

The Impact of The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership on The Internationalisation of SMEs In Morocco

AIT ALI EL Hassane

Abstract— The partnership agreement between Morocco and the European Union intervenes in a constantly changing economic context characterised by a greater openness on the world trade. In this cooperation platform which brings together the countries of the EU and the South and East Mediterranean Countries, Morocco constitutes a key partner on the economic, social, political and financial plans.

This study examines the effects of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership on the internationalisation of SMEs in Morocco, we incorporate proximity approach (organizational, geographical, and institutional) on SMEs in Morocco particularly. The concept of "the economy of proximity" has proved to be relevant in studying the impact of the euro-Mediterranean partnership on SMEs in the south Mediterranean region, and determining the extent to which this proximity may be regarded as a competitive advantage for the SMEs.

The data collection was carried out from June 2015 to December 2015, starting with the distribution of 1200 questionnaires by mailing including postal and electronic and by telephone in some cases to complement the incomplete questionnaires. Due to the difficulties encountered during this phase of data collection, only 100 questionnaires could be exploited, 35 of them were eliminated because lack of information. The validation of ours hypothesis is based on a series of statistical tests (One simple t-test, Chi-Square test, Pearson correlation, Factor analysis), through the SPSS software.

Index Terms—Euro-Mediterranean partnership, internationalisation, SMEs,

1 INTRODUCTION

The Barcelona Process was meant to provide a comprehensive framework for the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and reach various agreements of the European Union with the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean Countries (SEMC). The Process main objective was primarily to renew euro-Mediterranean relations, and go beyond traditional trade exchanges moving towards a new framework based on strategic relations which promotes the transfer of technology, cooperation and co-production.

After the Barcelona Declaration, several programs have come into being to facilitate the cooperation between the companies in the Mediterranean area, including "the Med-partnerships," "MED-Enterprises", and "Med-Invest". In fact, the partnership of SMEs in the Mediterranean area has become a necessity to handle the challenges facing the south of the Mediterranean's SMEs in terms of technology, Human Resources and Finance, as SMEs (STIBON J c, 2009) face lots of difficulties to develop, or even survive unless they take an international dimension.

With globalisation, access to international markets has accelerated since the 1990s, following the emergence of areas of free trade and regional blocks. According to Marchesnay, (2004) to cope with this process, which characterises the long-term trend of industrial capitalism (with innovation and concentration), companies have been able to adopt internationalisation strategies, to more or less advanced degrees.

-
- AIT ALI EL HASSANE
Hassan II University Morocco E-mail: aitalielhassane@mail.com

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The process of globalisation and SMEs internationalisation is based on the following pillars: the development of international trade, international investment, strategic alliances, the business-to-business partnership and networks. The main problem in this regard is to discuss the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the role of this partnership on the internationalisation of SMEs in Morocco.

SMEs competitiveness is closely linked to the competitiveness of countries's economy. Therefore, for the Moroccan SMEs to compete at the international level, they first need to develop in a stable and healthy macro-economic framework relying on two essential elements: financial solidity and administration efficiency. Levratto (2009) specifies that the role of the institutional, economic as well as cultural factors in the dynamic process of internationalisation has rarely been the subject of a comprehensive study. Thus, the international involvement varies depending on the following variables: national market dynamism, type of the enterprise, the entrepreneur's strategy, support from both the business environment and the State.

2.1 The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership

The Mediterranean region is considered as a specific block in the framework of the process of the normal evolution of globalisation and regionalisation. Strategic and Economic Globalisation stands as a complex and authoritarian political system led by a State (United States), or by a set of states (European Union), Ravenel, B (2003).

The Barcelona Process, launched in 1995, emphasises in its economic and financial component, on the essential role of the cooperation in the creation of a Euro-Mediterranean area of shared prosperity based on the establishment of a free trade area, the implementation of economic transition and the enhancement of investment. Thus, the SMEs in the south of the Mediterranean are seeking cooperation agreements with SMEs in the north, mainly to meet the following objectives: to develop their technological capacities, expand their access to markets, increase their competitiveness and promote innovation.

In accordance with the teachings of the international trade theory, trade liberalisation intensifies trade between two countries or groups of countries, and in with reference to the new geographical economics, space in can play a very important role as the engine of economic benefits if the geographical proximity allies with other components of proximity

The main question that arises in the case of Morocco is to check the

capacity of the industrial fabric of Morocco to withstand the constraints of openness. It is therefore time to go beyond the modes of partnership initiated in the framework of the Barcelona process, taking into account the concept of collocation which targets economic integration through production and sharing the value chain. However, the finding is that regional trade agreements concerns geographically remote regions more than neighbours, which calls into question the concept of geographical and the organisational proximity as well as its role in the integration of the countries of the southern Mediterranean. On the theoretical level, trade agreements are meant to bring benefits to economies. Yet several studies and arguments stipulate that despite the number of agreements concluded by Morocco, the economic and financial gain remains limited.

2.2 The Internationalisation of SMEs

Laghzaoui (2009) offers a more operational definition to the concept of "internationalisation" including all the steps that a company takes to develop beyond its national territory: export, search for business partners, investment abroad, recruitment of foreign personnel etc". Another comprehensive definition is proposed by Beamish (1990) and cited by Embrace and McAuley (1999, p. 225) referring to SMEs internalisation as (...) The process by which firms both increase their awareness of the direct and indirect influence of international transactions on their future, and establish and conduct transactions with other countries.

However, among the factors that allow enterprises and especially SMEs to internationalise, is the rapid evolution of ICT and the networks between SMEs. But generally, internationalisation may have important consequences on the organizations business models, on the technological capabilities and management, as well as on innovation capabilities. (OECD,2004)

Export is considered as the most traditional way of SMEs internalisation, overall, it is estimated according to (OECD, 2004) that SMEs realise between 25% and 35% of world exports of manufactured products. But according to (UNCTAD, 2004) The internationalisation can move through a number of activities, including international investment and participation in strategic alliances, partnerships and arrangements. for ZHEGN, Mr. Niosi, I (2011), despite the existence of a significant number of agencies and programs accompanying the process of internationalisation, it is essential to ensure a better coordination between these various agencies.

The Internationalisation of SMEs is not explainable by a single theory, it is a very vast and dynamic theoretical field. According to Levratto (2009), the issue of SMEs Internationalisation refers to a comprehensive approach resulting from three different schools of thought:

- The incremental approach developed by the behavioural theory,

- The idea of alliances with the theory of networks,
- The economic thinking with the theories of foreign direct investment (FDI),

2.2.1 The Incremental Theory:

The Uppsala Model (U-model), developed by the Swedish school (Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul 1975; Johanson and Vahlne 1977) in the seventies, still remains as an outstanding reference in the study of SMEs internationalisation. The size of the SME is not perceived as an obstacle to internationalisation. In this regards, Mcauley (1999) concludes that the size of the SME is not necessarily a barrier to internationalisation, and SMEs have also been found to find unique ways to overcome their "smallness". This theory has been the subject of several theoretical research (Bilkey and Tesar, 1977; Cavusgil, 1984) and finds its origin in the model of Uppsala, which stipulates that internationalisation is a gradual process, which is based on the knowledge and the commitment of the company. These two central concepts are the vectors of the decision-making to orient the SME toward the international level.

In general, two models constitute the basis of this first approach: the Uppsala Model (U model) and the innovation model (I model) (Bilkey and Tesar 1977). The I Model is based on a set of organisational innovations observed by the organisation in its tendency to expand and internationalise. Cheriet (2010) specifies that the Uppsala model is meant to provide theoretical reference for the internationalisation process analysis.

The Internationalisation of SMEs allows them to conquer new markets and increase their sales, and this is done through the export capacity of some SMEs, through the use of specific and well specific products that meet the needs of target customers. This confirms the contribution of the competitive advantage theory which is based on the idea of resources. ZHEGN, Mr. Niosi, I (2011), suggest that SMEs often lack the means necessary to obtain information on the international markets, which constitutes a brake to their growth.

Access to international markets especially through the medium of export seems to obey the principle of proximity as the Swedish School of Uppsala has demonstrated through its concept of psychic distance. Likewise, Johnson & Vahle (1977) refer to the concept of proximity to designate both the physical and psychological distance. This concept of proximity is the royal road for accessing the nearest market. According LEVRATTO, N. Maarouf, R (2009) This approach fits more in the case of undertakings "classic" whose success to the exchange is based on the accumulation of knowledge to reduce risks.

2.2.2 The theory of networks:

This theory is considered a continuity of the Uppsala model, it accounts for the membership of leaders and the companies to international networks. Moreover through their formal and informal relations, leaders play a very important role in the process of enterprise internationalisation. In this case, Levratto, N. Maarouf, R (2009) specify that the process of internationalisation is the result of the behaviors and choices of entrepreneurs influenced by formal and informal relationships that they forge with all the partners of the company.

According to Torres, the importance and the quality of the component of the Relational is one of the key points of the analysis of the specificity of SMEs management. For Torres, O (2004), taking into account the "proximity" factor in the management of SMEs is part of a wider search current which favours the relational to the transactional factors

The theory of networks tries to bring answers to the reasons what motivates companies to conclude partnership agreements with other local or foreign enterprises. For Levratto, N. Maarouf, R (2009) the network provides benefits which allow enterprises to develop their international presence. The creation of the networks is one of the ideal channels to access foreign markets. Therefore, and according to UNCTAD (2004), SMEs can forge links with multinationals or large exporting firms and local integrate as well with global chains of production.

2.2.3 Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):

The school of economic thought which deals with the process of the internationalisation of SMEs is the theory of international trade and specifically the component that deals with the foreign direct investment. These can be considered as a very important vector for the internationalisation of SMEs. For LEVRATTO, N. Maarouf, R (2009), an IDE refers to an investment which aims to acquire a lasting interest in a business carried on in a country other than that of the investor. Also, according to ZHEGN, Mr. Niosi, I (2011), the accompaniment to the internationalisation of SMEs will need to promote the role that FDI can play as a vector of the access of SMEs to the international markets. In addition to the figures of the OECD (2004) at the international level affirm this situation, in the case of South Korea for example, the share of the IDE attributable to SMEs is increased from 16% in 2000 to 20.6% in 2001, then to 37.6% in 2002.

We notice a weakness in the FDI received by the south of the Mediterranean region, if we compare the attitude of the EU toward the SEMCS which opposes the attitude of the United States in relation

to Latin America or that of Japan and the South East Asia. The IDE carried out in the areas of energy, real estate bring little local value added and more and for Almeras, G, (2009), the IDE does not represent in themselves a lever to cause a takeoff. However, some countries such as Israel attract better investments with strong added value (Technology) for its connection with the High Tech American market. This observation, the technological level influence the internationalization of SMEs. For Lecerf, M (2006), the technological advance is also an indicator that is revealed strongly influencing the turnover to the export.

Generally, according Levratto (2009), the reasons that explain the growth of FDI revolve around the three following logics: An industrial logic which is based on the search for the least expensive production factors, a logic of the market whose main objectives is the customer and a logic of the enterprise which is regarded as an organisation composed of human, financial and technical resources. Therefore, in order to promote the internationalisation of Moroccan companies and facilitate the transfer of skills between the two shores, Almeras, G, (2009), specifies that the issue of development in the Mediterranean basin, is a question of market and especially access to the international markets

3 Methodology

The data collection was carried out from June 2015 to December 2015, starting with the distribution of 1200 questionnaires via postal, electronic mailing and by telephone in some cases to fill in the incomplete questionnaires. Due to the difficulties encountered during this phase of data collection, only 100 questionnaires could be exploited, 35 of them were eliminated due to lack of information. The validation of hypothesis is based on a series of statistical tests: One simple t-test, Chi-Square test, Pearson correlation, Factor analysis, through the SPSS software.

3.1 Hypotheses

3.1.1 Inter-firm Cooperation

The objective of this study is to clarify the motivations and the constraints of Moroccan companies which are engaged in cooperation with their competitors and also to explain the reasons behind inter-firm cooperation. In fact, Maarouf R (2006) states that inter-firm cooperation has become a key strategy and to business survival and development in an highly competitive environment.

The development of inter-firm cooperation is mainly due to the following elements: The fierce competition at the international level between enterprises, the development of international trade and

FDI and the development of tools and techniques of information and communication. This competition, driven by the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, may constitute one of the keystones of the emergence of a new productive base in the Mediterranean countries, which motivates the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis1: the inter-firm cooperation supported by the Barcelona agreement contributes to the development of local SMEs and promotes their internationalisation.

3.1.2 The Internationalisation of SMEs in the Framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership

To achieve the objectives of the partnership between businesses of the two shores of the Mediterranean, a new model of a productive partnership is to be adapted based on the principle of subcontracting, collocation, or other forms which are likely to promote economic integration, production and value chain sharing. The objective is therefore to assess the role played by the Euro-Mediterranean partnership in the SMEs internationalisation strategies. Likewise, it is paramount to emphasise the level of commitment of the various parties (public and private sector) in facilitating the access of SMEs to the foreign market, especially the European market, hence the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The internalisation of SMEs is likely to take place within the partnership's framework than outside.

3.1.3 Market size and SMEs internationalization

For the southern SMEs, The inter-firm cooperation constitutes a source of organisational, managerial, and productive capabilities and therefore a means of acquiring the knowledge essential to the economic development in the framework of the open market. The countries which can take advantage of market openness are those which have solid industrial fabric and are capable to cope with international competition. Moreover, economic efficiency is the outcome of organisational strategy based primarily on technological and organisational capabilities. So, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership facilitates the internationalisation of SMEs through the enlargement of the market size in the south of the Mediterranean.

4 Results and Discussion

The inter-firm cooperation supported by the Barcelona agreement contributes to the development of local SMEs and promotes their internationalisation

Table 01: variables of Hypothesis 1

Items	Denominated
-------	-------------

Table 01: variables of Hypothesis 1

VAR 22A	Increase Competitiveness
VAR 22b	Expanding access to the market
VAR 22C	Foster innovation
VAR 22D	Develop technology
VAR 22 E	Increase exports

The KMO index for 0.438 can be qualified as low to less valid. The KMO test highlights the weak correlations between the different variables.

Table 02: KMO and Bartlett's test

Bartlett's test of Sphericity	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.438
	Approx Chi-Square	826,183
	Df	10
	Sig.	0.000

The table of values measures the total variance explained (inertia) of each of the factors. The first factor explains nearly 69% of the total variance of the 5 variables in the analysis.

Table 03 : Total variance explained

COMPONENTS	Total	% Of Variance	% Cumulative
1	3,466	69,315	
2	0,974	19,482	88,797
3	0,510	10,197	98,994
4	0,048	0,959	99,954
5	0,002	0,46	100,000
Extraction Method:Principal componentanalysis.			

At the level of proper values, we notice a breaking point (Cattel's elbow) at the level of the second factor with a cumulative value of

88,797. The following table shows a strong correlation between the first three variables, which justifies the motivation behind internalising Moroccan SMEs to increase their exports and their competitiveness at the national and international levels.

Table 04: Matrix of analysis components

VAR022B	,991
VAR022E	,940
VAR022A	,934
VAR022D	,815
VAR022C	,251
Extraction Method: Principal component analysis.	
A. 1 components extracted.	

As to the value of the Cronbach's Alpha Index, we notice that the value of the coefficient is positive since it exceeds 0.878, which means that the score of the Cronbach alpha values must be high (above 0.60); the higher it is, more the validity is strong.

Table 05: The Index Cronbach's Alpha

Reliability Statistics	
The Cronbach alpha values	The Cronbach alpha values
,878	5

The different statistics show a strong correlation between the variables in the Assumption, first the index of the Cronbach alpha values is between 0.817 and 0.931, more other statistical parameters are correlated and is located in the closest intervals, which justifies the trend toward the validation of the hypothesis.

Table 06: Complete statistics on the Elements

	Average of the scale in the case of deletion of an element	Variance the scale in the case of deletion of an element	Complete correlation of the corrected items	Square of the multiple correlation	The Cronbach alpha values in the case of deletion of an element
VAR022A	5.24	4,346	,891	,967	,817
VAR022B	5.15	3,523	,986	,997	,774
VAR022C	5.53	6,413	,172	,455	,931
VAR022D	5.31	4,357	,706	,985	,852
VAR022E	5.01	3.101	,876	,984	,823

The different statistical parameters confirm that the inter-firm co-operation supported by the Barcelona agreement contributes to the development of local SMES and promotes their internationalization: Hypothesis 1 result: Validated.

SMEs are internationalizing more in the framework of partnership than outside.

Table 07: The variables of Hypothesis 2

Items	Denominated
VAR 29A	External Opportunity
VAR 29b	Maximize profit
VAR 29C	Saturation of the local market
VAR 29D	Get closer to the client
VAR 29E	Distributions of fixed costs
VAR 29F	Geographical diversification
VAR 29g	Achieve a significant size

We notice that two variables (VAR029B and VAR029D) have a high dispersion in relation to other variables, which means that the objective of the internationalisation of SMEs is to be closer to the client at the international level and also to maximise profit.

Table 08	Mean	Standard deviation	Analysis N
VAR029A	,28	,451	100
VAR029B	1,50	,870	100
VAR029C	,27	,863	100
VAR029D	1	1,741	100
VAR029E	,25	1,095	100
VAR029f	,18	,980	100
VAR029G	,85	2,190	100

Most of the variables are significantly correlated, with the exception of two variables (VAR029E and VAR029F) which means that for SMEs internationalisation does not target fixed cost allocation and purpose of allocation and geographical diversification. Thus we note that the determinant of the matrix is very small (=0.39), which is a good indication of the existence of the good correlations between the variables in the matrix.

Table 09: KMO index and Bartlett's test

Measuring accuracy of the sampling of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin		,508
Bartlett's test of Sphericity	Khi two approximated	312,005
	Df	21
	Sig	0

The KMO index for 0.508 can be qualified for a limited validity, the reading of the KMO test indicates to us that the correlations between the items are of average quality. Therefore, the higher the KMO test is, the more satisfactory is the factorial analysis. In addition Bartlett sphericity test is a hypothesis test, its significance is equal to 0.00, thus the result of the test of Bartlett is significant, which confirms the hypothesis 2, it would therefore be legitimate to continue our study using the principal components analysis (PCA) method.

All variables are well taken into account; the quality of their representation is more than 50%. The first axis explains 39.8% of the total inertia of the phenomenon, while the second explains only 24.6%. In fact both axis 1 and Axis 2 explain 64.48 per cent of the total inertia (total variance), which shows a unidimensional scale of measurement.

Table 08	Mean	Standard deviation	Analysis N
----------	------	--------------------	------------

Table 10: proper values and percentage of the variance associated

Factors	Own values	% Of Variance	Per cent of the cumulative variance
1	2,787	39,820	39,820
2	1,726	24,663	64,483

We have reduced the hypothesis seven variables to 3 to be able to analyse the assumption already established. The following graph determines the illustration of variance accumulation known as the "Cattell's scree test"(1966). We kept at least Q=2 (Two factors) in order to achieve the graphical representations and be able to properly interpret the results. On the graph of the proper values we find that the break of Cattell's elbow is located at the level of the third factor. From the previous table, we find that between the 3rd and 4th proper value, we have a low slope, and we will therefore retain only two axes. Also, the correlation matrix allows us to determine the coefficients of correlation of each original variable in comparison to the extracted variables and to the factorial axes.

Table 11: Component Transformation Matrix (CTM)

Component	1	2
1	,920	,391
2	,391	,920
Extraction Method: Principal component analysis.		
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.		

The reading of the following tables shows that SMEs internalisation is influenced by three groups of reasons that push SMEs to internationalise, the first group suggests an overall structure composed of three correlated variables: the search for external opportunity, getting closer to customers, and finally reaching a size that calls for internalisation.

Table 12: Complete statistics on the Elements

	Average of the scale in the case of deletion of an element	Variance the scale in the case of deletion of an element	Complete correlation of the corrected items	Square of the multiple correlation	The Cronbach alpha values in the case of deletion of an element
VAR029A	4,05	14,513	,338	,704	,242
VAR029B	2,83	19,738	,597	,669	,529
VAR029C	4,06	10,986	,725	,733	,006
VAR029D	3,33	10,526	,206	,303	,201

	Average of the scale in the case of deletion of an element	Variance the scale in the case of deletion of an element	Complete correlation of the corrected items	Square of the multiple correlation	The Cronbach alpha values in the case of deletion of an element
VAR029E	4,08	14,115	0,69	,371	,300
VAR029F	4,15	13,543	,169	,634	,249
VAR029G	3,48	7,767	,272	,664	,120
A. The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items. This violates reliability model assumptions. You may want to check item codings.					

The results provided by the statistical tools used to test the variables of Hypothesis 2 confirm our hypothesis which stipulates that SMEs are internationalising more in a framework of partnership rather than outside of it. **Result Hypothesis 2: Validated**

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership facilitates the internationalisation of the south of the Mediterranean SMEs through Market expansion

Table 13: variables of Hypothesis 3

Items	Denominated
VAR 31A	Geographical proximity
VAR 31B	Cultural proximity
VAR 31C	languages spoken
VAR 31D	Political, economic and social stability
VAR 31E	Countries with low competition
VAR 31F	Priority for developed countries

The Index KMO for 0.568 can be qualified for a limited validity, the reading of the test KMO indicates to us that the correlations between the items are of an average quality, more the test of sphericity of Bartlett is a hypothesis test, its meaning is equal to 0.00, thus the result of the test of sphericity of Bartlett is significant, which means that it must accept the hypothesis 3, it would therefore be legitimate to continue our study by the method of analysis in principal component (ACP).

Table 14: KMO index and Bartlett's test

	Measuring accuracy of the sampling of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin	,568
Bartlett's test of Sphericity	Khi two approximated	250,952
	Df	15
	Sig	0

The following table is a measure of the quality of the representation, that is to say the weight variable, for each of the variables in the analysis. In the factor analysis in main components, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership does not participate in a clear manner to the internationalisation of SMEs (Test KMO low). These first two variables include nearly 83,495% of the variance explained; as well the table of values own presents the indications on the importance of the components, and on the evolution of the importance cumulative and also the quality of the information returned by the first six factors.

Table 15: The total variance explained

Component	Total	% Of Variance	% Cumulative
1	2,743	45,716	
2	1,305	21,743	
3	,962	16,036	83,495
4	,579	9,648	93,143
5	,279	4,654	97,797
6	,132	2,534	100,00
Extraction Method: Principal component analysis.			

The data of the analysis after rotation by using the methods of principal component analysis are reduced to two components, with a percentage of cumulative variance to the height of 67,459%.

Table 16: The total variance explained

Component	Total	% Of Variance	% Cumulative
1	2,743	45,714	45,714
2	1,305	21,745	67,459
Extraction Method: Principal component analysis.			

The analysis of the total explained variance shows us we can extract the two first principal components that allow to take into account approximately 67.45% of the total inertia. The following table gives us a global overview of the statistics related to our hypothesis six variables. With regard to the correlation, the data indicate a low correlation between the elements of the analysis; this is also true for the values of the alpha.

Table 17: Elements statistics

	Average of the scale in the case of deletion of an element	Variance the scale in the case of deletion of an element	Complete correlation of the corrected items	Square of the multiple correlation	The Cronbach alpha values in the case of deletion of an element
VAR031A	10,66	,631	,681	,743	-,610
VAR031B	11,54	1,059	,056	,170	,078
VAR031C	11,38	1,086	-,142	,377	,283
VAR031D	10,64	,778	,434	,763	-,280
VAR031E	10,90	,657	,216	,469	-,189
VAR031F	12,33	1,597	-,572	,553	,526
A. The value is negative due to a negative average covariance among items. This violates reliability model assumptions. You may want to check item codings.					

The results provided by the statistical tools used to test the variables of Hypothesis 3 confirm the invalidity of our hypothesis. These results show (according to the table of the chi-square, the CPA, test KMO) that the hypothesis must be rejected. **Result Hypothesis 3: Invalidated**

5.CONCLUSION

Triggering SMEs Internationalisation:

In the context of Morocco, the findings of our survey confirm that most of the Moroccan SMEs are inspired by the Uppsala Model, in focusing on export and import for their internationalisation.

Significantly, More than 50% of these enterprises rely on the easiest mode of internationalisation which is export and import. However, more than 50 % of these SMEs go for internationalisation after at least 5 years of existence following the Uppsala model, which enables them to acquire the necessary skills at the local level before embarking on an international experience. On the other hand, only 10% of the sample has an export department, which justifies the financial and organisational flaws the Moroccan SMEs.

The degree of internationalisation:

To measure the degree of internationalisation of Moroccan SMEs, two variables have been used, namely the share of production intended for export and the number of countries served by these export operations. Only 15 SMEs from the studied sample devote 75% of their production to the outside market. The majority of SMEs in Morocco exchange only with a single country, (60% in our sample), which explains the limited trade relations.

In addition, 26 SMEs of our sample have stated that they have achieved a net increase (average) of their exports, due to the geographical proximity. In this same perspective, the proximity has not allowed to diversify the markets for Moroccan SMEs, since they focus on the traditional market which is the closest and most traditional, instead of developing other synergies beyond the European market, which explains that this partnership has a low impact on the diversification of markets for the Moroccan SMEs. This stagnation of relations with the EU, has not permitted Moroccan SMEs to develop new markets, especially in Africa and with the Arab world. It is true that in recent years Moroccan SMEs have to achieve a growth at the level of political and commercial relations with African countries, and some Arab country, but this is far from being enough.

For the EU, advantage must be taken from of the geo-strategic strengths of Morocco in order to develop its influence on Africa and the Mediterranean. In this regard, Morocco has chosen to reorient itself toward Africa as a new development and growth strategy and to address deficiencies and also to compete with the northern shore of the Mediterranean. For this reason, Morocco's choice of Africa in agreement with the current reconfigurations of the world economy impacted by dynamic emerging countries and by the orientation towards a multipolar global system where the African continent is called to position itself as a new world pole of growth. (Direction of Studies and financial forecasts, Morocco, 2015).

This situation appears to be clear through the new trade structure between Morocco and some partners, and which justifies the decline in trade between Morocco and the EU for the benefit of other destinations such as Africa and Asia, with whom the exchange rate rose from 6% in 2007 to 10% in 2011. The inter-firm cooperation supported by the Barcelona Agreement have participated in the development of networks of SMEs from two shores of the Mediterranean through partnerships in various forms. For Moroccan SME's, the opportunities offered by the European Union should be seized with an eye on developing local the economy and improving technology transfer as well as enhancing good management practices.

Despite the positive achievements of the euro-Mediterranean partnership, the development gaps between the two shores of the Mediterranean remain very strong, the question which then arises of whether the base of the Barcelona process is relevant. Several internal and external barriers hinder the internationalisation of the Moroccan SMEs: lack of financial resources which is a major obstacle to enterprises both on the local and on the international market, the need for knowledge and the technology gap. It is clear that proximity can play a vital role between the countries of the Mediterranean area if advantage is taken from the geo-strategic position, potential and resources of both parties and if the willingness to cooperate defies the different challenges to bring growth and prosperity to the countries of both shores.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abouyoub, H (2009), De Barcelone à l'UPM, évolution idéologique et politique de la vision euro-méditerranéenne de l'UE, Dossier IEMED (Institut européen de la méditerranée).
- [2] Almeras, G, (2009), le développement d'entreprise dans les pays méditerranéens, constats, stratégie, actions. Papers IEMED N°8 (institut européen de la méditerranée), Septembre.
- [3] Cheriet, F (2010). Internationalisation et nouvelles implantations des firmes multinationales : le processus séquentiel du modèle d'Uppsala est-il toujours d'actualité? Working paper moisa 2010-5, Montpellier SupAgro.
- [4] CNUCED (2004), Promotion de la compétitivité à l'exportation des PME, Note thématique de la CNUCED, Réunion d'experts sur la promotion de la compétitivité à l'exportation des PME. Genève 6-10 Décembre.

- [5] Coviello, N. Mcauley, A (1999). Internationalisation and the Smaller Firm: A Review of Contemporary Empirical Research. *Management International Review*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (1999 3rd Quarter).
- [6] DEPF (2015), Quelles opportunités pour les produits halieutiques marocains sur le marché africain ? Etudes direction des études et des prévisions financières, Maroc, Avril.
- [7] Krugman, P (2000). La mondialisation n'est pas coupable - vertus et limites du libre échange. Editions la Découverte.
- [8] Lecerf, M (2006), les PME face à la mondialisation. Thèse de Doctorat, université de paris - Pantheon - Sorbonne.
- [9] Levratto, N. Maarouf, R (2009) L'internationalisation des PME dans les pays en développement : Un modèle conceptuel des PME libanaises. 11es Journées scientifiques du Réseau Entrepreneuriat, 27, 28 et 29 mai 2009, INRPME, Trois-Rivières, Canada.
- [10] Levratto, N, (2009). Quelques pistes de réflexion à propos de l'internationalisation des PME de la rive sud de la méditerranée. Acte de colloque sur l'entrepreneuriat et la PME algérienne face au défi de la mondialisation : enseignements des expériences internationales. Algérie, 3-4 Mars.
- [11] Maarouf, R (2006), Le partenariat euro-méditerranéen et l'internationalisation des PME. Intervention au séminaire du pool Europe, le 20 janvier 2006, IDHE-CACHAN.
- [12] Marchesnay M (2004). *Management stratégique*, les éditions de l'ADREG.
- [13] OCDE (2004), Faciliter l'accès des pme aux marchés internationaux, 2ème conférence de l'OCDE des ministres en charge des petites et moyennes entreprises (PME). Istanbul, Turquie 3-5 juin 2004.
- [14] Ravenel, B (2003). Prendre en compte la dimension stratégique de la globalisation. *Mouvements*, 2003/1, N° 25.
- [15] Stibon J C, (2009). Le compagnonnage industriel, une voie nouvelle pour le partenariat interentreprises en Méditerranée. *Invest In Med*, étude N°6, Octobre.
- [16] Torres, O (2004), Essai de théorisation de la gestion des PME : de la mondialisation à la proximité. Habilitation à diriger des recherches en Sciences de Gestion, présentée le 03 Décembre, Université de Caen Basse Normandie.
- [17] Zhegn, M. Niosi, J (2011), Etude sur l'accompagnement à l'internationalisation des PME québécoise. Chaire de recherche du Canda en Gestion de la technologie, Août Data Warehouses with Web Data: A Survey," *IEEE Trans. Knowledge and Data Eng.*, preprint, 21 Dec. 2007, doi:10.1109/TKDE.2007.190746.(PrePrint)