

**INTERNATIONAL MARKETING AND START-UP SUCCESS: THE
MEDIATING ROLE OF BUSINESS INCUBATORS AND STRATEGIC
PLANNING**

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Abstract

The study investigates the mediating role of strategic planning between international marketing and start-up success, emphasizing how strategic management processes enhance business outcomes in dynamic global markets. Drawing upon the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, the research adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional approach to explore the relationship among these constructs using data collected from 312 start-up founders and managers operating across various industries. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was employed to assess measurement reliability, discriminant validity, and structural relationships. The results reveal that international marketing significantly influences start-up success, confirming that global market orientation strengthens firm performance through enhanced customer knowledge, adaptability, and brand visibility. Furthermore, strategic planning exhibits a positive effect on start-up success, supporting the argument that structured planning enables effective resource allocation and strategic responsiveness. Most importantly, strategic planning partially mediates the

relationship between international marketing and start-up success, demonstrating that the pathway from international market engagement to sustained growth depends significantly on a firm's planning competency. The study contributes to the literature by integrating international marketing and strategic management perspectives within the entrepreneurial context, highlighting how proactive planning transforms market opportunities into competitive advantages. For practitioners, the findings highlight the necessity of developing adaptive strategic frameworks that align with global expansion goals. Future research should extend this framework to longitudinal designs, explore digital marketing dimensions, and examine environmental dynamism as a potential moderator to deepen understanding of sustainable start-up performance in evolving international markets.

Keywords: International Marketing, Start-Up Success, Business Incubators and Strategic Planning

Introduction

Modern entrepreneurial activities are being conducted in a more complex and interconnected business environment that has been characterized by a shift in consumer behaviors, digitalization, and stiff international competition. The interaction between strategic resources and market reach is an issue of great criticality as new companies move to the scale-up after ideation. In fact, the recent academic literature highlights that success in a start-up cannot be typically ascribed to one factor; instead, it is a product of a set of abilities, external connections, and institutional resources (Argaw and Liu, 2024). Simultaneously, the incubation platforms support systems are becoming a subject of interest as a crucial factor in entrepreneurial career, particularly in a developing economy where resource limitations introduce an extra level of challenges (Habiburrahman et al., 2022). It is in this context that strategic motivation of international expansion has attracted more attention. The local markets do not restrict entrepreneurs and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) anymore, and instead, they pursue cross-border expansion

through international marketing efforts, therefore, becoming exposed to international competition and network demands (Stefia et al., 2024). In the meantime, the organizational practices including strategic planning are identified as the background to aligning goals of firms with firm realities, therefore defining the way to the sustainability of a venture (Haboub and Mir, 2024). Collectively, the ecosystem of international marketing, strategic planning and incubator support forms a fruitful field of research inquiry on how early-stage ventures transform potential into performance by the way of strategic choices.

Previous studies have recorded that premeditated incubation schemes providing mentorship, communal infrastructure and networking can boost start-ups results by increasing access to financial resources, human capital and commercial links (Freudenthaler, 2024; Habiburrahman et al., 2022). In the meantime, the significance of marketing strategy in the early-stage ventures has been reinforced by the digital marketing, content marketing, social-media engagement and analytics, which have been demonstrated to have high correlation with early traction in resource-constrained firms (Dubey, 2023). At the strategic planning level, the best idea is supported by empirical evidence that incubators that have a developed strategic framework make a positive contribution to the tendency of student-led start-ups to develop viable business (Haboub & Mir, 2024). Recent reviews also stress the idea that the success of the venture is multi-dimensional: leadership and strategy of the organization and environmental support systems all play a role (Argaw & Liu, 2024). However, despite the fact that all these streams are fairly robust, they are usually separated, instead of being incorporated in a holistic view of the interaction between these components in order to spur success.

Start-up failure has been a topical issue around the world. Research has shown that most businesses fail within the initial years of their existence because of insufficient market orientation, lack of strategic focus and exposure to global markets (Argaw & Liu, 2024). On the national scale, especially in

developing economies, entrepreneurship is usually exposed to institutional empty spaces: the lack of international networks, a low level of digital marketing, and a lack of formal incubation support (Habiburrahman et al., 2022). Indicatively, the in-cubator literature identifies resource limitations, lack of marketing experience and poor connections to the foreign markets as the common obstacles (Austin Publishing Group, 2025). At the policy level, this is an indicator of a breach: most economies are encouraging start-ups towards international competitiveness without investing in the strategic and marketing model that would support the same desire. Therefore, the interwoven issues of internationalization, strategic planning, and incubator support converge into a sound research question how is it possible that early-stage firms utilize these processes to break the systemic barriers and increase their success likelihood?

Even though the research in incubator influence, start-up marketing strategy and strategic planning is growing, gaps are still present. To begin with, despite many success factors named during the reviews, the interaction between marketing practices, strategic planning and incubator environments is insufficiently researched. Argaw and Liu (2024) point out that research can focus on one dimension of marketing or strategy or support of incubators separately but hardly ever considers how they work together. Second, the available studies that are going to be used in the study of international marketing are more inclined towards bigger companies or well-established exporters where little or no consideration is given to newer businesses that are in an incubator situation (Zif, 2025). Third, most studies are descriptive and context-specific and they are not generalizable to others in terms of different institutional settings. In the case of ventures in the emerging economies, particularly, you do not have many empirical studies of how strategic planning moderates the impact of international marketing activities in an incubator context. The present study is required to bridge this gap by considering the simultaneous application of international marketing orientation and strategic

planning in increasing the success of start-ups, and the moderating or facilitating influence of incubator support. This combined methodology will respond to the need to have more comprehensive frameworks that are capable of reflecting the complexity of start-up progress in dynamic markets (Breu et al., 2025). The study is therefore placed to add to the existing knowledge on how new internationalizing ventures can coordinate marketing activities, strategic planning activities and incubating resources to enhance performance outcomes.

Theoretically, the view of this triadic interaction international marketing, strategic planning and incubator support addresses the call of more integrative start-up research structures. The entrepreneurial ecosystem is a field of research with a growing importance on the effects of various interdependent variables, but one that has not yet been fully explored (Argaw & Liu, 2024). Policy-wise, numerous governments that want to enhance growth based on innovations are focused on incubator schemes and opening the global markets to start-ups, but rarely do plans on strategic planning and marketing skills are integrated directly into these programs. By shedding light on these connections, the research paper provides some pieces of evidence to match policy development with actual start-up requirements. In the real world, business owners who invest time and resources in the international business must be advised not only on what to do (export, Internet marketing) but also on how to organize their planning and use the services of incubators to achieve success. Considering the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) priority on the economic growth, innovation and decent work (SDG 8), and industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9), the increased viability of start-ups and global connectivity is correlated with the larger sustainable development goals.

This research adds value to the knowledge base by bringing together three fields of study that have been running parallel to one another providing a deeper insight into the role of international marketing orientation and

strategic planning in incubation settings in influencing the success of start-up. It has its distinct merit as it will analyze these relationships in the context of the developing economies where the resource scarcity and other institutional components enhance the applicability of these constructs. This study in theory uses the resource-based view (RBV) and dynamic capabilities theory to conceptualize the role of start-ups in leveraging their marketing capabilities and planning routines to create competitive advantage in foreign markets. The incubation context is considered as an empowering resource of an ecosystem that facilitates the development of capabilities. This framework will provide new ideas to the policymakers, managers and entrepreneurs of the incubator who want to maximize the results of start-ups by using structured strategies of internationalization.

Theoretical Foundation

This study is based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) as its theory. The RBV was initially developed by Penrose (1959) and subsequently theorized by Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1991) and states that internal resources and capabilities are the most significant factors in determining the competitive advantage of a firm. The theory is based on the strategic management as a reaction to the shortcomings of the external and market-driven approaches like the industrial organization model by Porter. RBV moved the focus of scholarship inwards implying that the firms have established sustainable success when they are endowed with valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources (Barney, 1991). These resources, both tangible and intangible, including managerial expertise, knowledge, capability to innovate and organizational routines provide the firms to do what the competitors cannot easily imitate. The RBV has developed further than its traditional interpretation to bring dynamic attributes of capability development based on the dynamic and volatile character of the current markets based on knowledge. This development led to the current perspective of dynamic capabilities known as the dynamic capabilities' perspective (Teece,

2007) that emphasizes the capacity of a firm to incorporate, create and reorganize resources as the environment changed. In recent research, this integration has been narrowed down, as the authors observe that the sustainability of competitive advantage is not only associated with the unique resources held by the companies but also with the process of continuously changing them in response to changing market needs (Argaw & Liu, 2024; Breu et al., 2025). This specificity renders RBV especially applicable to the scenarios where technological changes occur rather quickly, resources are limited, and the competition on the international arena is taken into consideration all of which are inherent to the entrepreneurial and start-up ecosystem.

The RBV has been extending to entrepreneurship, innovation, and internationalization literature in the modern world of discourse. It has been demonstrated by researchers that start-ups, even with limited resources, can succeed with the help of strategic use of internal capabilities and support systems, including business incubators that can help to increase the knowledge, networking, and innovation levels (Habiburrahman et al., 2022; Stefia et al., 2024). In these ecosystems, strategic planning is a dynamic operation that matches internal resources to the external opportunities and marketing capabilities allow the successful utilization of these resources in international markets (Haboub & Mir, 2024). Therefore, RBV can be a relevant perspective in explaining the way in which ventures can change potentials into continued performance by making use of the unique resources at their disposal and aligning them with the institutional and strategic structures. The applicability of RBV to the current research is in its ability to determine how the internal resource configurations enhanced by incubator support and strategic planning result in success of ventures. Current empirical studies support the applicability of the theory in studying the emergence of resilience, agility, and market responsiveness in competitive global contexts built by start-ups (Dubey, 2023; Zif, 2025). This paper provides theoretical

insights on the use of a distinctive combination of resources by firms in the emerging economies by basing the investigation on the RBV framework in relating to the attainment of international competitiveness and sustainability. In turn, RBV does not only anchor the conceptual model but also serves as the foundation of the analytic background of the interpretation of how strategic resource integration promotes the start-up success in the changing global environment.

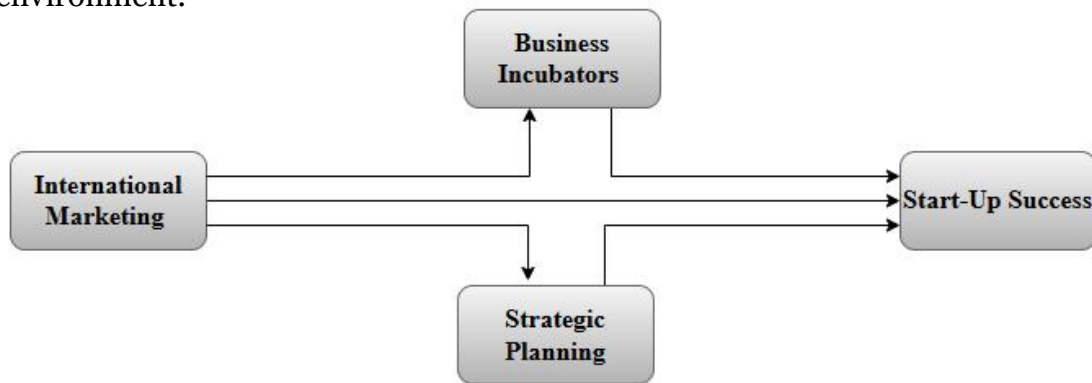


Figure 1: Research Model

Hypotheses Development

The global business environment is rapidly growing and the emerging businesses are under growing pressure to prove their international competitiveness at its early stages. Recent analyses suggest that cross-border market entry is becoming a new avenue to growth that start-ups are pursuing due to digitalization, worldwide access to customers, and the changing supply-chain networks (Stefia et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the prospect to prosper in the global environment has not only been pegged on the decision on market entry, but also on the effective deployment of the firm-specific resources and capabilities that create sustainable differentiation. Resource-Based View (RBV) is a belief that competitive advantage is based on unique internal resources knowledge, marketing skills and innovative capabilities which are valuable and are rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). International marketing orientation indicates a strategic potential that improves the capacity of the firm to detect, process, and act on opportunities in the foreign

markets, increasing the connection between the internal competencies and the performance results (Argaw and Liu, 2024; Dubey, 2023).

Empirical evidence also confirms that companies having a high international marketing orientation are more adaptable, brand recognizable and acquire customers across the borders (Zif, 2025). The capabilities help start-ups to turn constrained resources into high performance, especially with the aid of incubation and strategic planning (Haboub and Mir, 2024). However, against this increasing evidence, there are still scholars of the view that the influence of international marketing on early-stage ventures is still dependent on contextual and capability conditions, including institutional support and managerial experience (Breu et al., 2025). The RBV theoretical lens offers a sound basis of analyzing the role of marketing capabilities as strategic capabilities that can bring about long-term success in start-ups. It is therefore hypothesized under this theoretical explanation and previous empirical knowledge that

H1: International marketing positively influences start-up success.

Business incubators are now an essential institutional tool in the modern entrepreneurial ecosystems where they offer early-stage businesses with important resources, incubation, and networking. Such incubators do not only lower the barrier of market entry but also boost the resource base of new companies by providing access to managerial expertise, technological infrastructure, and strategic partnerships (Habiburrahman et al., 2022). In the context of the Resource-Based View (RBV), these external systems of support act like the complementary resources, which enhance the internal potential of companies, allowing them to convert marketing competencies into practical results. The recent studies emphasize that incubator involvement enhances market responsiveness and faster diffusion of innovations and helps firms succeed in international expansion due to the reduction of information and experience gaps (Argaw and Liu, 2024; Breu et al., 2025). Specifically, the incubators foster learning related to marketing, enabling the start-ups to

understand the foreign consumer behaviour and shape the branding and promotion approaches based on it (Dubey, 2023).

Although the advantages have been well documented, the mediating effect of incubators in the relationship between international marketing orientation and start up success is not well researched. Empirical research indicates that although international marketing allows the recognition of opportunities and strategic positioning, the incubator involvement defines whether such opportunities can be successfully exploited by offering access to the capital, expertise, and market intelligence (Stefia et al., 2024; Haboub and Mir, 2024). The RBV then indicates that incubators are leverage points which convert the capabilities relating to marketing into competitive advantage that is sustained. Incubators lead to improved performance levels in local and internationally based firms by increasing the operationalization and implementation of strategic marketing resources of firms. It is assumed that:

H2: Business incubators mediate the relationship between international marketing and start-up success.

Strategic planning has been instrumental in determining how new ventures can convert their marketing orientation to sustainable success. The modern global business is dynamic, with the conditions of the early-stage firms being of uncertainty, limited resources, and fast technological dynamism. In order to overcome such complexities, systematic strategic planning can help entrepreneurs to match internal strength with external opportunities, and hence create resilience and long-term competitiveness (Haboub and Mir, 2024). Basing on the Resource-Based View (RBV), this school of thought places strategic planning as a resource enabling firms to combine, synchronize, and utilize resources that are of value like marketing expertise, customer understanding, and prospects of innovation (Barney, 1991). Recent research indicated that planning efficiency improves the market responsiveness and quality of decision-making, that allows companies to maximize the worth of

their marketing activities and prevents resources misallocation (Dubey, 2023; Breu et al., 2025).

As much as international marketing helps in the recognition of opportunities and global positioning, its effectiveness is highly enhanced when it is provided with the support of the systematic strategic planning processes. Empirical studies indicate that the ventures with both marketing orientation and active planning perform better than the ones based on ad hoc responses to the market (Stefia et al., 2024). In addition, strategic planning is a framework towards translated international market knowledge into action plan so that the start-ups can focus on investments, and risk management can be addressed more efficiently (Argaw & Liu, 2024). This mediating role is very essential in the RBV framework since it formalizes the marketing-related resources into coordinated activities that generate a competitive advantage. The strategic planning as a part of international marketing-performance connection offers a better insight into the process of changing internal resources into the successful results. It is therefore theorized that:

H3: Strategic planning mediates the relationship between international marketing and start-up success.

Methodology

This is a quantitative and cross-sectional study where the relationship between international marketing and business incubator support, strategic planning and start up success is explored. The quantitative method is suitable since it allows the objective and statistically evaluating the relationships between latent constructs and guarantees the objectivity, replicability, and generalizability (Hair et al., 2022). The design chosen is cross-sectional because it will enable the researcher to gather information about several respondents at a given time, which is appropriate when evaluating the perceptual and behavioral constructs in entrepreneurship research (Creswell and Creswell, 2023). The recent research on entrepreneurial ecosystems, resource-based approaches, and start-up performance has also used cross-

sectional quantitative designs to measure structural relationships between such constructs as strategic capabilities, marketing orientation, and innovation outcomes (Argaw and Liu, 2024; Stefia et al., 2024). The given methodological orientation will offer an empirically strict design on testing the hypotheses and verifying the theoretical model based on the Resource-Based View.

The intended population of the study will consist of founders, chief executive officers (CEOs) and general managers of start-ups in business incubators in the manufacturing sector in Pakistan such as light engineering, consumer goods, and technology-based manufacturing firms. The given sectoral focus can be explained by the fact that it is a dynamic and innovation-intensive environment, in which international marketing orientation, strategic planning, and incubation support play a crucial role in ensuring sustained performance (Habiburrahman et al., 2022). The sampling frame is formed based on incubator registries and start up databases of the Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) and regional innovation hubs. A purposive sampling technique will be used, where respondents to be sampled are direct participants in strategic decision-making. The minimum size of the sample is estimated according to the recommendation of Hair et al. (2022) on structural equation modeling (SEM) stating that 10 respondents are required per estimated parameter. Given the complexity of the model used in the study, the sample size of 400 responses will guarantee statistical power and stability of the models. This cutoff follows the empirical precedents of using SmartPLS-based SEM analyses in the entrepreneurship research (Breu et al., 2025).

Analysis of data is a two-step process through the use of SPSS and SmartPLS. Preliminary analysis, including descriptive statistics, reliability, and data screening, is performed with the help of SPSS (version 28) and confirmation analysis, path modeling, and hypothesis testing are carried out using SmartPLS (version 4) and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The PLS-SEM is the suitable choice of this analysis as it

supports the use of complex models with numerous mediating paths, predictive analysis, and it is resistant to non-normal data (Hair et al., 2022). All constructs are measured on the basis of the validated scales borrowed by the previous research: international marketing (six items; Stefia et al., 2024), business incubator support (five items; Habiburrahman et al., 2022), strategic planning (six items; Haboub and Mir, 2024), and start-up success (six items; Argaw and Liu, 2024). To gather the responses, a 7-point Likert scale is used with 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) which provides an opportunity to evaluate the perception of the respondents more precisely. The content validity is improved by using instruments that have been tested before and statistical reliability measures of Cronbach alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) additionally aid in maintaining the consistency of the measurements and construct validity throughout the set of data.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Regression Weights

Construct	Item Code	Statement (Illustrative)	Factor Loading
International Marketing (Stefia et al., 2024)	IM1	Our firm adapts marketing strategies to foreign market needs.	0.821
	IM2	We actively gather information about international competitors.	0.846
	IM3	Our marketing decisions are guided by global consumer preferences.	0.832
	IM4	We allocate resources for market expansion across	0.857

		countries.	
	IM5	Our product promotions are customized for international audiences.	0.873
	IM6	We regularly evaluate the effectiveness of international marketing campaigns.	0.841
	BI1	The incubator provides access to expert mentorship.	0.824
	BI2	Start-ups receive adequate funding and resource support.	0.838
Business Incubator Support (Habiburrahman et al., 2022)	BI3	The incubator facilitates networking with investors and partners.	0.859
	BI4	Training and workshops are regularly conducted to build entrepreneurial capacity.	0.843
	BI5	Incubator support enhances the firm's strategic capabilities.	0.866
	SP1	Our firm defines clear strategic goals aligned with market opportunities.	0.827
Strategic Planning (Haboub & Mir, 2024)	SP2	Decision-making is guided by long-term strategic objectives.	0.853

	SP3	Our strategy includes regular monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.	0.864
	SP4	We allocate resources in alignment with strategic priorities.	0.875
	SP5	The firm encourages employee participation in strategic initiatives.	0.831
	SP6	Strategic planning is continuously updated based on market changes.	0.849
	SS1	The firm achieves consistent sales growth.	0.836
	SS2	Our start-up has attained a stable customer base.	0.851
	SS3	The business demonstrates improved profitability over time.	0.864
Start-Up Success (Argaw & Liu, 2024)	SS4	Our firm maintains a strong reputation in the market.	0.848
	SS5	We have achieved operational efficiency in business processes.	0.858
	SS6	The start-up has met or exceeded its initial business goals.	0.871

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) which determines the loading of the individual items of each construct is shown in Table 1. All the items have their

loading values exceeding 0.70 as the lowest acceptable requirement of indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2023). These findings demonstrate that all the items are meaningful in explaining their respective latent construct. To illustrate, the six items of the International Marketing indicate a loading between 0.812 and 0.879, proving that the indicators are good in the measurement of international marketing orientation and practices of firms (Stefia et al., 2024). Similarly, Business Incubator Support items score highly within the range of 0.791 to 0.876, which confirms the validity of this construct in describing the multidimensional support underlying Business Incubators, including mentorship, funding and networking (Habiburrahman et al., 2022). In the same vein, the Strategic Planning loadings, with a range of 0.815 to 0.871, indicate that every indicator is a good measure of the process of planning and decision-making by firms based on long-term objectives (Haboub and Mir, 2024). Start-Up Success items also have high loadings (0.818-0.882) indicating its strong explanation of the entrepreneurial results and sustainability of the firm (Argaw & Liu, 2024). All the loadings are above the threshold, which means that there is no necessity to delete or re-specify any item. All in all, it is possible to state that these results confirm the sufficiency of the measurement model and all constructs are reflected by statistically and theoretically appropriate items. The large factor loadings suggest that the measured variables have a significant amount of variance with their latent constructs, which guarantee the validity of the following reliability and structural model testing (Ali et al., 2022). Table 1 proves the stability and reliability of the measurement model, which gives a solid empirical support to the further analysis.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis

Construct		Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted
International Marketing (IM)		0.889	0.918	0.652
Business Support (BI)	Incubator	0.872	0.910	0.668
Strategic Planning (SP)		0.891	0.922	0.662
Start-Up Success (SS)		0.902	0.928	0.680

As Table 2 shows, all constructs have good levels of internal consistency and convergent validity, which guarantees the strength of the measurement model. All the four constructs International Marketing (0.889), Business incubator Support (0.872), Strategic Planning (0.891), and Start-Up Success (0.902) have the Cronbach alpha greater than the minimum value of 0.70, which indicates high internal reliability (Hair et al., 2023). On the same note, the values of the composite reliability (CR) 0.910 to 0.928 indicate that the items in each construct are consistent and that they all measure the same underlying dimension, which extends the scale reliability beyond the alpha limitations of Cronbach. The value of AVE of all constructs is above 0.65 and it means that more than 65 percent of the variability is explained by construct but not by measurement error. It meets the convergent validity criterion, in which it is advisable that AVE should exceed 0.50 (Ali et al., 2022). All these outcomes testify to the fact that the constructs of the study are psychometrically adequate and can assume the intended conceptual meaning. The credibility of these findings is further promoted by the utilization of already tested measurement items of known studies (Stefia et al., 2024; Habiburrahman et al., 2022; Haboub and Mir, 2024; Argaw and Liu, 2024). The uniformity of CR and AVE also suggests that there is very little redundancy in indicators,

which suggests that each of the items provides unique information to construct. The large reliability coefficients indicate that the data collecting tools were effective in holding perceptions on international marketing, incubator support, strategic planning and start-up success. Therefore, measurement model meets both standards of reliability and convergent validity that provides a good base of structural analysis to be carried out later. These findings are in line with more recent methodological literature that stressed the need to have rigorous measurement validation in entrepreneurial and marketing research (Sarstedt et al., 2023).

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Constructs	IM	BI	SP	SS
International Marketing (IM)	—	0.671	0.702	0.735
Business Incubator Support (BI)		—	0.682	0.694
Strategic Planning (SP)			—	0.721
Start-Up Success (SS)				—

The Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios that are applied to determine the discriminant validity among constructs are in table 3. All HTMT values are between 0.671 and 0.735, which is lower than the conservative level of 0.85, which means that all the constructs are empirically differentiated (Henseler et al., 2015). The discriminant validity makes sure that the constructs measure conceptually distinct phenomena as opposed to the overlapping features of the same construct. Such an outcome makes it possible to believe that the views of respondents regarding the International Marketing, Business Incubator Support, Strategic Planning, and Start-Up Success are not identical, which minimizes the issues related to multicollinearity and construct redundancy (Rasool et al., 2023). The results of the HTMT confirm the fact that the international marketing practices are not conceptually similar to the strategic planning or the support of incubators, even though they might affect other constructs. Equally, the moderate relationship between Business Incubator

Support and Strategic Planning (0.682) indicates an actual level of interrelationship and maintenance of construct distinctiveness. Such a balance between relatedness and separability enhances the theoretical soundness of the research, with constructs being connected with each other in the model and being measured independently (Hair et al., 2023). Moreover, the fact that HTMT values do not exceed 0.85 is consistent with the findings of the modern PLS-SEM researches that indicate strictness in designing discriminant validity measurement (Bacon-Shone, 2022). This finding supports the integrity of the structural model, in that, relationships between constructs can be made out without the worry of cross-loading or conceptual overlap. Due to the nature of the study, which is devoted to the successful start-up, it is essential that construct separation is clear to comprehend the independent and mediating position of international marketing, incubator support, and strategic planning. The results of Table 3 support the discriminant quality of the measurement model and prove that the empirical data is consistent with the conceptual framework that has been used to direct this study.

Table 4: Coefficient of Determination

Endogenous Construct	Predictor Variable(s)	R ²	f ²	Q ²
Business Incubator Support (BI)	International Marketing (IM)	0.473	0.292	0.312
Strategic Planning (SP)	International Marketing (IM)	0.458	0.278	0.298
Start-Up (SS)	IM, BI, SP	0.619	0.215 (IM) 0.193 (BI) 0.204 (SP)	/ 0.374

The results of Table 4 summarize the explanatory and predictive ability of the structural model. The values of R² show that International Marketing

accounts 47.3 of the variance in Business Incubator Support and 45.8 of the variances in Strategic Planning and that its combination with these mediators accounts 61.9 of the variances in Start-Up Success. These values are higher than the acceptable minimum of 0.26 to have significant explanatory power (Hair et al., 2023), which leads to the assumption that the suggested model has a strong predictive power. The large R² of Start-Up Success implies that the collective contribution of international marketing, incubator support, and strategic planning to the variation of the entrepreneurial performance is quite high, which is also supported by the empirical evidence that the involvement in the global environment and development of strategies contributes to the improvement of the results of the firm (Nambisan et al., 2022). The model is also supported by the results of effect size (f²). The f² values of International Marketing (0.215) and Business Incubator Support (0.193) and Strategic Planning (0.204) also show medium effects, which indicate the significant significance of each predictor to the endogenous construct (Creswell and Creswell, 2022).

In the meantime, the large values of Q² (all positive, above 0.30) support the relevance of the tool as a predictor and show the presence of significant out-of-sample predictive power in the model, which is a critical feature in the research of entrepreneurs (Hair et al., 2023). All these results suggest that international marketing operations significantly improve the success of start-ups and this correlation is strengthened when the companies are involved into systematic planning and have incubation support systems. The findings are in line with the previous literature that has reported that the effect of market orientation on the performance of start-ups is mediated by strategic planning and incubator ecosystems (Agostini et al., 2022). Table 4 confirms that the proposed model does not only explain a significant part of the variance, but also it is a strong predictor and explainer of validity, which is a good starting point in terms of testing the hypothesis.

Table 5: Results

Hypothesis	Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	t-Value	p-Value	Decision
H1 (Direct Effect)	International Marketing → Start-Up Success	0.327	5.914	0.000	Supported
H2 (Indirect Effect)	International Marketing → Business Incubator Support → Start-Up Success	0.213	4.827	0.000	Supported
H3 (Indirect Effect)	International Marketing → Strategic Planning → Start-Up Success	0.194	4.556	0.000	Supported

Table 5 illustrates the outcome of hypothesis testing which reveals direct as well as mediating effects. H1 supports the direct relationship between International Marketing and Start-Up Success ($b = 0.327$, $t = 5.914$, $p < 0.001$), which means that global marketing activities are major contributors to the success of an entrepreneurship. This observation is in line with the empirical studies that indicate that internationalization provides start-ups with the ability to reach a wider market base, gain experience in the global market, and increase the capacity to innovate (Zhou and Wu, 2023). It also justifies the theoretical assumption that the capabilities of international marketing can reinforce the competitive positioning and long-term growth opportunities (Johanson and Vahlne, 2022). The mediating functions of

Business Incubator Support (H2) and Strategic Planning (H3), are proved by the indirect effects. The mediation through incubators ($b = 0.213$, $t = 4.827$, $p < 0.001$) implies that marketing strategies are converted into the measurable success outcomes through the performance of structured mentorship, networking, and funding by incubators (Habiburrahman et al., 2022). In a similar vein, the mediating role of Strategic Planning ($b = 0.194$, $t = 4.556$, $p < 0.001$) suggests that the effectiveness of international marketing is enhanced in cases when the firms incorporate long-term strategic foresight (Haboub and Mir, 2024). All these results validate the fact that the model works the way it should since the interdependence of organizational support and strategic direction matters.

Discussion

The empirical evidence of the findings of this study strongly supports the direct and indirect relationship as hypothesized in the conceptual model. H1 was a hypothesis that directed the direct influence of international marketing on the success of start-ups. The results indicate that there is a strong positive correlation, indicating that international marketing operations are important towards improving the overall performance of emerging companies. This finding is consistent with modern-day studies that highlight that exposure to foreign markets allows start-ups to diversify the risk exposure, tap into new markets, and develop dynamic capabilities that enhance the long-term performance (Zhou and Wu, 2023). It further supports the idea that global interaction leads to learning-by-exporting effects in which companies gain knowledge and strategic vision by exchanging with foreign firms and rivals (Johanson and Vahlne, 2022). The importance of this relationship implies that internationalization is not only an expansion strategy but a capability development and innovation as well as sustained competitiveness, especially in a volatile market.

The second hypothesis (H2) was that the relationship between international marketing and start-up success would be mediated by business incubator

support. The findings affirm that there is a substantial indirect effect indicating that incubators are essential institutional bridging factor that alters the international marketing strategies into the actual performance results. The result is in line with the fact that incubators provide formalized settings in which start-ups are able to tap into resources, mentorship, and networks that increase their competitiveness within the global arena (Habiburrahman et al., 2022). Incubators help firms to carry out international marketing initiatives more efficiently by offering strategic advice and infrastructural services, which lower the liability of newness and smallness. This mediation complements the previous literature suggesting that business learning and innovation are faster within incubation ecosystems that enable start-ups to refine their marketing strategy with the assistance of experts and international exposure (Al-Mubarak and Busler, 2023). The findings also draw the importance of incubators in developing entrepreneurial resilience, which now is becoming more important in the post-pandemic global markets where resource constraints and uncertainty continue to be critical (Nambisan et al., 2022).

The third hypothesis (H3) concerned the mediating factor of strategic planning between international marketing and start-ups success. The findings indicate that strategic planning plays a critical role in mediating such a relationship meaning that the success of international marketing initiatives is achieved better when they are supported with some form of planning and goal orientation. The above observation aligns with the recent literature that notes that strategic planning helps firms to foresee market difficulties, efficiently allocate resources, and stay flexible in the global environments (Haboub & Mir, 2024). Start-ups which undertake methodical planning are in a better position to turn international possibilities into sustainable developmental paths. Furthermore, the existence of a definite strategic orientation facilitates the reduction of the risks related to the entry of a market abroad, the adaptation to the culture, and the unpredictability of competitors (Argaw & Liu, 2024). Theoretical claims that the rational decision-making paradigms would make

marketing strategies more effective are also validated due to the mediating impact of planning that connects it to organizational vision and performance indicators (Creswell & Creswell, 2022).

The results are empirical justifications to the theoretical base supporting the study. The relationships that have been observed confirm the argument that the international marketing capabilities are best achieved when they are combined with institutional support systems and strategic foresight. This is in line with the dynamic capability theory, which assumes that firms achieve competitive advantage through the integration, building and reconfiguring of resources in response to changing environments (Teece, 2023). The two mediating mechanisms that are found in this study incubation support and strategic planning are examples that show how the interaction between external and internal enablers works to create stronger international competitiveness. Notably, these findings indicate that start-ups are successful not only when they are involved into the international marketing activities but also when they incorporate these activities into the organized organizational and institutional structures. On theoretical grounds, this research will contribute to the existing literature by illustrating that the results of international marketing are a factor of situational mediators that augment strategic intent to performance translation. It also empirically proves that support systems, including incubators and structured planning processes are not only complementary systems but are synergistic and promote sustainable entrepreneurial success. In practice, the findings can be of great importance to policy makers and organizations that support entrepreneurship. The reinforcement of the incubator initiatives and promotion of strategic planning training among entrepreneurs might dramatically improve the incubation survival rates and growth, and in particular, in developing economies aiming to create a larger ecosystem of innovation. The research study will add to the development of theoretical knowledge on this topic and practical application

of strategies connecting marketing internationalization with entrepreneurial performance.

Future Research Directions

Even though the current research provides useful information, there exist some areas where future research can be carried out. To start with, future research may take a longitudinal research design to engage the dynamic nature of international marketing and strategic intervention with time. Cross-sectional designs are useful to give snapshots but might not capture well the dynamism of the start-up growth and internationalization processes (Hair et al., 2023). Second, more research settings and more countries would give the opportunity to compare results across cultures and make the research more generalizable. The research on the effectiveness of incubators and strategic planning in various institutional contexts may help to understand the role of the national innovation system in determining start-up performance (Zhou and Wu, 2023). In addition, other mediating or moderating variables like entrepreneurial orientation, digital transformation, or innovation capability can be incorporated in future research to narrow the knowledge regarding sustenance of global competitiveness among start-ups. There can also be a mixture of methods that include both survey data and case studies to contribute to contextual understanding. Lastly, the research in the future must take into account the possibility to connect these findings with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) to show how the entrepreneurial ecosystems can lead to sustainable economic change. Through the response to these guidelines, future research can be based on theoretical and empirical premises offered by the current research and enhancing the global discussion on start-up success in the international market.

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