

ENTREPRENEURIAL APPROACH TO GROWTH AND INTERNATIONALISATION: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ABOUT FOOD MANUFACTURING SMEs IN EDİRNE

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Abstract

Today, food industry is among the most important manufacturing industries and most of the enterprises in this industry are activated as SMEs. These enterprises face some difficulties in competing with large-scale enterprises in the sector. Simultaneously, they have to eliminate some barriers related to management, production, standards/quality, human resources (HR), and marketing. As a result of these facts, the owners of SMEs specialized in food sector have diversified perceptions about growth and internationalisation. Consequently, they make specific action plans in order to make their enterprises survive and be successful on regional and global platform. This study is based on face-to-face in-depth interviews which have been conducted in eight enterprises from Edirne, a city of Turkey. In the light of the qualitative approach sector-based and local difficulties have been analyzed and entrepreneurial approach and views for growth and internationalisation in food sector have been emphasized.

Keywords: Food Sector, Internationalisation, Growth, Management, SME.

BÜYÜMEYE VE ULUSLARARASILAŞMAYA GİRİŞİMCİ YAKLAŞIM: EDİRNE'DE GIDA ÜRETEN KOBİLER HAKKINDA NİTELİKSEL BİR ARAŞTIRMA

Öz

Günümüzde gıda sektörü, üretim yapan endüstrilerin en önemlileri içinde yer alır ve bu alandaki işletmelerin çoğu KOBİ niteliğindedir. Bu girişimler sektörde büyük işletmeler ile rekabet nedeniyle bazı

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zorluklarla karşılaşmaktadır. Aynı zamanda, bu işletmeler yönetim, üretim, standartlar/kalite, insan kaynakları (İK) ve pazarlama ile ilgili bazı engelleri aşmak zorundadırlar. Bu gerçeklerin sonucu olarak gıda sektöründe uzmanlaşmış KOBİ'lerin sahipleri büyüme ve uluslararasılaşma ile ilgili çeşitli algılara sahiptir. Sonuç olarak, onlar bölgesel ve küresel platformda girişimlerini devam ettirebilmek ve başarılı olabilmek için belli hareket planları yaparlar. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin bir kenti olan Edirne'de bulunan sekiz girişimci ile derinlemesine yüzyüze görüşmeye dayanmaktadır. Niteliksel yaklaşım ile sektör bazlı ve yerel olarak karşılaşılan zorluklar analiz edilmiştir ve gıda sektöründeki büyümeye ve uluslararasılaşmaya girişimci yaklaşım ve bu konularla ilgili görüşler vurgulanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gıda Sektörü, Uluslararasılaşma, Büyüme, Yönetim, KOBİ.

I. INTRODUCTION

Both in developed and in developing countries most of the enterprises are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). SMEs have become important as sources for employment and as contributors to economy. Especially, it is shown as a pattern like that of the high performing Asian economies due to SMEs contribution [30;37]. This reality reveals the necessity of focusing on the problems and difficulties, success factors and needs of these enterprises.

In addition to their sizes, there are important differences between SMEs and large-scale business. The key differences between large and small business are known as risk of failure, market power, management, motivation of the owner, the brand, the strategy, the organization of the enterprise, the compensation and benefits for the workers, human resources, training and recruiting, investment policies, source of finance, innovation, competitive advantages, and political influence [45]. These components can also be analyzed under the titles of "Founder's vision, Entrepreneurial drive, Human and non-human assets, Organizational capabilities, Management Process and Global Market Orientation". For this classification, for small and family businesses with respect to national and global market a global strategic framework for entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial firms are taken into consideration [56].

Around the world and in Turkey, the owner of an SME has a critical role in determining the brand identity of the enterprise. From the point of SMEs, with the owner of the enterprise as possessing also a manager characteristic, the existence of an entrepreneurial character is a matter of subject. In this sense, equipped with production technique and knowledge, experienced in related area, with their product and service potential, these enterprises may carry an entrepreneurial quality [31]. These enterprises may come across failure as well as success.

Researchers have found out that the failure ratios of SMEs are greater than the ratios of Large Scale Enterprises. Financial problems are one of the most critical factors in the failure ratios [41]. Overcoming challenges, sustaining growth [53] and barriers to entrepreneurship and SME growth such as legal environment, administrative burden, external financing, tax

burden and unfair competition [25] are among the examined titles affecting the success of SMEs. Financial crisis periods also play a vital role in failures. Styles of management, leader characteristics such as entrepreneurs' personal characteristics affecting SMEs' growth [43] play a critical role in local, regional or global financial crisis periods. Examples about the leaders' and employees' characteristics in the SMEs during the global financial crisis have been examined qualitatively in one of the studies [51]. Researchers have also figured out that 57% of the SMEs have become unsuccessful in the first five years of their establishments. That's why in their life cycle the first five years are very important for SMEs. The basic reasons for failure are summarized as follows [41]:

- Insufficient management
- Insufficient capital
- Job-related crisis
- The problems in the payment to credit side
- Competition

In addition to these reasons, in Turkey there are also the problems related to:

- The location of the enterprise
- Uniting with the large-scale industry
- The inability to have a share in the governmental/state bids for a contract
- Training and Education

Failure may be caused because of the lack of "growth" attempt, as well. Entrepreneurial approach to growth is thought to be another important point that should be taken into consideration. In literature it is seen that, when smaller firms grow in size, measured with reference to indicators such as sales, employment, market share, physical outputs, profits and assets, changes occur and the phenomenon of 'growth' is concerned with respect to these changes [11; quoted from 12]. Wakkee et al. [50] in their research on SMEs growth have reached the result that one of the most valid factor for growth is the SMEs' acquirement of the awareness in the subject of trademark. This phenomenon may bring success instead of failure.

Some differences influence as facilitators or impediments when we compare SMEs and large-scale business. For example, exporting may naturally become a part of large business than in SMEs. The fact is that, the case of exporting is seen one of the most commonly seen part of internationalisation according to European Commission in 2011.

When compared to large business, it is known that because of several reasons exporting is more difficult for SMEs. The researches in literature mention causes such as the failure in

developing proactive environmental strategies resulting from the inefficiency in following and adapting to the changes in the environment [29]. Another point is that, most of the SMEs don't have the necessary international environmental certificates like ISO14000 [7].

Though there exist differences between the characteristics of the establishments, all kinds of enterprises have to face global competitive and uncertain environmental circumstances that affect their success.

Scarborough, Wilson & Zimmerer have proposed some principles for the success of SMEs in globalizing world. Nine principal strategies for being global in the SMEs are mentioned as: being present on the web, relying on trade intermediaries, establishing joint ventures, engaging in foreign licensing arrangements, franchising, using counter trading and bartering, exporting products or services, establishing international locations and importing and outsourcing [42].

In the research of Korsakiene [23], for Lithuanian SMEs, profit goals and networks are seen as the main drivers of internationalisation whereas the forceful international competition is put forth for consideration as being a hindering factor for the growth of the firms. Among the main drivers of internationalisation, it is seen that international networks are of strategic importance to firms for identifying international opportunities and foreign exchange partners, acquiring foreign market knowledge [5].

When the studies about SMEs are analyzed, researches about innovation [40;38;6;1], supply chain issues in SMEs [47], entrepreneurial orientation relationship with other variables such as performance, learning in SMEs [46;9], the contribution of SMEs to national economy with regard to exports, foreign investment and productivity performance, involving the discussion about the role of subcontracting as well as that of institutions in supporting SME development, and aspects of growth [32] have been seen.

Among the studies carried out about SMEs in Turkey, there exists a lot of studies examining the problems of SMEs [10;15;33]. In these studies, the problems of SMEs have been analyzed with theoretical and quantitative methods, and have been presented in a joint point of view without any sector or local distinction.

The importance of this study is that, SMEs have a critical role in a nation's development and industry. That's why there is also a need to examine the needs/problems of SMEs with respect to sectors in a detailed and profound way. Because of this reason and need, the aim of this research has been decided as to reveal and identify the problems that block the way to growth and internationalisation and also to attempt to discover the success factors in SMEs in Edirne-TURKEY by the help of in-depth face-to-face interviews with the owners of SMEs in food sector. The city of Edirne is selected because it's located on the European side of Turkey and the city's location is important for the European interactions. Furthermore, Edirne is like a bridge to the developed countries in Europe.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

II.1. The Role of SMEs in the Turkish Economy

When it comes to defining SMEs, there are different points of view: with respect to the European Commission's definition; the micro or 'very small' category has fewer than ten employees, the small one represents 10-49 employees, and the medium class has the personnel of 50-249 [35]. With respect to "The regulations for the definition, qualities and classification of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises", the enterprises that have total employee number of less than 250 and have net amount of total annual sales or financial balance sheet of not more than 25 million Turkish Liras, are defined as SMEs. The enterprises of which 25% and with higher percentage of the capital or voting rights are under the control of public organizations, aren't accepted as SMEs although they have properties in the limits mentioned above [22].

According to 2011-2013 SMEs action strategy report; SMEs are accepted as important components of regional development and progress that provide the diffusion of the production activities to nation-wide. SMEs are of great importance in Turkey. They signify 99 percent of the total number of Turkish companies. Policy-makers have interested in designing and implementing effective programs in order to improve SMEs. That's why various associations for different aims apply/present supporting and encouraging programs for SMEs. In these programs, donation, support with payment, advantage for tax, direct credit and credit usage are used as support tools.

Despite these support efforts and programs, it can be seen that SMEs haven't reached the desired position, yet. The report published by the Turkish Association of Statistics presents that SMEs in Turkey form 99,9% of the total entrepreneurial organization number, 77,8% of the recruitment, 51,5% of compensation, 64,8% of endorsement, 55,5% of factor cost and added-value, 41,1% of gross investment related to physical properties. When it comes to Research and Development, 14,9% of the expenses belongs to SMEs [55].

Considering these high ratios; like their contribution to the nation's economy and recruitment, in order to make the SMEs reach to better conditions and levels in their added-value, identification of problems/needs and new applications are needed to support their development.

II.2. Food Industry and Food Industry Problems

The problems that SMEs face in Turkey are emphasized as problems related to the production, products, marketing, export, financial management, general management and organization [10;33]. A study, carried out about twenty-eight SMEs in the city of Istanbul in Turkey, has focused on these enterprises' problems about production, quality and technology. The results of the examinations have shown that SMEs focusing on different versions of

models of the same product, they have produced parts and inputs for the other firms, and furthermore they haven't had enough capital, technology and manufacturing facilities for the end products [15].

In the research, the food sector is focused on. So, first of all the frame of this sector should be identified and the basic problems of this sector should be highlighted.

The sector of food industry covers eight different sub-sectors: meat and meat products, milk and dairy products, water products, cereal and starch products, vegetable and fruit processing, plant oils and oil products, sugar and sugar products and other products and feed industries for animals. This sector faces general problems in all kinds of enterprises, on the other hand, it has some specific problems related to small-scale business. These related items can be stated as [54]:

- Problems that are caused by the fact that the numbers of these organizations being relatively high
- Production not certified for hygiene standards because of their scattered and non-registered structure
- Low-quality products
- Problems to do with fair competition
- Problems that are related to the durability of food products and
- The problems about food products' controls and production controls.

As it was cited above, exporting is more common for large-scale enterprises than for SMEs. Among the major exporting problems in food SMEs, there exist their being inadequate on product quality and not having the required certificates [8]. In addition to these factors, the fact is that, the large-scale businesses make the competition difficult with their shares and popular brands.

There are many other studies about SMEs all over the world. In a qualitative study, regarding SMEs in the food sector in Italy, 20 case studies have been included in the research. This research, providing a variety of insights into new ways of conceptualizing Knowledge Management Systems (KMSs) and practical examples of successful implementation of KMSs in SMEs, has suggested with its data that knowledge domain and innovation behavior permit significant distinctions between different kinds of KMSs [28].

In literature, attitudes of individuals (management and non-management) in SMEs to the environment and environmental compliance have been taken into consideration in another research that has been carried out in United Kingdom. In that research, the importance of the environment to individuals has been focused on. For the environmental performance, compliance with legislation is defined as a key motivating factor [35].

In addition to the mentioned points above, the fact is that, most of the conditions, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and problems of SMEs in other sectors are commonly faced in food sector. Entrepreneurial approaches of the owners of the SMEs in this sector and local characteristics add complementary dimensions to these commonly faced subjects. For example, the analysis of the local characteristics of Edirne concerning food sector is important for the outcomes. The economic structure of Edirne is mainly based on agriculture. This is why, the most significant sector of the city is the food sector that processes agricultural products. In Edirne, the ratio of the enterprises in food sector is 63% in total. Furthermore, the export ratio of the enterprises in this city is found to be below average ratios in Turkey [19]. Our research, moving from this reference point, has taken into account the entrepreneurial approach to growth and first steps to internationalisation from a local perspective for SMEs in food sector.

II.3. Internationalisation, Entrepreneurial Approach, SMEs and Growth

When reviewed, several papers exist about these topics in literature. To start with internationalisation, strategies and strategy changes of SMEs are among the research subjects.

In a research a detailed examination of the dynamics of 116 strategy changes, which were influenced by a firm's relationships in 20 New Zealand and Swedish internationalising SMEs. The main findings were that business relationships were more influential in internationalisation strategy changes than social relationships [3].

For internationalisation, it has its impact on SMEs for European countries in different sectors; tourism industry is one of them [44]. This sector is thought to have intersections with food sector and appears to be among the supportive industries for food sector since local and regional special/traditional tastes play a critical role from touristical aspect.

There also exist papers about the intersections of internationalisation, entrepreneurship and SMEs [2;4;21]. In these studies the issues are examined from strategical point of view.

In studies related to entrepreneurship, the entrepreneur and his/her personality traits were mostly considered. Entrepreneurship field is claimed to focus on two subjects: an opportunity and a person who seizes it [13]. When it comes to entrepreneurial approach, it is defined as involving innovative, proactive, risk-taking actions [18]. In addition to this definition, in several studies the expression of "entrepreneurial approach" is used for the entrepreneurs' viewpoints related to different subjects [18;20;36].

In SMEs entrepreneurial approach for the subject of growth appears to be interrelated with entrepreneurial approach for internationalisation. Positive approach to grow and attending to grow is a prerequisite for being global, complimentarily, global enterprises are open to growth. Sustainable and sustaining growth [27;52;53] looks like another comtemporany issue in this field.

Studies in literature also cover many subjects like SME growth drivers and success factors [16], female entrepreneurs and SME growth [39], international entrepreneurship, growth decisions and performance in SMEs [49], SME as a component for economic growth [48].

When it comes to the scope, our research have two primary aims, it is thought that since internationalisation is the first step to globalization, the first aim of this study is:

- (i) to understand what reasons, problems, needs and success factors may lie behind the interviewed SMEs' entrepreneurs' present perceptions and attitudes towards growth, internationalisation and the second aim of this study is:
- (ii) to understand outcomes of such perceptions and attitudes on their strategic choices.

As a study localized in Edirne and focused on only micro and small enterprises, this research has tried to reach these two aims with the help of face-to-face interactions. The next section summarizes the details of the research method of this study.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

“Many of the surveys of SMEs have relied on survey research techniques which provide an understanding of ‘what’ is done or which attitudes are important rather than ‘why’ something is done and how attitudes have developed and changed. Futhermore, the focus on SMEs tends to an assumption of homogeneity which encompasses some common internal corporate structures, shared outlook amongst owners and workers and common external economic and social contexts. Such assumptions present significant conceptual difficulties” [35 quoted from 14;17].

The research, being exploratory in nature, has been conducted with qualitative research techniques.

Therefore, the research question of this study has been formed as: “What are the accepted local problems, needs and success factors of SMEs in Food Sector in Edirne and what are the positive and negative outcomes related to growth, internationalisation and global actions with respect to the owners'/entrepreneurs' perceptions and attitudes about their strategic choices?”

After forming five questions in relation to this research question, in order to find out the probable perceptions of the entrepreneurs, three different experts' point of view about these questions have been taken into consideration. One of these experts is an entrepreneur of a SME from the city of Edirne and the other two are entrepreneurs of another SME from the city of Istanbul. For the final format, the interview questions are as follows:

1. Have you got any problems & do you have to face any difficulties related to the finance, production, management-organization, human resources, marketing, accounting, public relations, research and development (R&D) functions of your enterprise?

2. What is the problem that you most frequently encounter and takes time to solve?
3. a. Which methods does your enterprise prefer to use in order to overcome the difficulties?
 - b. In addition to these methods, though not applied yet, are there any other recommendations for precautions and solution methods that you find appropriate to apply?
 - c. In your opinion, what are the main reasons for not being able to apply these solution methods?
 - d. Have you got any activities related to R&D?
4. Do you have connections with abroad? Do you export your products?
 - a. If not, what are the reasons for not exporting?
 - b. If yes, where do you export the products? Why do you prefer these locations?
 - c. What are the difficulties you face in your connections with abroad?
 - d. Have you got any new action plans related to abroad in the near future or in the mid-term? What are the factors that affect these plans?
5. Have you taken any kind of support from a consultant/a specialist for your activities? If not, why not? If yes, in what sense have you taken the support and would you please tell us about this support and your comments/experience about it briefly?
6. Have you attended any kind of education program/training related to business administration, food industry, products, food sector etc.?

The research method of this qualitative study is face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interview technique. Relying on Qualitative methods while researching has certain advantages. To begin with, the nature of the research questions determines the research methods as some research questions require particularly qualitative one. As this research asks the question of “What are the accepted regional problems, needs and success factors of SMEs in Food Sector in Edirne and what are the positive and negative outcomes related to growth, internationalization and global actions with respect to the owners’/entrepreneurs’ perceptions and attitudes about their strategic choices?”. Also this method is used as it gives an opportunity to study on the issues in depth and detail. Researchers can deal with the topics without constrained with pre-determined categories of analysis, unlike quantitative studies. What is more, if the researcher can overcome the problem of validity by increasing research skills, this analysis will explore credible results [34].

As mentioned before, the importance of SMEs in the economic structure of Edirne and the high ratio of the enterprises in food sector in this city have a significant role in the choice of sampling. Furthermore, in the reports it is seen that these enterprises in the sector have

low levels of exporting and they have limited growth tendency. In order to make an in-depth examination about SMEs in food sector the enterprises were chosen with the help of the research method as described below.

First of all, the list of the food producing firms were taken from the Association of Industry and Commerce in Edirne and the appointments were set by calling the members in the list one by one. From the list, among the organizations which we got in touch with, eight firms responded positively and they were included in the research. The appointments from these eight different SMEs specialized in the production of food and beverage were scheduled in Edirne, from January to December 2014. The enterprise owners who had accepted to be included in the research, were interviewed in Turkish. The durations of the interviews varied from 20 minutes to 1 hour. Each interview was conducted in Turkish and all the entrepreneurs were native Turkish speakers.

Interview forms as recommended in literature [26] have been completed by the researchers during the face-to-face interviews in order to classify the answer categories in a better way. The answers of the top managers and entrepreneurs have been recorded and coded for a better classification.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research covered the findings gathered during the interviews of eight enterprises. The answers included covered local and regional problems, needs and success factors of SMEs in Food Sector in Edirne and the positive and negative outcomes related to growth, internationalisation and global actions in accordance with the owners' and entrepreneurs' perceptions and attitudes about their strategic choices. In the interviews, for the first question; the difficulties, problems and needs related to the functional dimension of the enterprises were discussed. The owner of each enterprise made a different emphasis:

- "...there's no apparent trouble but there's a lack of trust to personnel and there exists structural limitations like the insufficiency of the production area for new products and growth..."

- "...looks like there's no dimension without trouble; the low-quality raw material, the difficulties in marketing, musts in the regulations related to food sector are among the difficulties..."

- "...insufficient investment capital, cultural preferences, difficulties in advertisement and marketing..."

- "...the lack of technical knowledge and knowledge about marketing, problems about raw material, not being able to be part of foreign markets, insufficient capital..."

The answers have shown that raw material quality, capital, technical knowledge, regulations, personnel and marketing were the first four enterprises' difficulty, problem and/or need areas.

When it comes to the other four enterprises, the answers have also some common and different points when compared:

- "...difficulties in advertising..."
- "...official permission procedure for license, acquisition of required documents, required standards for quality, financial matters, raw-material, low capacity, marketing..."
- "...insufficient sales personnel, rivals' negative attitudes"
- "...problems related to personnel."

For the first question, the answers of the owners of the eight enterprises have shown that though the problems, difficulties and needs of priorities might change from enterprise to enterprise; the matters of raw material and product quality, capital, personnel, advertising and marketing were commonly mentioned in most of the answers. In addition to these points, the facts about "low-capacity" and "rivals" were also stated in the interviews. For this question, the expressions about cultural dimension were only stated in one of the enterprises and another one's owner included the factor of foreign market in the answer.

The second question is about the problems of high frequency occurrence and most time taking to solve. The highlighted problems are as follows:

- Competition with the large scale companies
- Machines going out of order, customers' not obeying the rules for storage of the products
- Financial difficulties like the time delay in revenue or the negative effect on the balance because of the length of production cycle period
- Difficulties in reaching the required standards for raw-material
- Costly machines which form a barrier for renewal of the hardware
- Advertising barriers
- Perceptions related to the people authorized being not enough concerned about the needs of SMEs
- International standards
- The gossips about the product
- The personnel related problems

The methods preferred by the owners to overcome the difficulties are:

- The strengths of the enterprise like customer potential, product and service quality, price advantage with respect to low-cost approach
- Downsizing
- Credit support
- One-to-one advertising and marketing
- Attending to the fairs in the sector and focusing on tourists as customers
- Being patient and calm while continuing the advertising activities
- Experience and the occupational knowledge that taught by previous generations
- For hygiene and quality, the use of utmost care while obtaining the raw-material
- The training of the personnel and raw-material suppliers
- Long-term agreements with raw-material suppliers
- Periodical meetings with personnel
- Observation
- Problem-solving and thinking methods
- Storage of raw-material in case of pressurizing competition

The answers to the next question are related to recommendations for other methods and they are stated as:

- Web-based advertising activities
- Allied agreements among competitors with raw-material suppliers
- Training related to raw-material, producers and personnel (e.g. training related to animal feeding for the quality requirements of milk)

Only in one of the owners' interview, the product characteristics were mentioned as the possible cause of not being able to apply the methods.

For the research and development (R&D) activities two of the owners stated that they didn't have R&D activities but one of these owners added that they would have a plan for R&D. Among the eight enterprises, five of the owners mentioned that for R&D activities they continued making experiments. Two owners pointed out the role of the food engineers in the processes. Two of the other owners emphasized that they made trials themselves for product R&D. Another firm mentioned that they would start to produce organic butter free from additives in the near future.

Despite exporting activities are the most common way to gain entry to foreign markets, especially for small-to-medium-sized enterprises only one of the owners among the enterprises gave information about the enterprise's experience related to the connections abroad. International networks are of critical importance to be connections abroad for small firms. Only this enterprise had experienced exportation to Japan but only once. One of the owners told that he had been thinking about exportation in the long-term plans but not in the short-run term. One owner mentioned about his children and added that his children had such plans for the future.

The main reasons for not exporting when asked are as follows:

- The risk of failure in meeting the demand amount
- The requirements for high-quality standards
- Investment costs for exportation
- Foreign companies' power in competition
- Difficulties related to customs
- Quotas of foreign countries
- Procedures related to exportation
- The products' expiration dates not appropriate for exportation
- Exportation not being included in the company's targets

Since these enterprises didn't have any specific connections with abroad for that time being, they didn't mention about any specific area or location for their exportation preferences. Only one of the enterprises emphasized that exportation of cheese was under consideration.

Three of the enterprises gave information about their supporters for donations as Ministry of Agriculture and KOSGEB (Turkish Association for the Development of SMEs) but none of these enterprises mentioned any donation or support after 2012.

The demographics of these enterprises cover the following characteristics:

- All of the interviewees were the owners of the enterprises
- Four of the enterprises had an employee numbers of less than 10 people, the other four enterprises employee numbers were between 14 and 35
- The age of the enterprises ranged from 3 years to over 45 years
- All of these enterprises were active in food&beverage sector
- All of these enterprises managed the production processes themselves
- The owners' educational backgrounds were not directly related to food or food

production but most of them mentioned about having attended to training programs, courses and fairs related to food sector

The following findings are some other points related to the enterprises:

- In one of the enterprises the owner thought that he had already reached his targets. He didn't want to encourage delegation in the workplace. He mentioned that the work atmosphere was like that of a family's. In addition to this, he took the full responsibility by himself and on his own. He didn't want to take any risks of failure and he would rather have full authority and power of control. He didn't have any positive entrepreneurial approach to growth or internationalisation. Looks like, he made all the decisions on his own.
- Another owner emphasized the importance of investment capital. This owner defended the protective approach for the present firm size and didn't think of growth. He thought that competition didn't exist in the region in the food sector, on the contrary there existed local philanthropy. The owner had confidence in himself and in his products' specialty, he was open to newness but looked like not being able to take risks for growth and internationalisation.
- The other owner thought that the regional climate conditions were advantageous for competition. He said that he followed the environmental developments and opportunities, with his positive entrepreneurial approach to growth and internationalisation.
- The owner of the fourth enterprise felt himself alone as an entrepreneur, waited for support, attention, and the inquiry about the company's needs and about his point of view for the business. He found product diversity as an advantage and thought that competition had a positive impact on product quality.
- Another one emphasized that his children had plans for growth and internationalisation but he himself didn't think of any renewal or innovation in his entrepreneurial approach to growth or internationalisation for that time being.
- The sixth owner had plans for new and large markets after being documented.
- The other owner emphasized the importance of the local/regional specialty of the products and regional sales strategy, added that the increase in the number of tourists would make a great difference in the production amounts and would trigger growth and internationalisation, and defended that the product represented the city brand.
- The last owner had hesitations and fear about the risks of growth and internationalisation, and didn't take the opportunities into consideration because of the possibility of losing control, had an entrepreneurial approach open to innovation about the products but didn't have motivation or feel of need for growth or internationalisation.

When the findings were generally evaluated, it was seen that the interviewed entrepreneurs of the enterprises in the food sector included in the study had limited positive intentions about growth and internationalisation. Considering the answers and the statements of the entrepreneurs, the reasons of this limited positive approach may be expressed as the entrepreneurs' not including the concepts of growth and internationalization as priorities in their visions, their not being enough equipped with professional background or point of view in order to overcome the difficulties they faced and their lack of knowledge about the processes, procedures, and positive outcomes related to growth and internationalisation.

V. LIMITATIONS, FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study has its limitations including regional characteristics, entrepreneurial approach differences and limits of the entrepreneurs' and the owners' perceptions about the questions in addition to food and beverage sector properties' limitations and the limits related to qualitative research methods. Findings are limited with the statements of the interviewees and written sources.

The following points are recommended to be taken into consideration for future studies:

- In family business and for local and regional entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial approach for different issues looks like being transferred from previous generations to present and future generations, and the entrepreneurial attitudes are somehow taught and used in positively and negatively developing trends. Exploring in depth the way in which positive entrepreneurial attitudes can be taught to young generations [24] for local and regional SMEs in food sector and education and training needs are thought to play triggering roles for the positive formations of future entrepreneurs, for the owners of SMEs and SMEs as a whole.
- Considering the personal statements and views of the interviewed entrepreneurs and owners, it can be seen that difficulties, needs and problems in the functional dimensions of the enterprises hinder growth attempts and shape the strategic choices towards internationalisation. That's why exploring the ways to overcome the difficulties, to meet the needs and to solve the problems in a systematic approach about SMEs, is highly recommended for future studies. Commonly mentioned difficulty, need and/or problem areas by the entrepreneurs of SMEs in local/regional studies can be accepted as warning signals for barriers to growth and internationalisation on that specific land.
- The interviews show that there exist lots of commonly mentioned points among the enterprises, whereas the priorities change from entrepreneur to entrepreneur, from owner to owner and from enterprise to enterprise. These priority differences and priority scopes appear to be affecting the "what", "how" and "why" nature of influence

of the perceptions and attitudes on the entrepreneurs' strategic choices about internationalisation and growth.

- R&D activities in SMEs give information about the owner' and the entrepreneurs' openness to change, innovation and renewal. Growth and internationalisation include and reveal a need to change, innovate and make renewals both in the structural and functional formations in an enterprise. For further considerations, the growth and internationalisation potentials of R&D-friendly SMEs can be focused on and the improvements in the performance can be traced in order to figure out the effects of the R&D approach and motives of the entrepreneurs in SMEs.
- In the interviews, it has been seen that the entrepreneurs think about the future owners of their enterprises, as well. Among the interviewees, there exist entrepreneurs thinking about their children to be the following owners of the enterprise whereas there also exist entrepreneurs who don't want to see their children facing the same difficulties by owning the enterprise. This differentiating fact is thought to affect the future growth and internationalisation of SMEs with regard to whether it is a family business at the moment or not. This can also be deeply examined in a future research.

In conclusion, the steps that should be taken by the entrepreneurs and the owners of SMEs in food sector for successful growth, internationalization attempts may differ from region to region with respect to local barriers, needs, difficulties, problems and entrepreneur's approach. The ideal way to optimize the successful road to growth and internationalisation looks like going through examining the common and differing components altogether for the SMEs in that specific sector and region.

This study, focusing on the entrepreneurial approach to growth and internationalisation in food and beverage manufacturing SMEs in Edirne, has formed an example to reveal the needs, problems, and difficulties related to growth and internationalisation from a qualitative local perspective. As being a qualitative academic research concerning SMEs in food sector in Edirne, this paper aims at inspiring future researchers to make local in-depth interview studies related to food sector in Thrace. This study also has the purpose to give an idea to the authorities while making strategic decisions for all kind of supports concerning the success, the growth and the internationalisation of SMEs.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the Association of Industry and Commerce in Edirne, the SMEs' owners and employees and the authors would like to thank also Assist. Prof. Dr. İlknur ESKİN and Assist. Prof. Dr. Onur ÇETİN for their contributions and professional support.

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