations, this paper analyzes whether or not corporate size and corporate international experience have an impact on the responses given for the motives, firm related and home country related competitive advantages and locational considerations for internationalization. The aim of this study is to contribute to the body of knowledge on internationalization by adding further information on the association between corporation size, corporation international experience, motives and competitive advantages in internationalization. Furthermore, it adds to the scarce literature on the internationalization of construction corporations in emerging economies and the service sector.

A. INTERNATIONALIZATION THEORIES AND MODELS

Internationalization is defined as the procedure of firm leaving its origin market searching for business or operations across borders [24]. With a specific end goal to illustrate the theoretical underpinning of the motives and competitive advantages in internationalization, it is vital to discuss the relevant internationalization theories furnished by various scholars. This paper briefly discusses four internationalization models used in the conceptual framework of the study (Table 1). The reason for using these four theoretical models is that they constitute the majority of frameworks that researchers have utilized to analyze the internationalization of corporations in a broad array of services ranging from construction [25], consulting [12] and random services [26].

The theory of Entrepreneurship emphasizes that top management is the primary driver of company's internationalization [27]. Oviatt and McDougall discovered that global entrepreneurship is a mix of proactive, creative and risk-taking behavior that crosses domestic outskirts and is envisioned to build value in corporations [27]. Particularly, the two constructs of entrepreneurship are: (a) openings or chances and (b) people who endeavor to adventure these chances. Henceforth, individual and firm entrepreneurial behavior is viewed as the root for international market penetration.

The Eclectic Paradigm presented by Dunning, suggests a valuable analytical model to explain the trends for the corporations opting for expansion beyond their borders [28]. Dunning proposes various factors influencing a corporation's decision to go international in terms of ownership, location and internalization advantages. Ownership advantages include firm-specific intangible resources particular industry-related advantages, and country-related advantages. Location advantages are identified as those advantages which are particular to a specific host country, including common assets, labor costs, duty and non-levy hindrances, physical infrastructure and size of local markets. Internalization advantages are those benefits that arise from intra-firm markets, by passing arms' length transactions [29].

TABLE 1. Usage of theoretical models in the conceptual framework of the study.

Theories/Models	Key components for internationalization	Usage in framework
International entrepreneurship (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994)	Driven by top management Combination of innovative, proactive and risk-seeking behavior that crosses national borders to create value Incorporates individual as well as corporate entrepreneurship	Motives
Eclectic paradigm (Dunning, 1977)	Ownership advantages - traits and specialties include firm-specific intangible resources, particular industry-specific and country-specific advantages Location advantages related to those specific to host country Internalization advantages - transfer pricing and efficiency in marketing and management that arise from intra-firm markets, bypassing arm's length transactions	Firm specific Location
Resource-based view (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991)	Key resources which are non-substitutable, inimitable, rare and valuable Tangible assets, including land, buildings, materials, money; and intangible assets, including competencies, knowledge, capabilities, attitudes, relationships and reputations	Firm specific
Diamond model (Porter, 1990)	Home base provides basic factors for competitive advantage Four determinants: factor conditions; home demand conditions; environment for competition and firm strategy; related and supportive industries Affected by two external factors: government + chance events	Home country

The Resource-based theory suggests that a corporation needs key assets that are non-substitutable, matchless, uncommon and profitable for internationalization and to be fruitful in the worldwide business [30]. The assets of the corporation may be distributed into substantial and impalpable resources. The substantial resources incorporate land, structures, cash, materials, whereas the impalpable resources comprise of abilities, information, capacities, demeanors, connections and standing of the corporation [31].

The Diamond Model emphasizes that the national home base of a corporation assumes a key part in deciding the degree to which it is probably going to accomplish competitive advantage on a global scale [32]. This home base provides basic factors, which support or hinder the corporation from building competitive advantages in global competitive environment. Porter [32] distinguishes four determinants i.e. factor conditions (for example land, usual assets, and workforce), home demand conditions (for example magnitude, configuration, trend and development), environment for competition and corporate strategy (for example organizational and managerial behavior), and related industries (for example assistance of executives and specialized workforce, sharing of practices and network arrangement).

Among the current theories and models, there is no obvious comparison or clarification regarding which of the theories is suitable for internationalization [33]. All theories or models have their own pros and cons; hence, to clarify the intricate phenomenon of internationalization, researchers propose the integration of various theoretical models so that a better understanding of the phenomenon can be achieved [12]. The present study, therefore, uses a mixture of related theories to develop the conceptual model instead of utilizing a single model approach, as used previously to study internationalization of service corporations of specific nationalities (Figure 1, Table 1).

The above mentioned four theoretical models constitute the majority of frameworks that have been utilized to examine the internationalization of firms in a broad array of industries ranging from construction [34], [35], construction consultants [12], food retailing [36], computer software [37] and services [38], [39]. Other key theories for internationalization include the born global theory [27] and the product life cycle theory [40]. However, both these theories are innovation and production related. Construction is considered as a non-innovative sector and has a discouraging record in introducing innovative design and productions, with corporations not competing on innovation [2].

This study now uses the literature above and applies relevant aspects of it to the four features of internationalization. The conceptual framework analyzes: 1) motives, using the International Entrepreneurship construct; 2) firm-specific competitive advantages, using Resource-Based View and

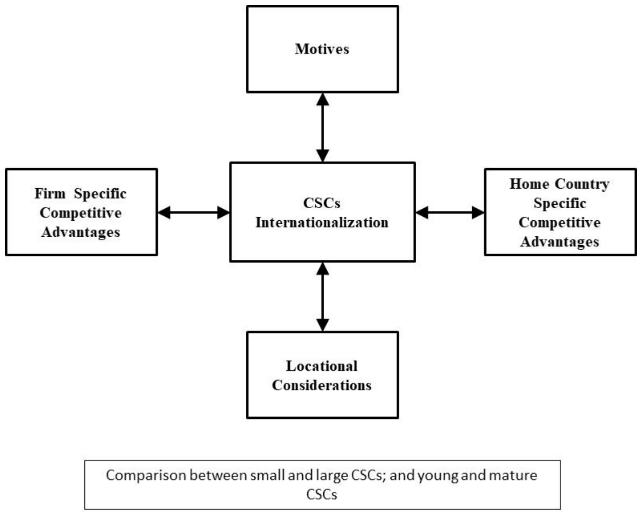

FIGURE 1. Conceptual framework.

Eclectic Paradigm; 3) home country-specific competitive advantages, using Diamond Model; and 4) location factors, using Eclectic Paradigm (Table 1).

B. FACTORS INFLUENCING THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF SERVICE CORPORATIONS

The impalpable nature of services and the unfeasibility of inventory in service business are the causes because of which there are several distinctive variances between the internationalization of service corporations and manufacturing corporations [41]. The construction industry is mainly a service industry [42], which confronts the same problems in internationalization, as those frequently faced by other service sectors, to be specific: inseparability, impalpability, perishability and heterogeneity of services [22], [24].

C. MOTIVES

The previous literature uncovers that the conduct of top administration of the organizations assumes a focal part in the international expansion of corporations [16]. Chen *et al.* [2] suggested that a corporation internationalizes to achieve healthy profit margins. Instead, Di Gregorio *et al.* [43] argued that corporations internationalize to exploit plenty of market openings accessible over the outskirts and to gain complete advantage of the foreign countries' assets or resources. Growth of the business areas, diversifying the risk and countering the local business environments, are presented as some of the key motives of small service corporations' internationalization [16], [44]. Some scholars in their study, found that high local rivalry is a motivating force for corporations to explore the opportunities overseas, arguing that the higher the local market competition, the lesser the profit margins in the domestic market and the greater the probability of a corporation to grow internationally [45]. Large service corporations have also been found to have a higher tendency to expand overseas in order to enhance the usage of spare resources [2].

D. FIRM-SPECIFIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Numerous researchers have recognized that a corporation's inimitable collection of assets (such as land, repute, innovation knowledge, brand equity and equipment) and employees who have skills (such as in handling workforce, marketing and coordination) are some of the firm specific competitive advantages that facilitate internationalization [31]. A solid household or international reputation may give a competitive advantage to a construction service corporation when venturing overseas [2], [12]. Seymour [25] found the British construction service corporations that expanded abroad consider their administration skills, technical information, aptitude, domestic repute and experience of overseas projects as their key firm-specific competitive advantages. Rottig and de Oliveira [46] highlighted that large corporations with the strongest workforce are destined to expand into worldwide markets. The ability to build sustainable contacts and networks with clients is also considered as a critical advantage for the international expansion of construction service corporations [47], [48]. Additionally, the utilization of foreign contacts to undertake internationalization can be more useful to small service corporations by strengthening their internationalization competencies than large service corporations [49].

E. HOME COUNTRY-SPECIFIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

The previous literature on home country-specific competitive advantages depicts that international expansion of corporations is driven by the environment and attributes of their country of origin [50]. Paul and Benito [51] concluded that there is positive correlation between the level of monetary advancement of the country of origin and foreign direct investment (FDI) of the corporation. Rasiah *et al.* [52] found that the patronage from the domestic government is a crucial factor which aids the internationalization of both manufacturing and service corporations. Öz [35] concluded that the international expansion of Turkish construction service corporations was the outcome of quick development of their local market and responding to Turkish and other international contenders operating in Turkey. Other home country related advantages, as recognized additionally by Abdul-Aziz *et al.* [12] in their investigation of international construction related consultants within the Malaysian housing development industry, are political governance and a multicultural staff. Seymour [25] acknowledged local market attributes (for example size, growth), accessibility of technical support through the consultants and helpful policies of the local government as home country related competitive advantages of British construction service corporations.

F. LOCATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

As far as the locational considerations are concerned, some scholars have identified that service corporations venture overseas to encounter idle demands in the foreign country, intermediaries for such demand comprise populace development [53], growth of market [54] and size of market [12].

TABLE 2. Profile of the surveyed CSCs.

Specializations	Total CSCs that have internationalized	Responses received (No.)	Percentage to total (%)	Small CSCs	Large CSCs	Young CSCs	Mature CSCs
Civil	40	23	27	13	10	09	14
Petrochemical	19	13	16	05	08	04	09
Mechanical and electrical	21	16	19	09	07	10	06
Multi specializations	46	32	38	11	21	17	15
Total	126	84	100	38	46	40	44

Other scholars have identified a range of hazards and uncertainties in the host country that may obstruct the expansion of corporations overseas, to include policies on foreign direct investment (FDI) [55], technological capability of service corporations [56], political and economic stability [57], geographical distance and culture [58], bilateral agreement with home country [59], currency exchange rate [60], labor, materials and equipment costs [9], and competition in the industry [61]. Scholars also argue that cultural distance is a critical factor which construction service corporations have to consider before venturing overseas [4]. As a result, construction service corporations with less international experience generally select culturally similar foreign markets [2].

II. METHODOLOGY

In view of the research questions presented earlier and the foregoing literature review, a structured questionnaire was produced, taking into account the factors identified in the preceding discourse on motives; competitive advantages related to firm, home and host country and locational considerations.

A. SAMPLE

A sample of the population was taken from a sampling frame based on the Construction Association of Pakistan (CAP) consisting of 126 Pakistan-based international construction service corporations. All these corporations were registered with the CAP, which is the statutory body that issues licenses to corporations for carrying out architectural, engineering and construction business in and outside Pakistan. In early 2015 the questionnaire, accompanied by an endorsing cover letter from the CAP chairman to give legitimacy to the research [62], was mailed to 126 corporations in total. The questionnaires were returned through email, post and collection in person by the researchers. Some 87 responses were returned, three partially filled questionnaires were discarded, leaving 84 useable questionnaires, representing a 66.7% response rate (Table 2).

B. MEASUREMENT OF THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

In order to ensure validity of the survey instrument, a combination of scales developed and used by previous researchers on internationalization of construction service corporations were adopted [12], [25], [63]. The survey instrument was also pre-tested with Head of the CAP, and four officials in charge for the business development in international construction service corporations in Pakistan, with a view to achieve face validity for construction corporations. Furthermore, in this study, 80% of the respondents were top management officials in their firms (including CEO, Managing Director, Director Business Development, Chairman, Head Business Development and General Manager) while the rest of the respondents (20%) were middle management (Senior Project Managers). All the respondents had significant international experience and held key positions regarding international decision making of their corporation. All respondents were therefore deemed to be in a position to provide significant information that pertains to their corporation's internationalization. To reduce the Common Method Variance (CMV) bias, participants of the survey were assured of keeping their privacy and namelessness in order to get honest responses and minimize the error of wrong answers to any of the questions [64].

C. DATA ANALYSIS

The responses were categorized according to corporate size (large or small) and international experience (young or mature) in order to find out the major differences in their determinants of internationalization. There are numerous classifications for corporate size and international experience globally, which vary by country, sector and even time e.g. large corporations are often seen as having more than 100, 250 and 300 employees or having revenue of more than 40 million USD or 50 million USD; similarly, mature corporations are seen as having experience more than 2 years or 5 years. This study considers large corporations having employees more than 250, whereas mature corporations are

TABLE 3. Motives of internationalization.

Variables	MR		Sig (2-tailed)	MR		Sig (2-tailed)
	Small CSCs	Large CSCs		Young CSCs	Mature CSCs	
Top management decision	22.37	20.78	.631	20.80	22.14	.684
Response to clients need	21.13	21.80	.852	21.73	21.30	.905
Enhance the usage of corporation resources	20.18	22.59	.452	23.63	19.57	.202
Growing overseas markets	20.76	22.11	.690	22.63	20.48	.523
Improve the profit margins	22.63	20.57	.536	23.00	20.14	.389
Small home market	23.55	19.80	.290	25.53	17.84	.030**
Competitive pressure in the home market	23.24	20.07	.372	22.63	20.48	.544
Sustain corporation growth	21.18	21.76	.851	20.83	22.11	.673
Instable work environment in home country	20.18	22.59	.498	24.75	18.55	.079*
Diversify the risk associated with domestic market	24.03	19.41	.197	22.40	20.68	.630
Less psychic distance between home and host country	21.74	21.30	.904	23.73	19.48	.233

MR=Mean Rank, **Significant at 0.05, *Significant at 0.1

seen as having international experience of more than 5 years based on criteria of Pakistan Small Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA), for which same criteria has been used by scholars [12], [65] and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

The collected data was examined utilizing the IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) statistics. At first, the Shapiro-Wilk test was applied to investigate the normality of data. The outcomes demonstrated that the data was not normally distributed thus requiring the utilization of a non-parametric test. Therefore, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U Test was utilized to compare the scores given by corporations of different size (i.e. small and large) and foreign experience (i.e. young and mature). The same research approach has been used by previous scholars for investigation of differences among the firms [12].

III. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. MOTIVES OF INTERNATIONALIZATION

The first phase of examination explored the motives of internationalization thus addressing the RQ1. The survey questionnaire included eleven items concerning with the internal and external motives [12]. The professionals were solicited to rate the significance of both internal and external motives utilizing a Likert scale (Not important having value 1; Very important having value 5). The outcomes of findings are displayed in Table 3.

The obtained results show couple of noteworthy contrasts in responses given by corporations of various foreign experiences for motives of internationalization. Two factors were viewed as more important by young corporations than mature corporations: small home market (MR: 25.53 for the young corporations and MR: 17.84 for the mature corporations with sig-value 0.030) and instable work environment in home country (MR: 24.75 for the young corporations and MR: 18.55 for the mature corporations with sig-value 0.079). Conversely, no significant differences were identified regarding motives of internationalization, amongst corporations of varied sizes.

For young CSCs, the dearth of work because of small home markets and unfavorable government policies may mean early failure. This restriction in the meantime turns into an opportunity for the young CSCs to hunt for new marketplaces to conquer the vulnerability pervasive in the local markets. Notably, small home markets that result in competitive pressure are viewed as an effective enticement influencing young CSCs to go into overseas markets. Due to the uncertain work environment in the small native market (which in a developing country like Pakistan is unavoidable), the only option remaining for the survival of such corporations is often to internationalize into overseas markets [66]. Similarly, previous studies have also found that due to the prevalence of confrontational business environments in small domestic markets, the only way for the young corporations

TABLE 4. Firm-specific competitive advantages that enabled surveyed CSCs to internationalize.

Variables	MR		Sig (2-tailed)	MR		Sig (2-tailed)
	Small CSCs	Large CSCs		Young CSCs	Mature CSCs	
Home-grown reputation	18.29	24.15	.062*	21.15	21.82	.831
Foreign reputation	15.71	26.28	.003***	24.53	18.75	.106
Foreign contacts and networks	20.71	22.15	.670	21.80	21.23	.863
Home-grown contacts and networks	18.24	24.20	.082*	20.20	22.68	.477
Skilled workforce	21.29	21.67	.906	24.50	18.77	.076*
Knowledge of foreign market	17.92	24.46	.065*	21.60	21.41	.957
Plentiful assets and gears	20.05	22.70	.444	20.13	22.75	.446
Superiority of services	20.42	22.39	.572	22.35	20.73	.648
Wide range of services	19.47	23.17	.293	19.45	23.36	.269
Foreign experience of the management	17.05	25.17	.026**	23.70	19.50	.247
Large financial capital	18.18	24.24	.098*	19.55	23.27	.308

MR=Mean Rank, ***Significant at 0.01, **Significant at 0.05, *Significant at 0.1

to ensure continued existence and further development, is to expand into overseas markets [9].

B. FIRM-SPECIFIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

The second phase of analysis explored the firm-specific competitive advantages of investigated CSCs (RQ2). Eleven items were taken into consideration in order to measure the differences in firm-specific competitive advantages of the CSCs [12], [63]. The respondents were requested to rate these items utilizing Likert scale (Not important having value 1; Very important having value 5). The findings for firm-specific competitive advantages of CSCs are presented in Table 4.

The results regarding firm-specific competitive advantages indicate significant difference between the scores of large and small corporations on the following six factors: home-grown reputation (MR = 24.15 for large corporations and MR = 18.29 for the small corporations with sig-value 0.062), foreign reputation (MR = 26.28 for large corporations and MR = 15.71 for the small corporations with sig-value 0.003), home-grown contacts and networks (MR = 24.20 for large corporations and MR = 18.24 for the small corporations with sig-value 0.082), knowledge of foreign market (MR = 24.46 for large corporations and MR = 17.92 for the small corporations with sig-value 0.065), foreign experience of the management (MR =25.17 for large corporations and MR = 17.05 for the small corporations with sig-value 0.026) and large financial capital (MR = 24.24 for large corporations and MR = 18.18 for the small corporations with sig-value 0.098). Conversely, slight significant difference appeared among the groups of varied international experience, as young corporations recognized only one variable that is skilled workforce (MR = 24.50 for young corporations and MR = 18.77 for the mature corporations with sig-value 0.076) as more important than mature corporations.

Large CSCs tend to undertake the large development projects in the home country and are therefore considered to be more reliable service providers. Due to the high frequency of undertaking these developments at domestic level, along with the local as well foreign anchor players, they develop contacts and gain reputation. Hence, based on home-grown reputation and networks, they tend to have greater advantages towards securing projects in global markets compared to the small CSCs. Although foreign market knowledge and international experience of management are regarded as important factors for corporate expansion [25], it may not be as necessary for the small CSCs' internationalization [12]. Despite extensive knowledge of the market and prior international experience of management being useful, it is not a prohibiting factor, as evidenced by respondents affiliated to small corporations, who may have started their internationalization without any prior international experience by management or extensive knowledge of the foreign market.

TABLE 5. Home country-specific competitive advantages that enabled CSCs to internationalize.

Variables	MR		Sig (2-tailed)	MR		Sig (2-tailed)
	Small CSCs	Large CSCs		Young CSCs	Mature CSCs	
Sufficient supply of trained workforce	20.24	22.54	.516	20.30	22.59	.517
Multicultural workforce	19.66	23.02	.335	20.08	22.80	.434
Response to domestic corporations operating overseas	21.97	21.11	.812	23.38	19.80	.325
Response to foreign corporations operating in home market	16.61	25.54	.014**	21.70	21.32	.917
Fast economic growth of home country	15.16	26.74	.001***	26.45	17.00	.009***
Home country's image as a capable developing country	19.76	22.93	.379	19.70	23.14	.339
Well-developed supportive industries	20.03	22.72	.449	20.80	22.14	.706
Unbalanced market situation	24.28	18.13	.091*	25.90	17.50	.020**
Government's support	20.16	22.61	.498	23.25	19.91	.354
Availability of financial funding from domestic banks and institutions	17.21	25.04	.028**	22.20	20.86	.706
Political leadership promotes internationalization	19.50	23.15	.286	21.93	21.11	.812

MR=Mean Rank, ***Significant at 0.01, **Significant at 0.05, *Significant at 0.1

The possession of large financial capital is a proxy for the size of the corporation. It obviates the need of international corporations to approach banks for financing, thereby protecting the corporations from fluctuations in the interest rates. This research discovers that the possession of large financial capital is a significant pre-condition for the large CSCs in their pursuit of internationalization [14]. Small CSCs avoid the risks in foreign markets; hence they enter the market through less risky modes and are not involved in heavy investment projects. Thus, in such cases, small CSCs may only need limited financial capital to operate overseas. However, small CSCs, despite lacking in home-grown and foreign reputation, market knowledge and financial capital could still internationalize based on their experienced and skillful workforce, and their strong desire to grow outside the domestic boundaries.

The higher importance attached by the young CSCs to having an experienced and skilled workforce, can be credited to the fact that young corporations being fresh in the international market, have greater challenges compared to the mature corporations in their bid to sustain their existence in the hyper-competitive and challenging international markets [17]. The ultimate support a service corporation could garner for its sustainability and existence is through its skilled human resource and therefore it's not surprising to see that young CSCs have been found to attach greater importance to having an experienced and skillful workforce compared to the more mature CSCs.

C. HOME COUNTRY-SPECIFIC COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

The third phase of analysis explored the home country-specific competitive advantages of the investigated construction service corporations thus addressing the RQ3. Altogether, eleven items were adopted from previous research in order to measure the home country related competitive advantages of CSCs [25], [63]. The respondents were requested to rate these items utilizing Likert scale (Not important having value 1; Very important having value 5). The findings for home country-specific competitive advantages of CSCs are presented in Table 5.

The findings indicate that there seemed to be significant differences in the replies provided by corporations of varied sizes and international experience regarding home country-specific competitive advantages. For corporations of dissimilar sizes, large corporations considered three factors as more important than small corporations, which involved response to foreign corporations operating in home country (MR = 25.54 for large corporations and MR = 16.61 for the small corporations with sig-value 0.014), fast economic growth of home country (MR = 26.74 for large corporations and MR = 15.16 for the small corporations with sig-value 0.001) and availability of financial funding from domestic banks and institutions (MR = 25.04 for large corporations and MR = 17.21 for the small corporations with sig-value 0.028). Conversely, only one factor was considered more important by small corporations than large corporations, namely: unbalanced market situation (MR = 24.28 for small corporations and MR = 18.13 for the large corporations with sig-value 0.091). With respect to corporations of varied international experience, young corporations considered two factors as more important than mature corporations, namely: fast economic growth of home country (MR = 26.45 for young corporations and MR = 17.00 for mature corporations with sig-value 0.009) and unbalanced market situation (MR = 25.90 for young corporations and MR = 17.50 for the mature corporations with sig-value 0.020).

Regarding the response to foreign corporations who operate in the home market, the opportunity to work alongside global anchors in the domestic market leads to good professional ties between the foreign competitors and large corporations who are engaged in large projects. This ultimately enables large corporations to develop contacts and long-term relationships with the foreign corporations which may result in securing overseas projects based on these networks [35]. It appears that the chance to work with international corporations may have facilitated the large CSCs to grow good professional relations which eventually led to smooth entry into international marketplaces.

The small and mature CSCs do not consider growth of their home country to be that important towards internationalization. Small and young CSCs are influenced more by the unbalanced market situations of the home country markets. It is normal practice that the majority of projects in the home country are awarded to large domestic corporations or global anchor players from foreign countries. This reality reduces the number of contracts awarded to small and young corporations in the domestic market, thereby creating competitive pressure for small and young CSCs in domestic market. Such unbalanced domestic market situation becomes the driver for these corporations to expand into overseas markets [9], [25].

Large corporations are able to get financial support from national banks owing to their healthy track record in the market and reliability, established with the financial organizations over a period of time. On the other hand, smaller corporations have to either depend on their own financial reserves or discover borrowing opportunities from international banks in the overseas. The attitude of local institutions to the small and young corporations can be illustrated by issues such as the saturated condition of local markets and macro-economic situations of the local country. In circumstances where these situations are not very encouraging, banks and institutions may resort to risk aversion thus merely lending to those corporations which can arrange sufficient guarantees, which results in the small and young corporations being denied lending. The findings of this study correspond with those of other researchers investigating the lack of availability of financial institutions' and government support and their effect in restricting internationalization of small service corporations [63], [67].

D. LOCATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The last phase of analysis explored the location considerations of the surveyed CSCs (RQ4). Seventeen items were taken into consideration in order to measure the locational considerations of CSCs [12], [16]. The respondents were requested to rate the seventeen items utilizing Likert scale (Not important having value 1; Very important having value 5). The results of location factors considered by CSCs before venturing in overseas are presented in Table 6.

The findings received concerning the locational considerations show that young corporations regarded six factors to be more important than mature corporations did. These factors included economic stability (MR = 24.53 for young corporations and MR = 18.75 for the mature corporations with sig-value 0.082), geographical distance (MR = 25.65 for young corporations and MR = 17.73 for the mature corporations with sig-value 0.027), culture and language similarity (MR = 25.58 for young corporations and MR = 17.80 for the mature corporations with sig-value 0.029), growth of market (MR = 25.28 for young corporations and MR = 18.07 for the mature corporations with sig-value 0.043), size of market MR = 25.25 for young corporations and MR = 18.09 for the mature corporations with sig-value 0.041) and labor cost (MR = 25.17 for young corporations and MR = 17.05 for the mature corporations with sig-value 0.021). Conversely, there appeared slight significant difference among the corporations of varied sizes as large corporations regarded only one factor to be more important than small corporations did, namely: material and equipment costs (MR = 24.54 for large corporations and MR = 17.82 for the small corporations with sig-value 0.064).

The higher importance attached to cheaper equipment costs, by the larger CSCs, can be illustrated by the fact that large CSCs working in international markets tend to primarily procure equipment from local markets. Kazaz and Ulubeyli [68] also argued that, most of the times, CSCs working in international markets normally purchase equipment and materials from local markets. Therefore, higher costs associated with rental or even purchase of the equipment may have an impact on the projected overall net profit margins being targeted by a CSC in its internationalization plans. This may result in a CSC abandoning the idea of exporting business overseas. Conversely, it could be argued that smaller CSCs are mostly concerned with the specialized jobs which most of the times do not require heavy equipment; this may therefore be the reason why small CSCs attach less importance to lower equipment costs as compared to large CSCs [9].

In addition, young CSCs attached more importance to the three locational factors, namely: "economic stability", "strong growth rate of the market" and "potential size of the market" compared to the mature CSCs. It should be noted

TABLE 6. Locational factors considered before venturing into overseas.

Variables	MR		Sig (2-tailed)	MR		Sig (2-tailed)
	Small CSCs	Large CSCs		Young CSCs	Mature CSCs	
Political stability	19.87	22.85	.410	22.55	20.55	.578
Economic stability	23.63	19.74	.243	24.53	18.75	.082*
Geographical distance between host and home country	20.53	22.30	.626	25.65	17.73	.027**
Flexible foreign direct investment policies	19.63	23.04	.347	23.08	20.07	.406
Quality of infrastructure	22.05	21.04	.778	22.00	21.05	.789
Culture and language similarity	21.55	21.46	.979	25.58	17.80	.029**
Currency exchange rate	23.21	20.09	.370	22.85	20.27	.458
Bilateral agreement with home country	20.47	22.35	.603	21.80	21.23	.873
Competition in the market	21.39	21.59	.958	20.08	22.80	.451
Growth of market	19.58	23.09	.320	25.28	18.07	.043**
Size of market	21.61	21.41	.954	25.25	18.09	.041**
Potential for the profit generation	20.97	21.93	.774	23.50	19.68	.253
Potential for future projects	22.00	21.09	.791	23.08	20.07	.382
Visa requirement	21.50	21.50	1.000	23.23	19.93	.354
Labor laws	19.24	23.37	.247	20.60	22.32	.629
Material and equipment cost	17.82	24.54	.064*	21.13	21.84	.843
Labor cost	22.53	20.57	.578	25.17	17.05	.021**

MR=Mean Rank, **Significant at 0.05, *Significant at 0.1

that these three variables reflect the increasing demand and the capacity of market to accommodate new entrants and the risk associated with foreign markets. All the three factors are closely associated with each other and therefore threat perception corresponding to one factor will increase the overall risk perception corresponding to all three factors. Ahmed et al. [69] claimed that in a market with higher demand for a corporation's product or services and size sufficient enough to support the new corporation's entry into the market, the risk associated with such market will be considered low. This explains why young CSCs attach more importance to these demand related variables as these variables suggest a reduction in uncertainties for the new entrants, making younger CSCs comfortable with such business propositions.

Young CSCs attached more importance to the factors 'geographical distance' and "cultural and language similarity" in comparison to the mature CSCs. The difference between young and mature corporations on these two factors could be explained using multiple grounds. However, this study borrows support from the literature on 'uncertainty and experience' to discern some of the reasons for this difference. Due to the fact that young corporations possess less confidence in dealing with uncertainties compared to mature corporations, they tend not to expand to locations significantly far from their home country because of the resulting uncertainties and inherent associated risks. One of the inherent risks associated with increased geographic distance among home and host country is cultural risk, which was also identified as a potential risk by Kraus *et al.* [70].

Another locational factor where a significant difference was observed between young and mature CSCs is 'low labor cost'. Young CSCs, due to their pre-mature phase of internationalization, tend to get involved in small or specialized jobs in foreign markets or act as a sub-service providers

TABLE 7. Significant factors driving the internationalization of CSC's.

Factors	Varied size		Varied international experience	
	Small CSCs	Large CSCs	Young CSCs	Mature CSCs
Motives				
Small home market	-	-	✓	x
Instable work environment in home country	-	-	✓	x
Firm-specific competitive advantages				
Home-grown reputation	x	✓	-	-
Foreign reputation	x	✓	-	-
Skilled workforce	-	-	✓	x
Home-grown contacts and networks	x	✓	-	-
Knowledge of foreign market	x	✓	-	-
Foreign experience of management	x	✓	-	-
Large financial capital	x	✓	-	-
Home country-specific competitive advantages				
Response to foreign corporations operating in home market	x	✓	-	-
Fast economic growth of home country	x	✓	✓	x
Unbalanced market situation	✓	x	✓	x
Availability of financial funding	x	✓	-	-
Locational considerations				
Economic stability	-	-	✓	x
Geographical distance between host and home country	-	-	✓	x
Culture and language similarity with home country	-	-	✓	x
Growth of market	-	-	✓	x
Size of market	-	-	✓	x
Material and equipment cost	x	✓	✓	x
Labor cost	-	-	✓	x

✓ = More important, x = Less important

(piggybacking) in order to gain knowledge and experience within uncertain foreign markets [16], [20]. In this perspective, young CSCs are usually seen as specialty service providers and their specialized jobs for most of the times are labor intensive rather than equipment intensive. This may explain why the young CSCs attached more importance to 'low labor cost' than mature ones. One plausible deduction could be made from the explanation: most of the young CSCs usually provide their services in the category of 'normal service works' instead of 'heavy service works' due to the latter being worker as well as equipment intensive. Furthermore, this finding supports the explanation provided in earlier paragraphs with respect to the difference between large and small CSCs with regards to 'cheaper equipment cost'. The early finding related to larger CSCs attaching more importance to 'cheaper equipment cost' indicating the fact that larger CSCs are more concerned with the equipment rentals and purchasing costs as the majority of the work by large CSCs require heavy plant and equipment. On the contrary, young CSCs are mostly involved in labor intensive jobs and hence attach more importance to "low labor costs."

A brief summary of the findings has been presented in Table 7 below.

IV. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

A. CONCLUSION RELATED TO THE MAIN AIM

This research contributes to the literature on international services by adding to the empirical studies on the relationship between corporate size, international experience and internationalization. To study the internationalization processes of corporations, one needs to understand their size and international experience which are important dimensions that influence various factors underlying the motives, firm and home country related competitive advantages and locational considerations varying with the size and international experience of corporations.

Entering foreign markets is one of the strategies which may help construction service corporations to expand their businesses and operations overseas thereby overcoming declining demand in domestic markets. Young construction service corporations have a reactive approach in seeking opportunities in foreign markets. Small domestic markets and unstable business environments in home countries are the main external motives that push young construction service corporations to expand their operations abroad. Large construction service corporations have more advantages in terms of firm-specific competitive assets and local country support compared to their smaller counterparts. Young construction service corporations have more advantages in terms of home country support and they give more thought to locational considerations compared to their mature counterparts.

B. THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In relation to the theoretical contribution of this study, the statistical investigation of large construction service corporations provides significant credence to the Eclectic Paradigm and Resource-based view in relation to firm-specific competitive advantages, and Eclectic Paradigm and Diamond Model in relation to home-country specific competitive advantages. On the other side, young construction service corporations provide significant support to the Entrepreneurship theory for top management roles in internationalization, the Diamond Model in relation to home country-specific competitive advantages, and Eclectic Paradigm with respect to locational considerations.

The findings of the research have managerial relevance with several implications for practice. The study provides insights for managers in construction service corporations of different size and international experience on critical weaknesses associated with size and international experience of corporations which they need to address and overcome while undertaking internationalization. In order to internationalize in competitive global markets, small construction service corporations have to overcome their firm related and home country related weaknesses. Small construction service corporations may enhance their firm related competitive advantages by developing the social and business networks with the local as well as foreign anchor players. This can be attained by making joint ventures with international reputed firms in foreign as well as national market. Furthermore, government and home country backing is direly needed to promote internationalization of young and small service corporations, which are quite susceptible due to lack of opportunities in local markets and lack of financial support from local banks and institutions. Partnering with host country corporations and engaging local people in foreign projects may help young service corporations overcome locational factors, such as culture and language similarity, geographical closeness, local labor availability and mobilization of resources.

C. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

Considering that this study is exploratory in nature and focuses on construction corporations from a single emerging country, generalization and applications of its findings should be made with caution. This research didn't explore the differences in terms of area of specialization of firms. Further research needs to cover more service industries and economies before any broad generalizations can be established. Nonetheless, the insights from this study would be very useful for the corporations belonging to other service industries such as consulting, architecture, housing, engineering, telecoms, mining, power, oil and gas, provided they share the same characteristics in terms of being location-specific and self-sufficient in nature, in their internationalization processes. Further, the results of this study may hold valid in the backdrop of other developing economies with the similar demographics e.g. India, Bangladesh and Turkey. All these countries share similarities with Pakistan in the domains of economic development, culture and inclination of contractors to expand in Middle Eastern countries. Finally, this study recognizes the potential for CMV bias, but efforts were made to limit the possibility of this occurring, as earlier noted.

This study's findings indicate that the explanatory power of some models is limited in addressing the firm and home country related competitive advantages of small construction service corporations as well as locational considerations of mature construction service corporations. This research calls for further longitudinal researches to be conducted in order to deeply examine the internationalization behavior of small and mature service corporations and to develop a more nuanced and broader theoretical model which takes into account the antecedent variables related to the small and mature construction service corporations identified in this paper. The future studies may also investigate the moderating effect of internationalization experience on the association between motives, competitive advantages with firms' internationalization performance.

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