

# The Internationalisation Strategies of a Born Global Firm

A Case Study of a Dutch Start-up Company

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<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>Born global firms are an evolving subject of international business research that analyses the characteristics and strategies of firms internationalising from inception. This thesis project gives a general review of the literature on born global firms along with the case study of a Dutch start-up company. The research analyses the strategies that the case company has implemented in the past and have been successful for its growth. It also aims at identifying which factors in the internationalisation could have been or could be implemented to ensure its development. The opinions of the founder and the employees of Housing Anywhere have greatly contributed to shaping the outcomes of this research.</p>			
<p><b>Keywords</b></p> <p>Internationalisation strategies, born global firm, start-up company, entrepreneurship</p>			

## CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION .....	5
2	THE BORN GLOBAL FIRM .....	6
2.1	Definition of a Born Global Firm.....	6
2.2	Factors Related to Born Global Firms .....	8
2.3	Macro-environmental factors .....	8
2.4	Organisation-related factors .....	9
2.5	Founder-related factors .....	11
3	CHARACTERISTICS OF BORN GLOBALS FIRMS .....	13
3.1	Origin.....	13
3.2	Founders and Managers.....	14
3.3	Resources and Liabilities .....	15
3.4	Foreign Market Entry .....	17
3.5	Intermediaries .....	17
4	INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGIES OF BORN GLOBAL FIRMS .....	13
4.1	Asset Parsimony.....	20
4.2	Capabilities .....	21
4.3	Social Capital .....	22
4.4	Effectuation Logic.....	23
4.5	Entrepreneurial Orientation .....	24
4.6	Differentiation Strategies .....	25
4.7	Re-Internationalisation .....	26
5	THE CASE COMPANY: HOUSING ANYWHERE .....	27
5.1	Purpose at Founding.....	29
5.2	Extent and Scope of Internationalisation .....	30
6	RESEARCH .....	34
6.1	The Research Question.....	34
6.2	The Research Methodology .....	35
7	DATA AND RESULTS.....	37
7.1	Interview with the Founder .....	38
7.2	Survey Results and Final Review by the Founder.....	40
8	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION.....	51
	REFERENCES.....	54
	APPENDICES	
	Appendix I	
	Appendix II	

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on the topic of internationalisation of born global firms, with the example of a Dutch student start-up company where I have carried out my professional internship of the Bachelor programme. The topic provides a good overview of the company's operations and may suggest further implementation of specific internationalisation strategies in the future. The case company is a great example of a born global firm as it perfectly fits the definition and characteristics described in the literature.

The aim of the thesis is to analyse the internationalisation strategies of Housing Anywhere from a perspective of a born global firm and its business success abroad. At the same time, this thesis provides a close examination of an interesting example of a born global Dutch start-up company which, unique in its concept, uses originality and creativity to solve problems, provide solutions and grow as a firm. Investigations on how the company achieves to sell its services abroad have been carried out with personal working experience, quantitative and qualitative research on the company and literature research.

Using empirical research methods, such as personal interviews and reviews with the founder of the start-up company, and a questionnaire collecting the opinions of former and current employees, I analysed and compared the case company with the theory of born global firms. I followed the research question of what are the specific strategies used by born global firms in their internationalisation. The results showed that the case company uses several strategies described by relevant authors in born global research, such as asset parsimony, extensive social assets usage and strong reliability on the personal and professional networks.

Moreover, new methods for quick and inexpensive internationalisation used by the case company were found and described in the results, which provides additional support to the hypothesis of the company being a born global firm and to the research in the field in general. The conclusion agrees that the internationalisation strategies used by Housing Anywhere generally comply with the ones described in the literature, though there are some distinctions due to the uniqueness of the firm and the limitations in the existing research on born global firms.

## 2 THE BORN GLOBAL FIRM

### 2.1 Definition of a Born Global Firm

Born global firms are becoming a widespread phenomenon in the field of international entrepreneurship and are a rather recent topic of international business research. In fact, it is a rather modern phenomenon that has arisen thanks to favourable external conditions for fast international expansion, such as globalisation, communications and technological development. Other internal conditions, such as previous international experience of the founder and the managers, extensive professional networks and entrepreneurial spirit, are also important characteristics of a typical born global firms.

The phenomenon of born global firms has been growing in the last 20 years mostly thanks to such conditions that facilitate a quick internationalisation process of newly founded businesses. There are certainly other factors that shape the concept of born global firms, such as the founder's perspective of the world as one big market-place, organisational flexibility and that of the employees, dynamic capabilities, and other features that are often shared with start-ups and new enterprises. Both the external and internal conditions of born global firms are going to be discussed in the next chapters, so let us first examine the definition of born global firms.

What makes the born global firms special is that they by-pass the ordinary internationalisation processes that other SMEs would generally go through – first domestic expansion and establishment, then research and risk-analysis of which countries to enter next, the actual market entry to the selected countries, etc. Instead, the internationalisation process of born globals happens with a different scope and at a much faster rate. Some born global firms can only exist if present in foreign markets from the very beginning and, therefore, differ from other businesses who seek internationalisation only after domestic establishment. Some examples of companies that are dependent on international markets from the start are holiday house-swapping businesses, while other companies that might become dependent over time, are audio and video communication software.

The first definition of born globals was formed for the first time by international business researchers **Oviatt & McDougall (1994)**, when describing small or medium sized enterprises willing to jump in the international scene right from the very beginning:

*"A business organisation that seeks to derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and the sale of outputs in multiple countries"*

Note that according to this definition, the born global firms refer to the use of resources and sales of outputs when speaking about foreign market entry, two very valuable features that characterise the behaviour of born global firms. Moreover, notice that the internationalisation is defined by multiple countries: it does not specify a number as long as it is larger or equal to two. This classic definition is to this day often referred to by many publications, however, it lacks of time limitations, expansion rate and number of countries. Therefore, **Knight & Cavusgil (1996)**, two other very important contributors to the born global firms' research, impose a two-year limit on their definition of born global firms:

*"The firm should also begin exporting 'one or several products within two years of establishment, that these firms 'tend' to export at least a quarter of total production"*

This definition outlines that the born global firms start going abroad usually at the very beginning, however, it only suggests that the firm *tends* to "export" at least 25% of total production. Still this is only a suggestion that the internationalisation typically happens through export. Moreover, there is no clear outline for how many countries does internationalisation entail, though it does mentions "one or several products", which is a minimum requirement for internationalisation. Not long after the publication of this definition, **Sharma and Majkgård (1999)** and later also **Gabrielsson et al. (2004)** decide to set more strict requirements for the concept of what they call "born international" firms.

*"The rapid internationalisation of the born global firms has to result in more than 25% of sales from outside the base country within 3 years of the decision to internationalise."*

In this definition there is no mention of the number of foreign countries and no specification of the home country of the business. Moreover, the 25% of sales does not imply a dependency on foreign sales and it leaves room for an interpretation that the domestic business brings in more revenue than the foreign. The three years limitation is set after the decision to go international and not from the founding of the business. This

definition, even if quite more restrictive than the previous ones, is the most accurate one when describing born global firms and is the one I am basing my thesis project on.

## 2.2 Factors Related to Born Global Firms

Born globals is a relatively recent phenomenon that has been reported more and more frequently in the last two decades in the Western markets. International business researchers describe several factors which facilitate the establishment of born global firms on various levels. There is a reason why born global firms (also referred to as born internationals by several publications) are a growing trend these days. Many entrepreneurs choose an international career for their businesses as it may provide them competitive advantage for their business concept or simply because it would not function in only one country's market. It is thanks to innovative and brave businesses that the idea of born globals are becoming a common reality which often succeeds in creating solutions for today's globalised world.

The favourable factors for the establishment and growth of born globals are different and vary from country to country. These factors are not requirements for the creation of a born global, but can naturally support it and increase the chances of success of the business. Some observations of these factors can be made according to the background literature of born global firms. I would like to categorise them as macro-environmental factors, organisation-related factors and founder-related factors as in a study by Madsen and Servais (1997).

## 2.3 Macro-environmental factors

These macro-environmental factors are linked to the external environment of a born global firm. Some examples cited are new market conditions in many sectors of economic activity, technological developments in the areas of transportation, production and communication (Rialp et al, 2005). These advances in the modern world facilitate the possibility of distant coordination, ease the foreign export and amplify the professional and communication networks.

It is also the existence of common customer needs, which unfold into global customers, favourable channels and logistics, advances within information technologies, government policies and regulations, and transferability of the competitive advantage



(Knight and Cavusgil, 1996; Lovelock and Yip, 1996; Oviatt and McDougall, 1994, 2005a) that create more opportunities for markets that are targeted for an international scale.

Most of these developments occur on a global scale, such as the spread of new technological software or gadgets, however, others may take different amounts of time, such as government policies and legislation. An excellent example for this is the American-founded company Uber®, which tried to establish a market in many of the European countries, however, due to fiscal legislation difficulties it was forced to withdraw from Belgium and France.

Global communications and logistics mean also global access to a worldwide clientele for the offerings of the born global firms. Reaching a transnational profile of customers around the globe is now feasible (Cavusgil and Knight, 2015), especially approaching a niche-market. Moreover, some authors argue that the decision to internationalise at founding is strongly influenced by the size of the home market and its initial volume of production, as well as by cultural and economic activities (Fan & Phan, 2007).

A good example can be found in the Netherlands where, besides the case company, there are many born global firms, such as the education-related firm Study Portals. It aims to provide education counselling to students interested in study programmes around the world, while promoting hundreds of higher education institutions around the world. This is also a good example of niche-market firm which has grown dependent on the international market to maintain its business success.

However, other authors claim that born global firms emerge not only from small domestic markets, but also from economies with large internal markets. Facilitated by globalization, the internet and other modern communications technologies, the cost of internationalisation doesn't hinder under-resourced companies (Cavusgil and Knight, 2015).

#### 2.4 Organisation-related factors

The organisation-related factors are related to both external and internal factors of a born global firm. Some examples are global business environment, the founders and factors related to their network and organisation, overcoming resource scarcity and obtaining market knowledge through networking, similar internationalisation strategies

within the same industries (Johanson and Mattsson, 1988; Johanson and Vahlne, 2003; Oviatt and McDougall, 2005b; Coviello and Munro, 1997; Sharma and Blomstermo, 2003).

A special focus should be given to the increased importance of global networks and alliances, which are some of the most valued assets of a born global firm. Additionally, the organisational formation through internalization of some transactions, strong reliance on alternative administrative framework to access resources, establishments of foreign location advantages and control over unique resources explain the alternative factors that play a role in the existence of born globals (Rialp et al, 2005). An example can be brought by a competitor of the case company, called Nestpick, which established temporary connections in their target cities of internationalisation in order to enter the markets through the expertise of locals.

Networking is considered a crucial matter when speaking about the success factors of born global firms. It is not only essential for obtaining market knowledge, but also to establish market commitment. This can be done through exploiting the knowledge market of the national distributors, letting them make the commitments within each local market and accumulating the international intelligence (Rialp et al, 2005). Furthermore, networks and networking competencies open doors by providing financing, market access, distribution channels, referrals and a pool of key contracts for learning and internationalisation (Coviello, 2006). Logitech® is one of the success stories of born global firms, which managed to export its products to national and local vendors and gain substantial recognition on the international markets in very little time.

Overall, internationalisation and international performance through alliances and collaborative partnerships are facilitated in big part by networking abilities of the born global firms (Freeman et al., 2006). This argument is strongly supported by several authors, who claim that born global firms leverage networking ability to identify and benefit from market opportunities, assist developing knowledge-intensive products and support international performance (Mort & Weerawardena, 2006). Not to forget the importance of social networks, which can increase the trust and solidarity (Zhou, Wu and Luo, 2007) towards the business and engage with competitors among born global firms (Mathews & Zander, 2007).

The main source of value creation of born globals is through product differentiation: the firm's competitive advantages are predominantly based on the innovative and leading edge nature of its products (Rialp et al, 2005). Because of the resource limitation and

the liability of newness and foreignness, the relative strengths and weaknesses are more commonly measured in accordance with the ability of the founder to maximize opportunities and overcome threats (Learned, Christensen, Andrews, Guth, 1969). Success depends on what “*the organization can master in terms of finance, manufacturing and marketing*” (Teece, Pisano, Shuen, 1991). Some of these non-traditional organisational assets may include: proactive orientation, dynamic capabilities and skillful strategy.

It is claimed that the risk perception, pro-activity, tolerance for ambiguity, and international orientation influence the likelihood of early internationalisation (Acedo & Jores, 2007; Zhou, 2007). These change aspects possess on entrepreneurial orientation and mental schemes that appear to reduce the risk of going international (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015). Related to this is the effectuation-based approach, which serves in the identification of opportunities that the born global firm may want to follow (Harms & Schiele, 2012) and therefore define the extent and scope of international strategy.

The firm’s and the employee’s flexibility and willingness to adapt to contingencies is often a factor that can determine the survival of the born global firm. The strategic flexibility to changing external conditions and circumstances makes the born global prepared to constantly adapt to target demand-related changing expectations (Rialp et al, 2005).

## 2.5 Founder-related factors

The founder-related factors are strictly internal and relate directly to the function of the founder and management, in case there is any. The founders play a fundamental role in the establishment of born global firms: their previous experience of global business management, connections with potential channels and customers are key factors to successful business (Madsen and Servais, 1997). International experience of founders and managers is a strong asset when dealing with a number of cultures and languages.

Moreover, it has been observed that the minimal use of classic internalisation schemes (such as the Uppsala model) and the greater use of alternative transaction governance structures are more likely to determine born global firms’ success (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994). With modern technological developments also comes the development of people themselves: nowadays people have access to acquire more

sophisticated entrepreneurial skills (Rialp et al, 2005), which can then be a stimulus to the founding and management of a modern and challenging firm.

The founder's and managers' vision clearly has a global vision and international ambitions when creating a born global firm. Previous international experience of founders and managers is a common factors among many born global firms (Rialp et al, 2005). They view their world as their marketplace (Cavusgil and Knight, 2015) and engage in strong commitments to the internationalisation process and expansion by personally assuming all major foreign responsibilities (Rialp et al, 2005). It is also thanks to specific dynamic capabilities that are built and nurtured by internationally entrepreneurial founders that help support early internationalisation (Weerawardena et al, 2007).

### 3 CHARACTERISTICS OF BORN GLOBALS FIRMS

According to the background research conducted for this thesis project, there are several characteristics that shape born global firms. In this chapter an analysis of several authors' works over the last two decades aims to streamline the features that make the born global firms unique. The characteristics differ from the factors because they are the activities that a born global firm assumes after its creation, whereas the factors facilitate it. There are several more characteristics that can be included in the analysis, however, these are the most important and shared ones among the literature.

To consider next to this is another important and recent publication by Coviello (2015) which suggests a reconsideration of the literature on born globals, because of the widespread misinterpretation following the Knight and Cavusgil (2004) definition of born global firms. Coviello claims that the born global firms' performance is driven by the four capabilities they identify: global technological competence, unique products, focus on quality and abilities to advantage from foreign distributors. In the following chapter, I will also consider the re-examination of the born global literature previously collected.

#### 3.1 Origin

The origin of born global firms, by definition, are international enterprises who achieve 25% of sales over the first 3 years after the decision to internationalise. They are often referred to as young companies that derive a significant portion of their revenue from international sales (Cavusgil and Knight, 2015). A special attention is brought to the fact that the international activity is sales, among many other activities that could be done in international markets.

Additionally, the managerial vision should have a clear global one (Rialp et al, 2005) and not simply regional or international as in the neighbouring countries. Coviello (2015) denies that regional internationalisation accounts for born global firms and should be simply named international new ventures. Moreover, the global vision should exist from inception (Oviatt and McDougall, 1995) and not only developed after a domestic establishment or after over three years of operations.

### 3.2 Founders and Managers

As described previously, it is often claimed in born global literature that the role of the founders and managers is extremely significant in the successful upbringing of a born global firm. Distinctive entrepreneurial prowess, typically championed by founders and managers (Tamer Cavusgil and Knight, 2015) is a common trait of born globals. They view the world as the marketplace (ADM Law Group, 2013), as justified by the fact that modern technologies and communications bring a global clientele easier to reach. Moreover, characteristics like distinct international outlook and international entrepreneurial orientation can be found in many managers (Cavusgil and Knight, 2009), which favour the attitude of risk-taking and pro-activeness.

However, according to these claims, these entrepreneurs represent asymmetrically distributed knowledge (Hayek, 1937, 1945), which is shaped by the individual's prior experiences and is instrumental in the discovery and pursuit of new business opportunities (Zander et al., 2015). In fact, Rialp et al. (2005) suggest that the skills and knowledge for born global firms are determined in great part by previous international experience of entrepreneurs and managers. This previous experience is also determined by their international networks, another essential element in the business' mix (Oviatt and McDougall, 1995).

More recent research suggests that the entrepreneur is characterised as an entire batch of identity, knowledge and networks (Sarasvathy, Kumar, York, and Bhagavatula, 2014) and may provide a link to understanding the speed and mechanisms of internationalization. According to Sarasvathy (2001), this "bundle" that is the entrepreneur is comprised of: who they are, what they know and whom they know.

Various researchers have brought suggestions on the impact of the entrepreneur's technical vs international knowledge (Nordman & Melén, 2008), and the importance of the returnee entrepreneur's foreign knowledge transfer (Filatotchev, Liu, Buck, & Wright, 2009). Likewise, networks, ties and social capital receive much attention (Coviello & Munro 1997; Ellis, 2011; Prashantham & Dhanaraj, 2010; Yli-Renko, Autio, & Tontti, 2002). What remains missing is rich insight on who the entrepreneurs driving these international ventures are. That is, their identity in terms of their qualities and characteristics.

The general agreement, as suggested by Coviello (2015) is that the founder and top management tends to see the world as our firm's marketplace. This is explained by the dominant organisational culture which favours active exploration of new business opportunities abroad; regular communication of its mission to succeed in international markets; development of human and other resources for accomplishing their goals in international markets (Coviello, 2015).

On the other hand, experience might provoke behavioural patterns in managers, who develop their own preferred ways of dealing with different cultures. Internationalization brings along complicated challenges to which some managers react by focusing on a few ways of doing things. Because of the development of such mental schemes, then carrying these experiences forward might deprive INVs of a promisingly abundant source of innovativeness in their operations. Uncovering new successful business models and concepts is accomplished through experimentation and openness (Zahra, 2005).

### 3.3 Resources and Liabilities

When speaking about the resources and assets, some of the most common characteristics of born global firms are their limited access to them because of their liability of newness, smallness and foreignness (Zahra, 2005). However, even if proportionally small and restricted in tangible resources, born global firms are gifted with unique intangible resources and capabilities (Tamer and Cavusgil, 2015) that allow them to reach their goals in the international markets. Their limitations in finances and tangible resources (Carpenter and Dunung, 2012) are in contrast with their intangible assets based on knowledge management (Rialp et al, 2005), which can be often unique and rare (Oviatt and McDougall, 1995).

An example is brought by Autio, Sapienza, and Almeida's (2000) "research with the notion of learning advantages of newness and imprinting" (Bruneel, Yli-Renko, & Clarysse, 2010; Sapienza, Autio, George, & Zahra, 2006; Schwens & Kabst, 2009). Autio et al. emphasise the advantages of bearing newness as it leaves clean ground for the formation of unique skills and capabilities.

However, another very valid point is that "*the entrepreneurs' actions lie at the core of new ventures' ability to develop ways to create value beyond their established and presumably resource-rich competitors*" (Zahra, 2005). It is resourcefulness, which is not

only the amount or the type of resources that is important, as claimed by Hamel and Prahalad (1994). This also reflects on the employees of the born global as the entrepreneurship perspective emphasizes that the individuals' degrees of operational freedom are circumscribed by the extent of resources at their disposal (Aldrich & Ruef, 2006; Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990).

International new ventures, Zahra et al. (2004) claim, combine different assumptions and cognitions of the market and competition, allowing them to find and identify various types of new opportunities that they exploit differently. In spite of the divergence in these assumptions and cognitions, the origin of international new ventures' competitive advantages seems to be found in their founders' cognitions, through which they are able to quickly discover opportunities in international markets and establish new ways to exploit them (Zahra, 2005).

The assumptions and cognitions are also known as "absorptive capacities": the ability to identify, value, select, and assimilate external knowledge and exploit it for one's own benefit and operations (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Zahra and George, 2002a). Knowledge acquired about the markets, customers, competition and suppliers provides fundamental evidence about new foreign market opportunities, potential markets entries, systems developments, new products offerings, and new ways of implementing new globals' own operations (Zahra, 2005)

In terms of foreign customers, the born globals suffer from the liability of newness, which is additionally aggravated by the liability of foreignness. In the literature, the liability of foreignness is defined as "*the costs of doing business abroad that result in a competitive disadvantage for a foreign firm*" (Zaheer, 1995). Local firms are more likely to profit compared to the foreign ones considering all other factors being equal, therefore the growth and survival of the foreign ones is at risk.

To overcome these liabilities and the knowledge gap, networking and forming alliances become important parts of visible internationalisation. However, another explanation can be found in early inward internationalisation, such as imports of international production equipment, foreign technology licensing and foreign knowledge acquisition prior to the outward internationalisation and its consequent effect on the outgoing process (Luostarinen, 1994; Jones, 1999). Internationalisation of services is very demanding even for conventional firms, but for born global firms, it is presumably even more so, requiring favourable conditions, adequate financial and earlier acquired experience.



### 3.4 Foreign Market Entry

Generally, born global firms prefer exporting as their market entry mode (Tamer Cavusgil and Knight, 2015; ADM Law Group, 2013; Coviello, 2015), and they do this by using external, independent intermediaries for distribution in foreign markets (Carpenter and Dunung, 2012; Coviello, 2015), such as foreign distributors. The reason is that by exploiting the knowledge market of the national distributors and by letting them make the commitments within each local market (Rialp et al, 2005) they benefit by surpassing their liabilities of newsness and foreignness.

National distributors are also a great source for accumulating the international intelligence and making the commitments within the export markets (Rialp et al, 2005). Exporting and leveraging independent intermediaries facilitates the operations of born global international. This flexibility allows born global firms a relatively quick and easy entry and withdrawal from foreign markets (Cavusgil & Knight, 2009).

Because of the decreased international transaction costs, a result of infrastructures arising under globalisation and from advances in information, production and communication technology (Cavusgil & Knight, 2014) born global are able to find their success through international and national intermediaries. Consequently, the exporting transaction costs are lowered and used as the main method of foreign market entry (AMD Law Group, 2013).

The external independent intermediaries are used more widely for the distribution in foreign markets (Carpenter & Dunung, 2012), as they facilitate the entry to different types of markets and customers. The customer base, therefore, is considered as worldwide clientele, since reaching a transnational profile of customers around the globe is now feasible (Cavusgil & Knight, 2014).

### 3.5 Intermediaries

Along with these rich characteristics, nevertheless, it is often the case that the companies do not possess enough resources to reach their internationalisation goals and therefore refer to other means of achieving them. Consequently, *“born globals form mutually beneficial relationships with their buyers, suppliers, other companies, trade associations, universities and research centres”* (Zahra et al., 2003).

These business relationships provide born globals with an opportunity to learn the necessary skill, which enable them to enter new country markets in which they can develop new relationships and give them a platform for entering other country markets (Johanson and Vahlne, 2003). Hence, born internationals often form alliances with large partners to benefit from their ready-built sales channels reputation and brands.

In addition, there is evidence of born globals cooperating with large multi-national corporations (MNCs), which use born globals' products in their systems (Gabrielsson and Kirpalani, 2004). This can be beneficial for born globals in the entry phase, but can become problematic if they become overwhelmingly dependent on such large channels. Furthermore, Luostarinen and Gabrielsson (2004) state that born globals depart from the holistic operation mainstream pattern (Luostarinen, 1994) by moving with unusual speed from outward operations to the co-operative stage.

Cooperation with intermediaries also facilitates other parts of the born globals' tasks, such as the customer orientation in the development of the products. The direct customer relations are mostly undertaken by the chosen international distributors (Rialp et al, 2005), however, this usually depends on the possibilities of product or service alteration from the original output.

#### 4 INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGIES OF BORN GLOBAL FIRMS

First thing to know about born global firms is that their internationalisation process differs from the classic Uppsala model, which is the most common foreign market entry mode in most enterprises. Some general definitions claim that internationalisation is a series of accumulative decisions where the firm adjusts to dynamic circumstances, both internal and external (Cyert & March, 1963). By acquiring knowledge through error and trial, firms may incrementally expand to further away countries (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Additionally, we must consider that “*strategy in international business is a prepared set of actions that managers engage with in order to profit of their firm’s resources and core competencies to gain competitive advantage*” (Knight et al., 2011).

All of these definitions are true in the born global firms’ case as well, however, we need to keep in mind that there are different types of internationalising firms and they exhibit particular internationalization routes in terms of their market entry methods as well as the activity duration in overseas markets (Jones, 1999). When considering born global firms there is a number of factors that affect their internationalization courses varying from networks, experience and information, as well as the entrepreneurs’ assessment of risk and the procedural costs in making use of the accessible resources at their availability (Bell et al., 2004).

There are more specific aspects that need to be implemented in order to guarantee a successful functioning of the firm (Knight et al., 2011). Following is an example:

1. **Flexibility:** the ability to rapidly adapt to foreign market opportunities.
2. **Quick response:** faster decision making and implementation of new operating methods.
3. **Customisation:** the ability to customize products to foreign buyers, with greater ease and smaller production runs.
4. **Risk-Taking:** an entrepreneurial spirit, high growth aspirations and a strong determination to succeed.

The founder and managers of born global firms need to find ways to juggle with the aspects of flexibility and quick response to fast changing internal and external environment, make quick decisions and adapt to changes through customisation and often taking risks. Therefore, different strategies are used to turn this into reality, such as asset parsimony, the use of social capital, effectuation logic, entrepreneurial orientation and differentiation strategies. Sometimes, internationalisation schemes of born globals do not go as planned and they are forced to withdraw from foreign markets. Jones and

Coviello (2005) argue that strategy is not a variable that can be studied, as one might, for example, the extent of foreign market knowledge. Rather, it is time-sensitive, inferred post hoc from the emergent patterns and profiles of a firm's behavior. In the following sections, I will describe the different strategies that a born global can take in order to succeed in internationalisation.

#### 4.1 Asset Parsimony

One of the most common behaviours of any new enterprise, including born global firms too, is the parsimonious management of the already lacking resources and the methods of obtaining the needed ones. This is why new enterprises often make use of the the principle of asset parsimony. According to Hambrick and MacMillan (1984) it is key to successfully meet the challenges of resource constraints of new enterprises. Because new enterprises often suffer from liabilities of newness (Stinchcombe, 1965), of smallness (Venkantaraman, 1979), and of fundamental uncertainty (Knight, 1921) the asset parsimony principle can clearly make a difference between the survival and the failure of the firm.

One of the strategies under the asset parsimony principle are the cooperative strategies (Starr & MacMillan, 1990) used to obtain legitimacy and access to critical resources. Cooperative strategies encompass the idea of collaboration with already established stakeholders to gain trust and visibility. As mentioned previously, this is the case of born global firms, as they often engage with intermediaries and facilitators for their foreign sales.

As Starr and MacMillan (1990) argue, successful entrepreneurs use their social assets and savvy to adhere to a distinct set of rules applying to asset parsimony: "*Never buy new what can be bought second-hand. Never buy what can be leased. Never rent what can be borrowed. Never borrow what can be begged*". These rules often need to be applied to born globals and examples can be found from various situations: for instance, Housing Anywhere's first office was set in the founder's own apartment to save on the rent of an office.

Some of the struggles of born global firms include the liabilities of newness and smallness (Stinchcombe, 1965), and resource constraints and uncertainty, which create both risk and opportunity (Knight, 1921). The resource based view suggests that relative strengths and weaknesses specific to the nascent firm are more traditionally assessed in

light of the ability of the founder to maximise opportunities and overcome threats (Learned, Christensen, Andrews, Guth, 1969). Success depends on what “the organisation can muster in terms of finance, manufacturing and marketing (Teece, Pisano, Shuen, 1991). This is strongly connected to the theory of substantive and dynamic capabilities.

## 4.2 Capabilities

A firm’s capabilities can make a difference between its survival and failure. The amount of resources (Hannan, 1998) and the dynamic capabilities (Autio et al., 2011; Sapienza et al., 2006) become essential in estimating growth and survival. We can distinguish two different types of capabilities:

- **Substantive capabilities:** set of abilities or resources which go into solving a problem or achieving an outcome;
- **Dynamic capabilities:** ability to change or reconfigure existing substantive capabilities. (Zahra, Sapienza, & Davidsson, 2006).

Substantive capabilities can play an essential role in overcoming obstacles and accomplishing the wanted goals. However, they would not be useful if the born global firm was not aware of how to apply them creatively and re-use them according to different circumstances the firm goes through.

Knowing how to shuffle the abilities and resources of the born global firm can bring to great outcomes, while the less these capabilities are exploited, the higher the risk of not being able to reach the wanted results. Firms can accomplish long-term growth solely if their capabilities are both substantive (e.g. marketing and technology) and dynamic (Zahra et al., 2006).

The greater the extent to which the entrepreneur adheres to the principles of asset parsimony, the greater the number of *real options* he or she will be able to take out and the greater the anticipated *total return* on this investment is likely to be (McGrath, 1996). The logic of asset parsimony rests on employing underused resources and thus keeping costs low. With frugal investment strategy, the entrepreneur can pursue or create opportunities and, if necessary, abandon them with limited exposure (Bruner, 2003).

### 4.3 Social Capital

Social capital is a topic slightly overlapping with the principles explained in asset parsimony's cooperative strategies. Social capital includes all the social assets a new enterprise can exploit for its growth and overcoming difficulties. In fact, by using social capital and connections to obtain the use of underutilised and salvageable assets, an entrepreneur can reduce to a minimum the investment required to deliver an output (Hambrick and MacMillan, 1990). Additionally, by helping create the initial resource configuration, social assets play a crucial role in helping entrepreneurs initiate an idiosyncratic process of discovery (McGrath, 1996).

Social capital can also be related to the traits and personal characteristics of the entrepreneur (Bygrave and Hofer, 1991). The primary resource of the entrepreneur when faces with the challenges of a start-up is to engage in cooperative strategies to obtain legitimacy and access to critical resources.

Some of the types of social assets can be obligation, gratitude, trust, liking, and friendship (Starr & MacMillan, 1990), however they must be used with respect and carefulness as all of them include an understanding of mutuality. Entrepreneurs may also refer to reputation, relationships or credibility of intermediaries in order to establish transaction relationships (McGrath, 1996).

Networking is known for being one of the basic strategies of any new enterprise that wishes to expand internationally and therefore is a core activity of any born global firm. For instance, relying on external facilitators (ADM Law Group, 2013) facilitates the foreign market entry and has been confirmed to be a key success factor in internationalisation (Rialp et al, 2005). Global entrepreneurs have strong international business networks (Oviatt and McDougall, 1995) and make use of them whenever possible.

Network connections with strategic alliance partners, trading companies, foreign distributors and more traditional buyers and sellers and other entities located abroad can facilitate early foreign market expansion (Cavusgil & Knight, 2009). Similar alliances also offer priceless knowledge to the born global firms on the matters of international business strategies and opportunities (e.g., Welch & Luostarinen, 1993). Born globals are therefore allowed to gain advantages abroad through network relationships, which would be otherwise rather inaccessible without such connections (Cavusgil & Knight, 2009).

#### 4.4 Effectuation Logic

When internal uncertainty is high, there is a strong incentive to invest in reducing this uncertainty, since only making the investment will do so (Dixit and Pindyck's, 1994). Effectuation logic provides an answer through techniques, such as exploitation of contingencies, improvisation and formation of markets through cooperation and partnerships (Sarasvathy, 2001). It is as a moderator that either accelerates or mitigates the influence of antecedent factors on the growth and survival of international new ventures (Gabrielsson and Gabrielsson, 2013).

A commonly referred to definition is provided by Sarasvathy (2001): "*Effectuation practices take a set of means as granted and concentrate on choosing between possible effects that can be produced with that set of means*". In other words, the born global firm needs to rely on the available the resources to achieve the outcomes and cannot have the luxury of first deciding the outcome and then gathering the resources, which are usually attributed to causation logic.

What does a decision involving effectuation involve? The set means to achieve a goal are set and usually consists of relatively unalterable characteristics/circumstances of the decision maker. The decision maker is also faced with a set of effects or possible operationalisations of generalised aspirations, in other words, the different scenarios.

Every scenario includes certain constraints on (and opportunities for) possible effects, which are usually imposed by the limited means as well as by the environment and its contingencies. Therefore, the decision maker defines specific criteria for selecting among the outcomes, such as a premeditated level of affordable loss or tolerable risk connected to the given means (Sarasvathy, 2001).

Entrepreneurs using effectuation use more resources and capabilities offered by partners and invest less in their own. This means, for example, that they attempt to resolve emerging contingencies effectively and operate on the principle of affordable loss. Often this leads to operating more on the basis of improvisation (Prashantham & Floyd, 2012) with little sunken cost, and learn quickly whether the direction chosen was the correct one.

Overall, effectuation logic is used for most of the strategic decisions of a born global firm, including internationalisation, as a way to confront situations filled with uncertainty (Read, Dew, et al., 2009). For example, to reinforce their status in foreign networks

(Johanson & Vahlne, 2009), where liabilities of foreignness are heavy. Effectuation logic is based on the argument that the environment is endogenous to the actions of 'effectuators'. Their attempt to establishment is through engagements with a network of partners and stakeholders (Read, Dew, et al., 2009).

#### 4.5 Entrepreneurial Orientation

Knight (2000) argues that an entrepreneurial orientation is an essential feature for the development of strategies in born global firms. Kundu and Katz (2003) and Zahra et al. (2003) suggest that it is the entrepreneur's of the management team's knowledge, experience and learning that facilitate the firm's performance, evolving goals and strategic actions through various motivations. Crick and Spence (2005) in a study of high-performing UK firms and Spence and Crick (2006) reveal in a comparative study of British and Canadian entrepreneurs that the combination of proactive and reactive behaviours based on the entrepreneurs' objectives, resources and perceptions of risk are the factors that affect the initial and consequent internationalization decisions.

Global firms with an entrepreneurial orientation actively look for opportunities and attempt to prepare their resources for quickly and effectively grabbing the potential opportunities. This is also known as "alertness" to entrepreneurial opportunities (McDougall et al., 1994). Chaudhry and Crick (2002) emphasise that policy makers are to advise the maximization of the international entrepreneurs' exposure on search engines (i.e. search engine optimisation), allowing them to seize the opportunities from "global exposure".

International entrepreneurship research highlights that a strong entrepreneurial orientation is crucial for sales development (Zhou et al., 2010). It can also influence the firm's performance and therefore be essential for an understanding of the firm's survival (Rauch, Wiklund, Lumpkin, & Frese, 2009). It often results in aggressive entrepreneurial mind-sets (ADM Law Group, 2013) which might create ambiguous results for both success and failure in different countries of internationalisation.

Opportunism is also considered part of entrepreneurial orientation: an example of it is a serendipitous event mentioned by Spence and Crick (2006). It includes an entrepreneur on vacation accidentally encountering an executive from an overseas firm and this "chance" encounter guiding to the creation of a joint venture. Though this orientation is



highly based on probability, entrepreneurs avidly seek for possibilities to engage in for their own advantage.

#### 4.6 Differentiation Strategies

It would be difficult to explain early and rapid internationalization without taking into account the genuine uncertainty associated with approaching and entering foreign markets, or how founders of born globals are able to overcome – or even thrive on – such uncertainty in developing their business ventures (Zander et al., 2015). Cavusgil and Knight (2015) outline a number of aspects such as the challenge to the gradual, incremental internationalization view; emphasis on internationalization under conditions of asset parsimony; and an observed predominance of differentiation and focus strategies.

When it comes to the products and services of born globals, they are usually highly specialized for markets (ADM Law Group, 2013) and the idea of super product is often emphasized (Carpenter and Dunung, 2012). The reason for this is that most of the born globals target small niche markets (McAuley, 1999; Bell et al., 2004). The size of the firm does not represent directly a limitation to international sales, therefore, bringing the assumption that competition against large established players would mostly be obsolete depending on the operating sector.

When targeting a global clientele, born global firms immediately develop strategies to expand abroad and employ differentiation strategies (AMD Law Group, 2013) to target a niche-market in different countries around the world. The firm's competitive advantages are based on the innovative nature of its products (Rialp et al, 2005), which are wanted by a specific target group.

Due to the limitation in resources and relatively specialised products and services that generally target niche markets, differentiation strategy are considered suitable for born global firms (Cavusgil & Knight, 2009). Customised products and services demand has been rising since the globalization of markets in many industries (Dalgic & Leeuw, 1994; Oviatt & McDougall, 1995).

#### 4.7 Re-Internationalisation

Not all rapidly internationalising firms have performed well according to research. However, after the initial moving into overseas, markets have improved with time (Bell et al., 2004). In other cases, withdrawal from foreign markets have been followed by secondary attempts, from as “born-again global” firms (Bell, 2001).

Indeed, Crick (2004) argues that some firms move in and out of markets and in some cases withdraw completely from overseas involvement. In fact, some modes of market entry such as exporting have fewer exit barriers from a market than others like opening subsidiaries. Withdraw from those markets are easier and can offer entrepreneurial learning for future re-internationalization (Crick and Chaudhry, 2006).

## 5 THE CASE COMPANY: HOUSING ANYWHERE

The case company is a Dutch student start-up founded in 2009 by Mr Niels van Deuren, a former student of the Erasmus University of Rotterdam. The service provided by the company is an **online housing platform** for exchange and internship students looking for short- or medium- term accommodation. This solution provides a meeting place for demand and supply of affordable student housing around the world based on the concept of shared economy. Students whose university is subscribed to the service can freely advertise their empty apartments or rooms for the duration of their stay abroad and at the same time can search for other available accommodation in their destination cities.

The **business model** is, therefore, revolving around the Higher Education Institutions paying a membership fee in order to provide the Housing Anywhere platform to their students as a way of solving housing shortages, which are common to big student and capital cities. Other business models are being considered by the company to ensure a sustainable income, such as small percentage booking fees for the students in exchange of a secure money transfer. However, because of the company values of students helping students, the general idea is to keep the platform free for students. Currently, the service is being provided in about 134 countries and over 3496 cities worldwide, based on university membership and cooperation with other housing providers (student housing agencies, other housing platforms, etc.).

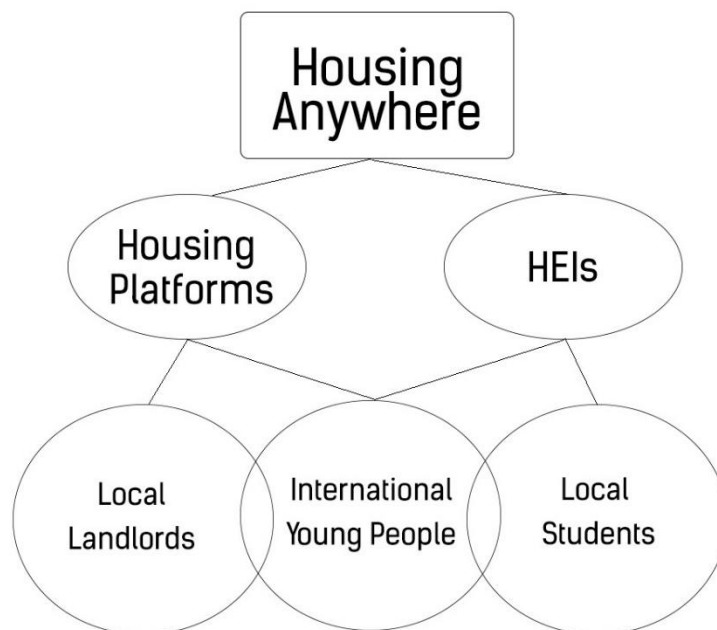


FIGURE 1. The business model of Housing Anywhere

The Housing Anywhere's **organisational structure** has been growing ever since its foundation: in 2009 it was merely a student project with a few student volunteers who worked on it part-time. In 2012 the founder Niels van Deuren decided to dedicate on the development of this start-up by recruiting students from abroad as interns to work full-time. The three main focus areas at that point were sales, marketing and recruitment. On the second investment round in 2014, a group of venture investors put their trust in the company and emphasised on the technical development of the company. Hereafter, two full-time front- and back-end developers were recruited in order to renew the website of the platform and introduce new features to keep up with the technological developments and requests of the users. At present time, the company has approximately 20 employees of whom five are full-time and the rest are interns or part-time workers.

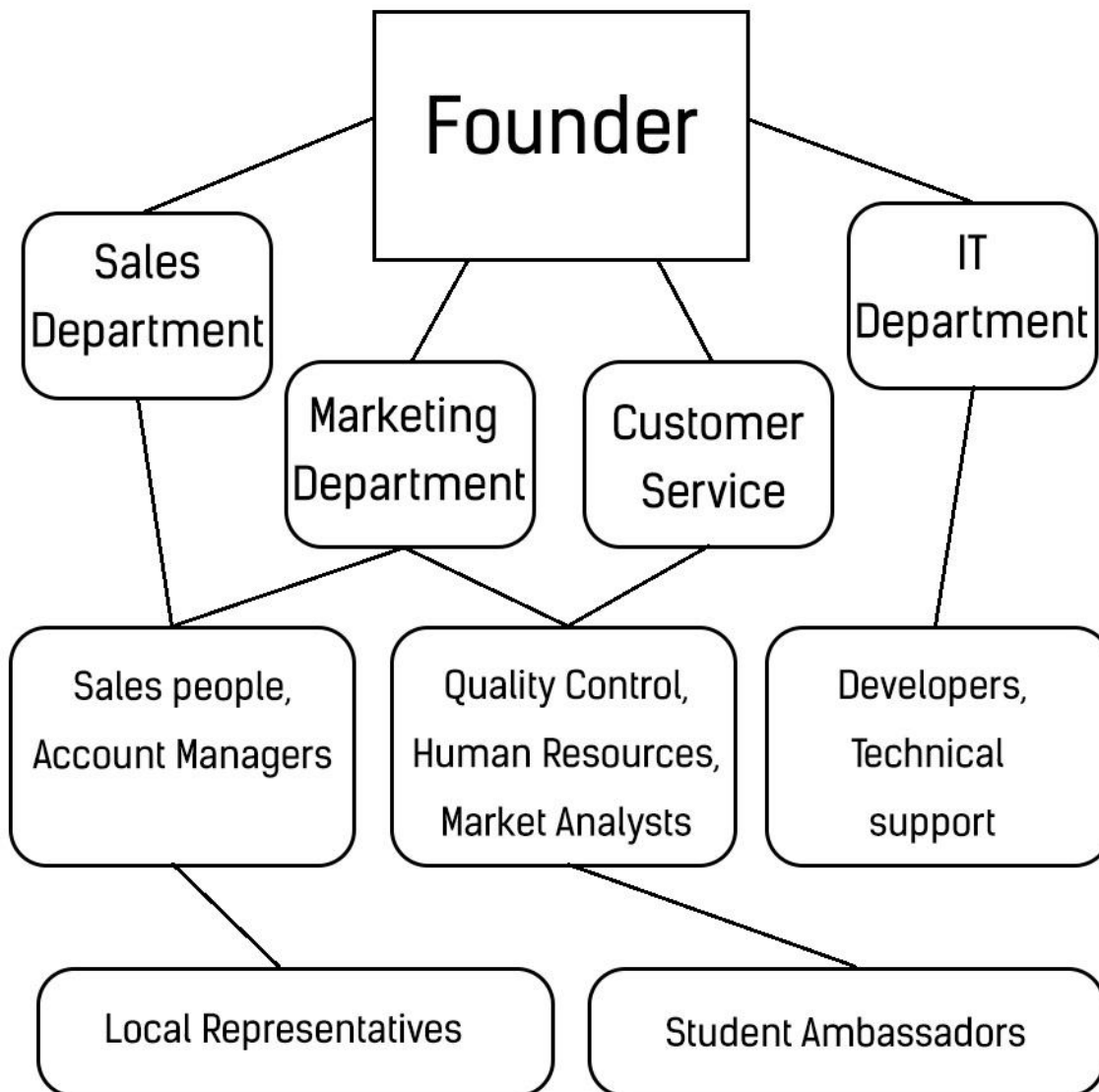


FIGURE 2. The organisational structure of Housing Anywhere

The connection to the born global firm definition can be attributed to the founder's goal for the company to become a global housing platform for international students. Already from the early stages of the company, the orientation to foreign markets was deliberately expressed. Other typical characteristics of born global firms, such as small domestic market and entrepreneurial spirit of the founder can be identified with the case of Housing Anywhere.

### 5.1 Purpose at Founding

Housing Anywhere was initially an idea of a group of university students and eventually pioneered by its founder. What started at the beginning as a solution to a local problem was soon identified as a potentially successful business idea and was readapted for a global market. From the very beginning of the development of the company, the direction has always been to become a **global housing platform** that could connect students from around the world.

The business concept was easily adaptable to any country and city, thanks to its easy functioning and flexibility in technical development. That is why within the first year of operations, as Mr van Deuren recalls during the interview, the company had already received attention from nearby countries' universities. In fact, the housing situation for exchange and internship students had started to become a major problem in the biggest university cities around Europe and in other parts of the world. This is where the opportunity for Housing Anywhere was found.

With the new internationalisation programmes of higher education institutions, the growing trend of going abroad for work or studies and the more commonly accepted concept of shared economy, Housing Anywhere could perfectly match together the demand and supply of those in need. Similar to the concept of the short-stay housing platform Airbnb®, Housing Anywhere advocates for the students' well-being and improved living experience during their abroad period.

"We are an international company, so we should definitely be in as many countries as possible. That's our vision, that's the end goal: becoming a global housing platform", says the founder of Housing Anywhere during the interview taken place at their headquarters in Rotterdam. The word *global* is included in their mission, vision and goals and therefore deeply matches the definition of a born global company.

It is argued that firms' internationalization paths range from information, experience, and networks, through to entrepreneurs' perceptions of risk and the transaction costs in making use of the accessible resources at their availability (Bell et al., 2004). Did any of these play a role in Housing Anywhere's initiation to internationalisation?

As the founder comments: "The Netherlands is a small country and in order to grow a company you need to go abroad, because it is a small market" (van Deuren, 2015), point that is proven in many literature sources. "So I thought from the start, if we want to make money out of this, we should go abroad. And then my international experience helped me with that because I knew some friends studying in different cities, so I could ask them to help me launch in their universities" (van Deuren, 2015).

From the interview we can notice that many facilitating factors and characteristics of born global firms are mentioned by the founder: the will to go abroad from the very beginning, the small domestic market, the international connections and the social assets used for internationalisation. Moreover, other references to born globals' characteristics can be found also in other parts of the company as following.

When asked about the strategies for internationalisation during the first years of the firm, the reply was: "It was always for the last five years number one, internationalization and sales sales sales" (van Deuren, 2015). Already during the first three years of operations, the company managed to obtain more than 30% of their revenues from abroad. "The biggest challenges at the beginning was that we didn't have money and we wanted to expand abroad" (van Deuren, 2015), continues the founder, referring to the sales process at the beginning of internationalisation. This can be found in the literature as the liability of newness and foreignness.

## 5.2 Extent and Scope of Internationalisation

With the first five years of the Housing Anywhere's operations focused on entering in as many countries as possible and signing as many universities up to the platform as conceivable, the firm's growth was rapid, yet rough. In December 2014 the company reached 21 countries and approximately 70 higher education institutions, covering regions from Europe, to Asia and the Americas. Thanks to the strength of the organisational structure, Country Managers took care of all operations from sales to marketing and recruitment in their assigned territories.

However, this process was lengthy and at times very costly. The firm's approach was very entrepreneurially oriented in the first years of operations, and often considered rather aggressive and risk-taking, as the founder confirms during the final interview. One of the main challenges of the firm was the liability of foreignness, which was then being confronted with native language speakers, in person visits to the potential clients, and the use of intermediaries for establishing more trust and visibility.

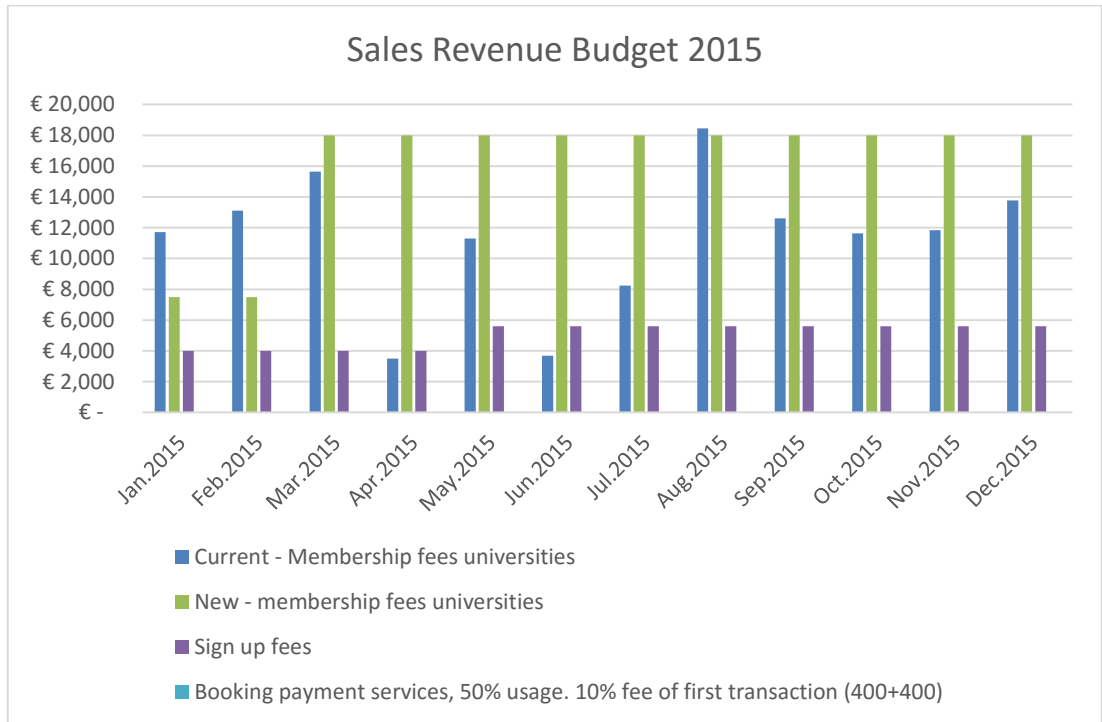


FIGURE 3. The revenue of abroad sales of Housing Anywhere in 2015.

Each Country Manager was following their countries' sales process individually with the support of the Head of Sales and the founder himself. Weekly internal meetings were arranged to follow-up on the progress and come up with new ideas on how to convince the universities to join Housing Anywhere. Effectuation logic was obviously the mainstream course of strategy as resources were scarce and results needed to be achieved on a weekly, monthly and yearly basis.

Often Country Managers were asked to use their personal connections in their focus countries to establish connections with student organisations and other stakeholders in the higher education field. Personal visits to universities were arranged when possibilities of signing the deal were higher than 50% or when the potential client was an important one (e.g. high number of incoming and outgoing students). Attendance to networking conferences, such as the European Association for International Education (EAIE) and the National Association for Foreign Students Affairs (NAFSA), was done yearly in order to increase the recognition and the value of the firm.

At present day, Housing Anywhere is present in 134 countries and 3496 cities thanks to collaborations with intermediaries, other housing providers and platforms. When direct market entry is hard to achieve, referring to already settled intermediaries can strongly facilitate the presence of the firm in a foreign market. Hereby, the progress of Housing Anywhere's market expansion year by year:

TABLE 1. The international expansion of Housing Anywhere since 2009.

Year	Countries	Cities
2009	1	1
2010	2	5
2011	5	27
2012	10	40
2013	15	79
2014	19	88
2015	21	102
2016*	25	181

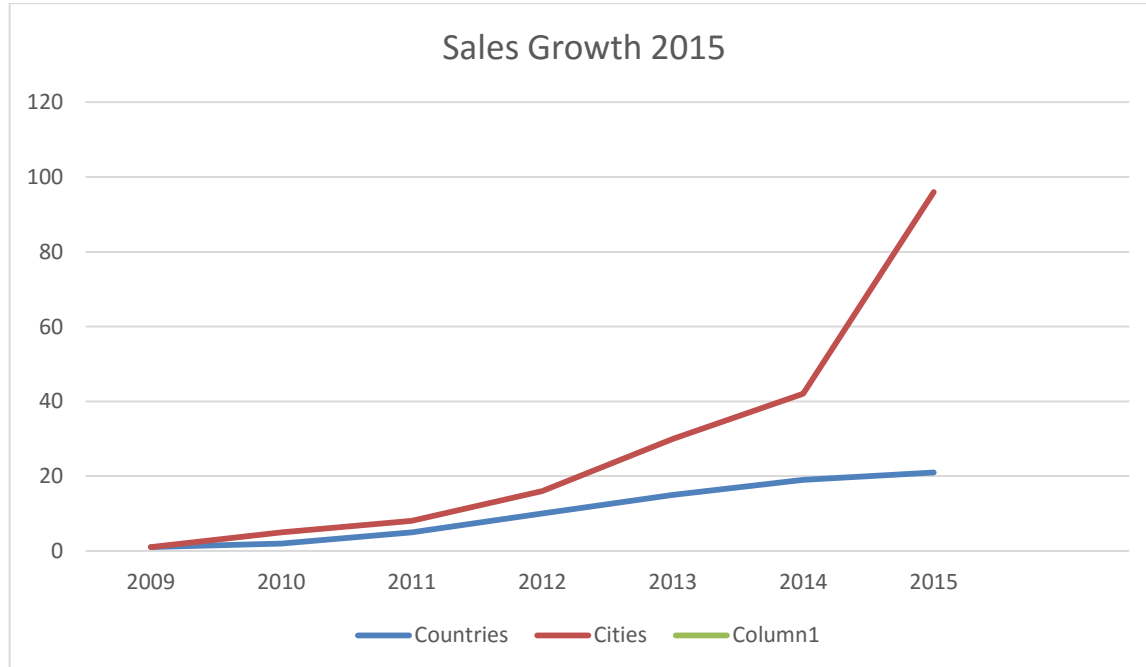


FIGURE 4. The countries and cities where Housing Anywhere's service is present.

\* In reference to the expectations for expansion of the firm.



During the first five years of internationalisation, Housing Anywhere used direct sales to increase the number of partners on the platform. Naturally, this also brought the risk of not being able to fully satisfy each and every customer (e.g. higher education institution). In that process some countries' HEIs welcomed the services of Housing Anywhere more than others, meaning that some countries were lost, while others grew stronger. However, with the recent developments of the firm, the use of intermediaries is much more strongly emphasized to reduce the risk of withdrawing from a set country.

Housing Anywhere applies the differentiation strategy in its internationalisation: it aims at a very specific target audience and serves them with a very focused need. The firm is able to efficiently identify the target group not only through its market research and analysis, but also to contact them directly through social media, marketing and advertisement. It aims at improving its services to the target group by calling directly to the users to ask for feedback and potential improvements. The target group is very well defined and very sustainable per se: the number of students going abroad for work or studies is steadily increasing and is a priority in the agenda of higher education institutions and educational stakeholders around the world.

## 6 RESEARCH

### 6.1 The Research Question

What are the factors that create a successful internationalisation strategy for an online service born global firm? Based on the internationalisation factors described in Cavusgil and Knight's publication "Born Global Firms – A New International Enterprise" (2009), I analysed the different aspects of the case company to compare with the gathered literature. To better understand the functioning of the case company, besides the personal experience of over a year, first as a Local Representative and later on as a Country Manager, I interviewed the founder of the company, carried out a questionnaire among the former and current employees and conducted a review of the results with the founder to gather his expectations and opinions.

In this thesis, the **research question** is: compared to the literature on the standard internationalisation strategies of born global firms, how does Housing Anywhere find success in its operations? How does the company shape its internationalisation strategies to achieve the expansion goals and continue growing? What are the factors that create a successful internationalisation strategy at HousingAnywhere?

Through this **empirical study**, I want to understand the internationalisation strategy process from its roots: what are the goals that drive for foreign expansion, how are they planned, organised, lead and controlled, what are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches, what have the learnings of these approaches been so far, what are the future ambitions, how can the opportunities and threats be identified and used for the benefit of the company.

I based the **background literature** on the most updated research papers, journal and editorial publications, online database resources and university contacts that would provide me a good overview of what has the research found about born global firms until now, how to they operate and make a living and their usual tactics for internationalisation, as it is their number one reason for existence. I believe that the case of Housing Anywhere is a peculiar one because of the rapid growth that the firm experiences, the effectuation logic used in making strategic decisions and to analyse whether a pattern can be established based on the findings. The firm uses a mixture of different strategies which change very rapidly according to their needs for survival and growth. Through this study, I hope to identify the main factors that ensure the success of Housing Anywhere and provide further recommendations to the company.

## 6.2 The Research Methodology

The thesis project aims at an empirical analysis of qualitative data gathered by **in-depth interviews** to the founder and of quantitative data gathered through a **questionnaire** to be filled by former and current employees of the company. Finally, I conducted a **final review** with the founder on the results of the questionnaire to analyse his expectations, personal perceptions and future directions of the firm. In spite of the rather time-consuming methodology, I decided to apply it to achieve the most detailed results and accurate responses.

Because born global companies are usually driven very strongly by the founder's entrepreneurial spirit, it is essential to receive first-hand information from the founder of the company. The initial in-depth interview served as a basis for the start of the research. Based on some background literature, I prepared a set of questions which would give a general overview of the internationalisation strategies used by the firm and suggest the direction for the questionnaire.

The **questionnaire** was sent to former and current employees of Housing Anywhere. It was conducted in order to collect a different perspective on the internationalisation strategies within the firm. Since the employees deal directly with the client universities, they have a strong knowledge on the countries they operate in and how the general internationalisation strategies are being implemented in the company. The questions were designed to narrow down the specifics of the strategies and to gather quantitative results in an anonymous method.

The **final review** of the questionnaire results were shared with the founder in order to analyse whether his perspective of the questions matched the answers given by the employees. Naturally, some former employees who answered might not be aware of the internal changes of the firm, however, it gives an interesting angle to the results as it includes the previous perspective on the firm's internationalisation strategies compared to the current one. The review was also helpful to understand the future direction of the firm.

The **professional internship** lasting 6,5 months between July 2014 and January 2015 have given me the opportunity to become closely acquainted with the company policies and general conduct. I had the chance to personally experience the work environment in the headquarters of the company in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, and work along with the founder and other employees. Moreover, I had attended three business trips abroad

as a sales representative, which gave me the chance to learn about the company from the customer and prospect universities, students using the platform, competitors and other stakeholders.

Thorough research on the literature around the concepts of born global firms, internationalisation of born global firms and international new ventures, the asset parsimony principle, effectuation logic and entrepreneurial orientation has been carried out to build a strong theoretical basis. Examples from various research papers on born global studies have been used to develop the research methodology of this thesis. The use of comparative studies research topics are present (e.g. The Born Global Phenomenon, A. Rialp, J. Rialp, Urbano, Vaillant, 2005), the theoretical models of strategic processes (e.g. Challenges and Opportunities of International Business, Carpenter and Donung, 2013), as well as critical reviews of previous research (e.g. Re-thinking research on born globals, Coviello, 2015).

All the raw material gathered for the thesis project, such as the interview with the founder, the questionnaire responses, the final review and consultations with external experts, have been recorded and their transcriptions can be made available on request. The language used for the interviews was English, as that is the working language of the company and of my bachelor programme.

## 7 DATA AND RESULTS

In this chapter I will present the elaborated data gathered through the previously mentioned methods to analyse the research question and find possible answers and conclusions. Let us first take a look at the interview and the basic information about the company.

TABLE 2. The general overview of the firm's internationalisation extent.

<b>HousingAnywhere</b>	
Location	Rotterdam, the Netherlands
Field of business	Online platform; student housing; IT solutions
Vision	International students renting and subletting their rooms and apartments as an additional housing service for higher education institutions.
Foundation	2009
<b>Start of internationalisation</b>	
First international sales	2010
Internationalisation degree (percentage of foreign revenue in the first three years of int)	60%
<b>Current foreign status</b>	
Internationalisation degree	2015, fast growing
Globalisation degree	70%
Current number of countries	25
Number of rooms	11,755
<b>Current size</b>	
Net sales (EUR)	513.252€
Employees	17 full-time (headquarters); 85 part-time (abroad)
Growth rate	16%

## 7.1 Interview with the Founder

The interview with the founder Mr Niels van Deuren took place in Housing Anywhere's headquarters in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2015. The questions adapted from "The Born Global Phenomenon: A Comparative Case Study Research" by A. Rialp, J. Rialp, Urbano and Vaillant (2005). The purpose of the interview was to understand the general direction in terms of internationalisation strategies of the firm and whether the basic characteristics of born global firm were also present and shared by the founder.

The findings of the interview matched the expectations based on the background literature. The founder mentioned the premeditated intention to start a global housing platform which would be present in as many countries as possible. However, due to resource constraints, he admits that the focus at the moment is to establish a strong position in Western Europe. Regional internationalisation was a common attribute of "fake" born globals, as Coviello mentions (2015), however, the company is already present in Europe, Asia and the Americas.

Housing Anywhere started off with what can be called a rather aggressive and risk-taking approach, focused on international sales (van Deuren, 2015) as the entrepreneurial orientation of the firm was very strong. In fact this forced the company to withdraw from some countries after an initial attempt to solidify the sales in Singapore, Norway and others. However, after a different approach through intermediaries, the firm managed to re-internationalise in a far bigger number of countries than during its initial direct sales approach. This can be partly attributed to strong developments in the IT department of Housing Anywhere, which went through significant investments and efforts to improve the online platform.

Challenges were met along the path of internationalisation: the first step in this process was choosing the right targets according to the number of international students (van Deuren, 2015). After that all the Country Managers were given the same amount of time and resources to close the deals. "The biggest challenge at the beginning was that we didn't have money and it really slowed down our internationalisation", recalls the founder. Solutions were needed to maintain the growth steady.

One solution that was implemented was hiring local students to help the firm out with the local contacts and have a personal approach. The reward for the student would be to receive a commission once the partnership was signed. However, this revealed to be an

ambiguous option, as in some cases it proved to be extremely efficient and in others the opposite. This solution played on the risk that the local students would not have the competences necessary to carry out the task and maintaining the communication with the headquarters regularly.

When asked about the social assets used by the company, the founder replied “if I would have had only Dutch friends then it would have been a harder time to get started”. Having had an international experience both abroad and through the international students studying at the home university, the founder managed to use his personal contacts in order to facilitate the foreign market entry and the connection to the potential clients. The same strategy is also used in public networks, such as the student organisations, education associations, higher educations’ international affairs collectives and so on. This is also extremely important for obtaining legitimacy and trust.

The attitude of the founder reflects also on the employees, both the ones in the office as well as the local representatives: “For sales people and relations people it’s [social skills] definitely needed, they need to be social”, claims the founder, “and the international experience is needed too”. When hiring, Housing Anywhere looks for people with great social skills that could easily connect with their potential and established clients, as it is fundamental to be able to establish a sense of trust even via distant communication.

Overall, Housing Anywhere has revealed so far of being a very entrepreneurship oriented company, through its sales activities and methods of expansion. It has proved to be successful in some countries and less in others. In spite of limited resources, the company has still managed to achieve great results also thanks to the employees which greatly contribute with their personal competences to the internationalisation and success of the firm. It is a mix of these unique assets that the company managed to be where it is at this day.

## 7.2 Survey Results and Final Review by the Founder

The survey was designed based on the internationalisation theory of born global firms found in the publication “Born Globals: A New International Enterprise” by Cavusgil and Knight (2009). The questions were adapted to the webpropol survey design in order to achieve the maximum information possible. Following are the results of the questionnaire with an explanation of why are they relevant for the study as well as the final review by the founder. The total number of respondents was 26 and it includes former as well as current employees of Housing Anywhere.

1. The first question “**Internationalisation strategies are an important part of HousingAnywhere's business. Do you agree?**” was meant to analyse if all the employees perceived that internationalisation is an important part of the firm. 24 out of 26 replied yes, while 2 replied maybe. This was agreed and expected by the founder.
2. The second question aims at understanding the involvement of the employees in the internationalisation process: “**Do you feel personally involved in the internationalisation process of HousingAnywhere?**” and was replied with 12 yes, 8 maybe and 6 no. Whereas most of the employees felt that the internationalisation was important to the firm, not all of them felt directly involved in it. The founder explains by saying that the IT developers, for example, do not contribute directly to the internationalisation.
3. Next on: “**What is your department in the company?**” aimed at connecting the previous responses to the departments of the company and its best explained visually in the following graph:

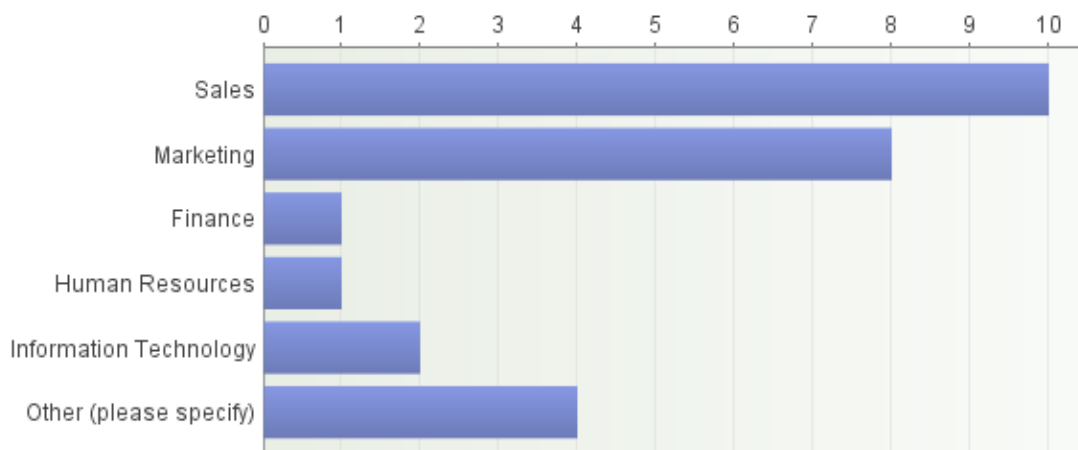


FIGURE 5. The departments of the respondents as the employees of Housing Anywhere.



Following this, I wanted to draw a connection between the department and the involvement in internationalisation: 9 out of 10 respondents in the **sales department** seem to agree that internationalisation is important for Housing Anywhere, while 1 replied maybe. 6 respondents do feel personally involved in the internationalisation strategies while, 3 maybe and 1 no. The same connection can be drawn with the **marketing department**: 7 out of 8 respondents consider internationalisation important and 1 maybe, while only 2 feel personally involved, 2 maybe and 4 no.

This is quite an interesting result considering that the founder considered these two departments the ones driving the internationalisation forward. One explanation for this could be that some of the marketing department respondents were Student Ambassadors\*, who did tasks only on the local level. That's why I wanted to analyse also which departments said no to the personal involvement in internationalisation: 1 from sales, 4 from marketing and 1 from other.

4. Question number 4 focused more on the flexibility of the firm as well as of the employees. Flexibility is considered an important characteristics in a young internationalising firm. **“To what extent to you agree with the following statements in regards to your work in the company?”**

TABLE 3. The respondents' assessment to the employees and firm's flexibility to internationalisation.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total	Average
I believe that HousingAnywhere is a flexible organisation and it can easily adapt to different situations.	3	5	5	9	4 X	26	3,23
HousingAnywhere's flexibility has facilitated its internationalisation process.	3	5	6	7	5 X	26	3,23
I am willing to put extra effort to ensure HousingAnywhere's well-functioning.	1	1	3	12	9 X	26	4,04
I am willing to put up with some tasks that I don't find exciting or useful.	1	3	4	13	5 X	26	3,69
Internationalisation goals can be easily achieved without flexibility for HousingAnywhere.	6	11 X	7	2	0	26	2,19
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>3,28</b>

The results with an “X” are the ones that the founder ticked in the final review of the responses. Generally, his expectations match the results. The last question was put

there as a control for randomised answers. Most of the respondents seem to be willing to put extra effort to ensure Housing Anywhere's well-functioning (avg 4,04) and to put up with tasks that they do not find exciting or useful (avg 3,69). This leads us to think that the employees' flexibility is above average. Regarding their perspective on the flexibility of the organisation the average results are identical (3,23) with most responses agreeing that Housing Anywhere is a flexible organisation and that this helped to its internationalisation. In both cases there were 3 "strongly disagreements" and 4 "disagreements" which suggests that some respondents find have found some situations in their working lives as non-flexible.

Taken for granted that "youth and smaller size confer a degree of flexibility and agility that help born globals succeed in foreign markets" (Cavusgil & Knight, 2009), what are the factors that influence the respondents idea of the organisational flexibility? Is it a limitation or an advantage? To what extent does the flexibility and resourcefulness of the employees have a say in this? Are there limitations for employees in this regard? The flexibility and entrepreneurial maneuverability of young born globals are key factors that allow them to overcome shortcomings associated with limited human and financial resources (Cavusgil & Knight, 2009).

5. Question number 5 aimed at analysing the employees' personal assets as workers: **"How would you rate yourself regarding the following characteristics?"** It should be taken into account that most of the employees of the firm are youth between 18 and 30 with varying degrees of professional experience. The youth, inexperience, and newness of these firms to international business can limit management's ability to acquire needed resources that support internationalization (Cavusgil & Knight, 2009).

While this might be a weak link the firm, it can also prove to be its strongest asset, as young workers are easily adaptable, flexible to change and fast-learners: they are therefore the dynamic capabilities of the firm. The dynamic capabilities view suggests that the ability to internationalize despite limited company resources is a function of the internal capabilities of the firm (McDougall et al., 1994; Zahra, Ireland, & Hitt, 2000).

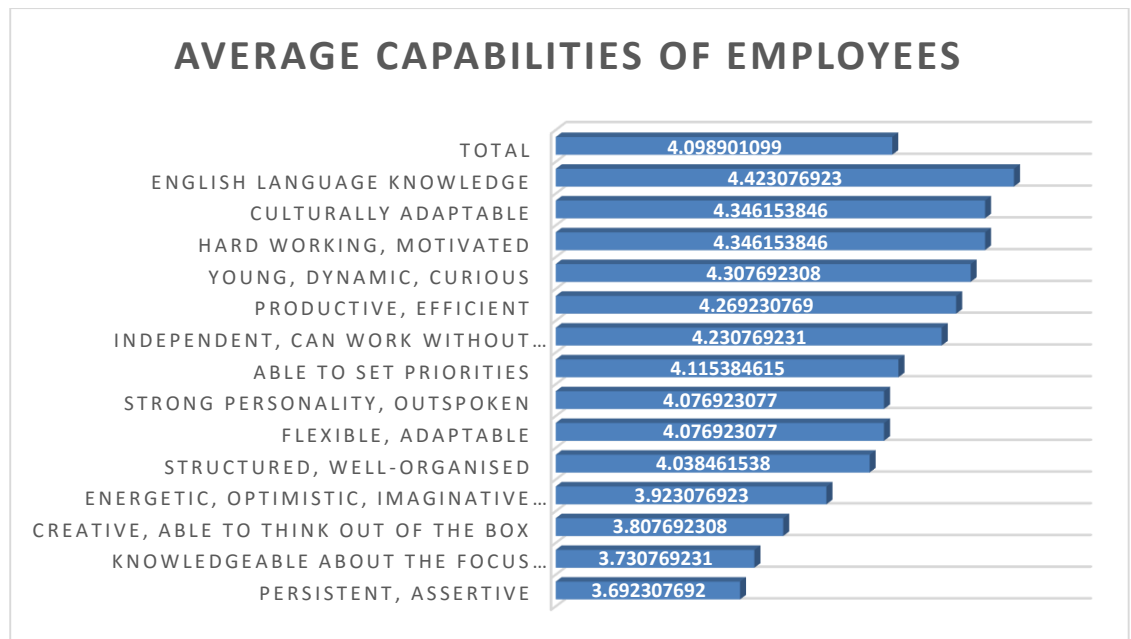


FIGURE 6. The respondents self-grading of their capabilities in the work field.

The highest scoring capabilities seem to be relatable to any department in the company: starting with English language knowledge (avg 4,42), culturally adaptable and hard-working and motivated on the same score (4,35), and young and dynamic (4,30). All of these capabilities were rated very well and the founder commented that it reflects the team. The lowest scoring capabilities seem to be persistence and assertive (3,69) – a skill usually linked with sales people, knowledgeable about focus countries (3,73) – something that is not a necessity in every team, and creative and able to think out of the box (3,80) – something that perhaps would be more expected in a young and dynamic company.

6. This question asks the respondents to assess a number of strategic directions' statements according to their personal perspective: **“Rank the importance of the following concepts in Housing Anywhere”**.

The most valued strategic concept among all was distinctively the international networks (4,31), followed by strategic planning (3,85), and international marketing competence and market orientation on the same level (3,81). These are all valuable directions that any born global firm should consider strongly. The least voted direction was technological leadership (3,38), which is quite surprising considering the specific focus placed by the founder and the investments made in the firm for that department.

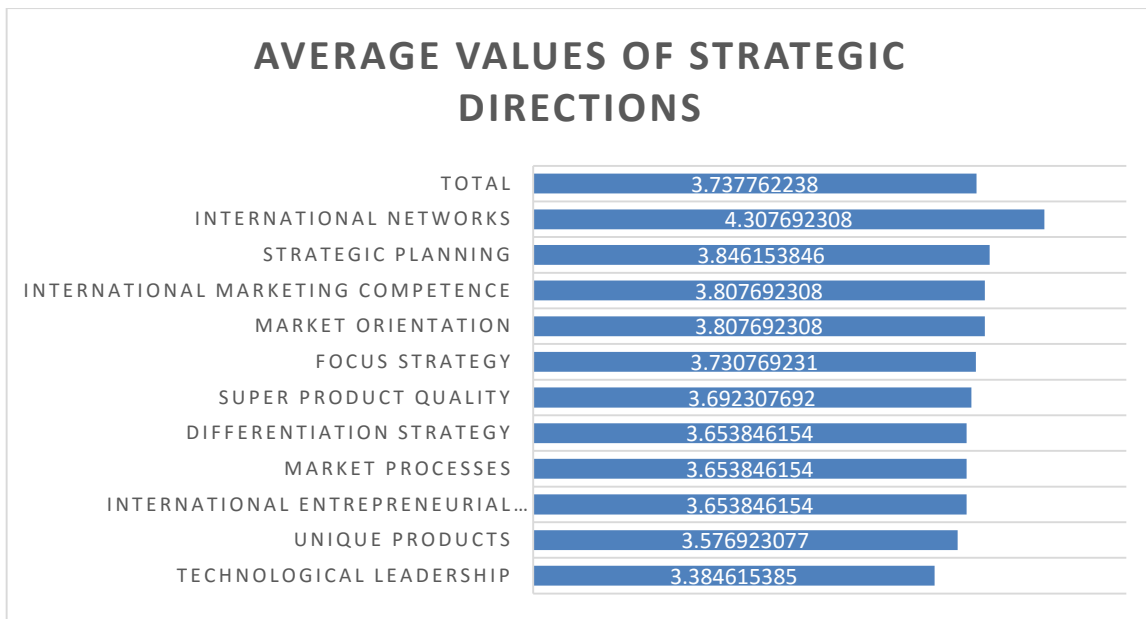


FIGURE 7. Various strategic concepts assess by the respondents of the questionnaire.

7. Question number 7 was directed to a more specific characteristic of the firm: marketing information collection: **“HousingAnywhere has a good methodology of collecting market information on housing”**. “Market focused learning capability” involves the acquisition and dissemination of information from the firm’s marketplace (Weerawardena et al., 2007). It involves continuously updating the firm’s knowledge base in order to account for new information that is acquired in target markets and the ability to assemble the acquired information as knowledge that management can use to achieve its goals (Cavusgil & Knight, 2009).

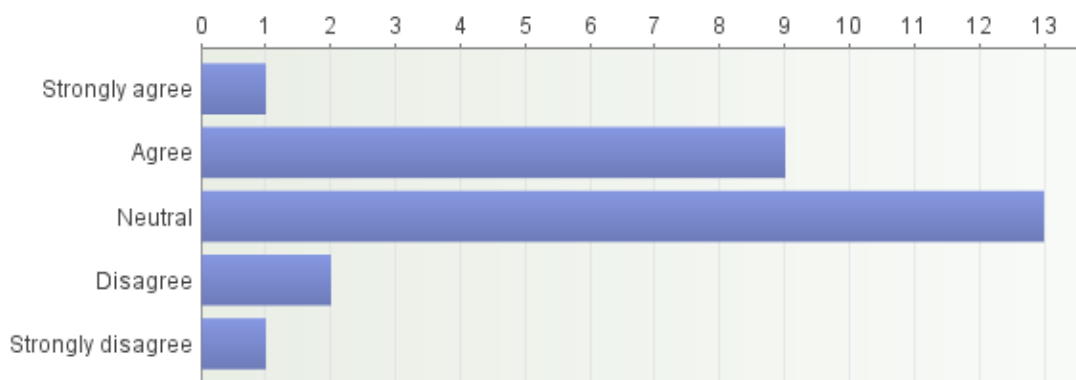


FIGURE 8. The respondents’ assessment whether Housing Anywhere collects enough market information.

Generally tending towards a positive response, it can be seen that half of the respondents (13/26) are neutral about this topic, while 9 agree. This can be due to

the fact that not all the departments can feel this process happening as it is usually collected by the market analyst, sales and marketing departments and local connections and networks. The founder comments that there is still room for improvement for this aspect and more energies are going to be dedicated to it.

When the respondents are asked to contribute to this with their personal opinions, some suggestions were to create a more advanced and scalable system to gather information from the users, to gather local intelligence especially before study visits, such as housing agencies, housing offices at the universities and relevant associations, in the country reports, having an efficient archiving and CRM system, looking for competitors in the focus markets, visiting international conferences to stay up to date with the latest market information on housing, creating databases to keep track of the growth and reading articles, keeping up with social media and so on. Several ideas were thrown and many of them relate to the different means of collecting the marketing information, which ranges from public to private information, and storing methods for further improvements.

8. Question number 8 was a continuation of the previous question and aimed at evaluating sharing of the market information: **“The market information is thoroughly disseminated in the company”**

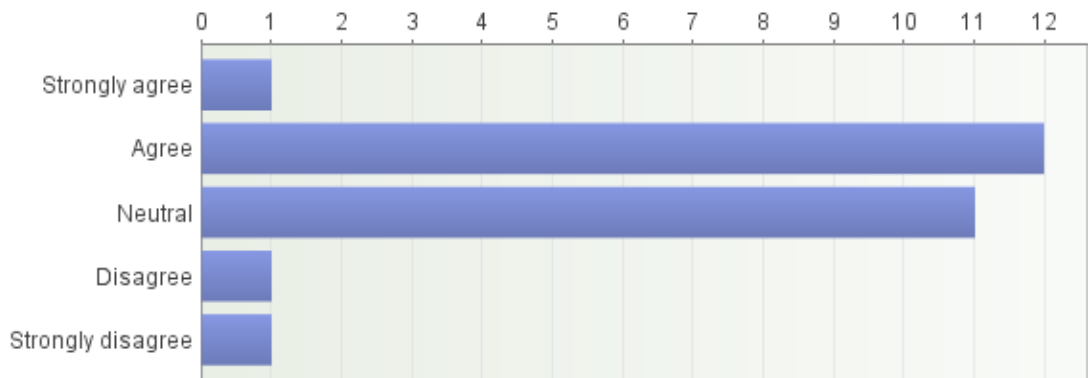


FIGURE 9. The respondents' assessment of the dissemination of market information internally in Housing Anywhere.

Almost half of the respondents (12/26) agree that the market information is shared thoroughly within the firm, while 11 respondents are neutral about this. Internal information of the company should be well communicated to all the departments of the company and it can be achieved, for example, with an updated and simple CRM system, weekly meetings and strategic internal meetings. Well-informed employees also mean more efficient work production. The founder commented that he agrees with the results.

**Collecting information** on the firm's markets is only one part of the market orientation activities. Additionally, there are also the activities of disseminating such information throughout the organization and creating products, innovations, and marketing activities that are consistent with this information (e.g., Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990).

9. Question number 9 continues the topic of market information in the form of customisation to the market: **"HousingAnywhere creates and adapts services consistent with the market information"**.

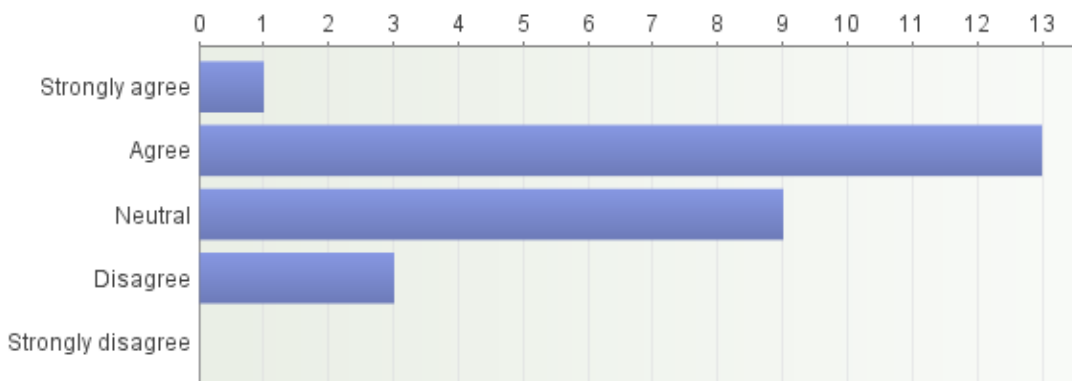


FIGURE 10. The respondents' assessment on the customisation of Housing Anywhere's services in response to the gathered market information.

Once again, half of the respondents (13/26) agree that the services of Housing Anywhere are well adapted to the incoming marketing information and that the firm tries to configure its direction depending on the market it serves. 9 respondents remained neutral about this statement as well, though there were 3 respondents who disagreed with it. While serving a global market it may be hard to adapt the product or services to each country's culture and practicalities.

Though serving a specific target market by following a differentiation strategy, there might be still some differences, especially in language and use of online services. Having a market orientation means the firm attempts to ascertain the needs and wants of potential buyers and then creates products and services that specifically fit those needs and wants (Cavusgil and Knight, 2009). Therefore, after understanding the specific demands of the target market, it is important to adapt the product, especially when facing competition.

Some suggestions by respondents were to trying to adapt more to specific markets rather than only trying to standardize. Other comments claimed that by adapting the service more to the users they realised what the customers wanted was not exactly what the platform offered. The founder's review on this was the following: "over the last year we've been collecting feedback from users, the Customer Care team does that, the secure booking service is an example that users asked and we provided it", he commented in the final review.

10. Question number 10 aimed more to analyse the entrepreneurial orientation of Housing Anywhere by asking three topic questions, the first one of them being: **"Do you think that HousingAnywhere is an innovative company in its field?"**

TABLE 4. The respondents' assessment to the firm's innovation.

	1	2	3	4	5		Average
Strongly disagree	1	3	9	10	3 X	Strongly agree	3,42

The general tendency of the respondents is to agree that Housing Anywhere is an innovative firm and the founder strongly agrees: "It is as innovative as it can be in the housing market. Expected results", he comments. The average result is 3,42.

11. Question number 11 continues on the same wave with a question about aggressiveness in international entrepreneurial orientation: **"Do you think that HousingAnywhere is aggressive in its international actions?"**

TABLE 5. The respondents' assessment to the firm's aggression proclivity.

	1	2	3	4	5		Average
Strongly disagree	1	3	5	13	4 X	Strongly agree	3,62

Once again the respondents tend to agree that Housing Anywhere is aggressive in its international actions and the founder strongly agrees: "You have to be aggressive when you are a start-up and establish yourself in the market. Expected results". The average result is 3,62.

12. Question number 12 is the third in a series of international entrepreneurship orientation and goes as following: **"Do you think that HousingAnywhere has a tendency to risk-taking?"**

TABLE 6. The respondents' assessment to the firm's risk-taking proclivity.

	1	2	3	4	5		Average
Strongly disagree	3	2	12	8 X	1	Strongly agree	3,08

This question was more neutral than either positive or negative with an average score of 3,08. Three respondents strongly disagree that Housing Anywhere is a risk-taking firm and the founder comments: "You cannot always play safe, as long as the risk-taking is reasonable."

The final comments by the respondents after this short series of three question were that HousingAnywhere could have been innovative, but no more at the present status; the risk taking at current percept is around 3, however, it has decreased over the past years, in fact others comment that at the beginning the level of risk-taking was constantly at 5. Born globals are entrepreneurial firms that emphasize **innovativeness**, **aggressiveness**, and a proclivity for **risk-taking** (Cavusil and Knight, 2009).

Whereas the company is rather innovative in the concept (3,42) it can still improve in making its product more unique and up to modern technology by, for example, creating a mobile application and using new communication systems both for sales and marketing. Aggressiveness scored the highest score among the three (3,62), yet still not very high. Some past actions of Housing Anywhere might have been considered quite aggressive, such as the insistent emailing to specific higher education institutions or other entities. However, these are actions that born global firms often need to take in order to achieve their goals. Last but not least, the proclivity to risk-taking is the lowest score (3,08), which would be more interesting to investigate from the respondents compared to the founder, as he is the person with the main decision power in the company.

13. The question number 13 was aimed to analyse the strategic control through some specific statements: "**Rate the importance of the following statements regarding strategic control of HousingAnywhere**".



TABLE 7. The respondents' assessment to the firm's international entrepreneurial orientation and strategic internationalisation.

	No opinion	Not important at all	Somewhat important	Important	Very important	Average
Developing strategies and approaches that support internationalisation and business success abroad.	0	2	5	14 X	5	3,85
Developing international entrepreneurial orientations to encourage strong customer focus.	0	2	10 X	11	3	3,58
Developing human and other resources specific to meeting foreign market needs.	1	2	8	8 X	7	3,69
Develop innovative processes to stay abreast of global competition.	0	2	7	11 X	6	3,81
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>3,73</b>

While in an earlier question, international entrepreneurial orientation did not score a very high value as a strategic concept, the development of strategies and approaches that support internationalisation and business success abroad seems to have the highest response average in agreement (3,85) with 14 responses (including the founder's opinion) consider it important. Next, the strong customer focus was rather agreed, though more neutral, with 10 respondents opting for somewhat important (once again including the founder) and 11 opting for important. The founder generally commented that these results were expected.

Developing human and other resources specific to meeting foreign market needs scored 3,69 out of five, with a rather equal number of respondents considering it very important (7), important (8) and somewhat important (8). It is expected that the management of the company creates favourable conditions for fostering this aspect of the global born firm, which consequently will have a positive impact on the business performance (Cavusgil and Knight, 2009). Developing innovative processes to stay abreast of global competition also scored 3.81 out of five, with the majority of votes going for important (11) and no one considering it not important at all. Companies focus on continuously improving products, services, processes, and administrative techniques within the firm (Cavusgil and Knight, 2009).

14. The question number 14 attempted to go more in depth with the internationalisation strategies and assess the respondents' opinion regarding

specific characteristics and behaviours that the firm could or should follow:  
**“Select the priority for the following potential internationalisation strategies of HousingAnywhere.”**

TABLE 8. The respondents’ assessment to the firm’s priorities for internationalisation strategies.

	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Working closely with the customers.	1	5	3	8 X	9	3,73
Adapting the platform to suit customer circumstances abroad.	1	1	4	11	9 X	4
Specialising the know-how, marketing skills and other assets on a given customer group.	0	3	3	16 X	4	3,81
Serving customers well, the company will be able to reduce costs.	2	1	7	10 X	6	3,65
Offering a distinctive products, the company will gain comparative advantage.	0	5	2	12	7 X	3,81
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>3,8</b>

The priority scale according to the respondents is:

1. Adapting the platform to suit customer circumstances abroad (4,00);
2. Specialising the know-how, marketing skills and other assets on a given customer group (3,81) and offering a distinctive product, the company will gain comparative advantage (3,81);
3. Working closely with the customers (3,73);
4. Serving customers well, the company will be able to reduce costs (3,65).

According to the founder the top priority is to adapt the platform and make it a unique product so to gain comparative advantage. Many born globals offer state-of-the-art products that are better designed and higher quality than competitors’ offerings (Cavusgil and Knight, 2009). Not only it provides the firm the first market entry advantage, but also offers the reputation of one of a kind service or product.

Overall, the results were expected by the founder during the final review and his views were very similar to the ones of the respondents. This suggests that the direction of the firm is closely linked to the vision of the founder entrepreneur and organisational culture.

## 8 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

With this study I was able to deeply analyse the purpose and extent of the internationalisation strategies of Housing Anywhere, not only thanks to my personal experience at the firm, but also through an in-depth interview with the founder and a questionnaire to the firm's former and current employees. It was extremely interesting to link the connections between the born globals' literature with the case study of Housing Anywhere and identifying all the characteristics in the firm that are similar and different.

Housing Anywhere was born with the purpose of being a born global firm and it is managing to achieve that thanks to various external and internal factors. Being a start-up company in a small domestic market, it did not take long for the internationalisation to begin. Its strategic geographical location and international entrepreneurial orientation pioneered by the founder and main managers have allowed the firm to enter foreign markets in the first years with a rather risky and aggressive approach of direct sales.

This initial purpose and reasons behind the choice of internationalisation strongly comply with the literature presented earlier. Some authors argued that also the top management plays an important role in this, however, the case company did not have a defined distinction among its employees to clearly identify the "top management". All employees of Housing Anywhere have a chance to provide input for strategic management during weekly meetings and team meetings with the founder.

Several strategies were used for entering foreign markets, such as using local intelligence and networks, and personal connections of the founder and employees. Social assets definitely played an important factor in the internationalisation of the firm, in spite of the liabilities of newness, foreignness and smallness. The employees' dedication, flexibility and willingness to go a mile further played an essential role in driving the firm's growth and ensuring its global success. It was the dynamic capabilities and creative approach to problem solution that made a difference between Housing Anywhere and other local or regional housing options.

All of the above strategies are also found in most of the research papers about born global firm's strategies to enter foreign markets, some emphasising certain features more than others. Networking and social assets were especially connected to born global firms that provide products and services, just like Housing Anywhere. The liabilities of newness, foreignness and smallness were emphasised in relation to international new ventures, which is a wider field of international business encompassing born global firms as well.

The international entrepreneurial orientation was considered a necessary step both by the founder and the employees, though there are significant differences in the firm's approach from the very beginning and today's working methods. This feature was also covered in the background theory and is strongly in agreement with the case company. Its establishment through international intermediaries and strong investments in the IT department have raised the service quality and attracted the attention of the target audience. This step was absolutely necessary as the niche-market of the platform required differentiation strategies, superior product quality and customisation according to market wants and needs.

The market information collection is an important characteristic in Housing Anywhere as it serves a very big number of countries and therefore is directly in touch with the respective cultures, languages and customs. The diverse cultural organisation of the firm, such as having native language speakers and internationally experienced employees, is definitely a plus for the firm and can be considered as a comparative advantage to their competitors. However, the high employee turnover, the practice of employing short-term interns might be revised in order to ensure more stability in the transition from a start-up company to a real established firm.

According to born global firms' theory, there are many more uses to the market information which could strongly benefit the firm. Housing Anywhere is already covering them partially, but could for example also focus on researching more about general housing market trends from a regional perspective. Moreover, market information is essential also for other purposes, such as exploiting new opportunities, adapting the product and services to the needs of the different users, connecting with domestic networks and generally reinforcing their status in those markets.

Being still strongly lead by effectuation logic, the company's management is without doubt lead by the founder. Some literature argues that this management tends to change after the first 5 years of operations and that the founder of the firm tends to pass on his work to investors or other CEOs. However, we might still structural and strategical changes in the future of the company that depend on the success of the firm.

The features of Housing Anywhere are in strong agreement with the background theory of born global firms. There are obviously some differences between the case company and the literature, and this is explained by the fact that every born global company finds their own strategies of internationalisation, which often follow a certain pattern. With the

current amount of research done in this field, there are some generalisations that can be concluded, such as the need to overcome the liabilities of newness, smallness and foreignness. Each born global firm is its own example of how they achieve that, because their success depends on it.

For further investigation, it would be interesting to see where the founder and employees envision the firm to continue, whether it will continue with the same international entrepreneurial approach or it will tend more towards a corporation-style management. As this was a question often discussed in the born global literature, it would be also interesting to analyse the transition of a born global firm into its next form and how is it different from other firms which internationalised according to the traditional Uppsala model.

It would be also interesting to analyse the trend of internationalisation strategies among various born global firms in a cross-sectional study. Can these strategies relate by field of the born global firm? Or do they follow more a regional/national pattern? What are the different rates of expansion depending on the intensity of internationalisation? All these questions should be addressed in a wider study of the already existing research of the born global firms.

Finally, from a personal perspective this thesis project was an extremely interesting process: starting from the topic selection thanks to my internship experience at Housing Anywhere, continuing to the defining of the research question and methodology which was parallel to the extensive background research. This provided me with a strong theoretical understanding of the topic and of how to conduct research.

Additionally, the interview, questionnaire and review with the founder and the company employees, the data analysis and results encouraged me to an investigative approach and critical thinking that I reflect in this document. Overall, this project provided me with a deep insight in a specific field of my interest and has given me the opportunity to practice my competencies gained through my education. I would like to thank all the persons involved in the execution of this project for their support and contribution.

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## APPENDIX I

Questions for the interview with the founder Mr Niels van Deuren on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2015, Rotterdam.

1. What is your vision on internationalisation of Housing Anywhere BV?
2. What is your previous international experience?
3. How would you describe your commitment to the internationalisation process of the company? What priority does it hold compared to the other functions of the company?
4. What do you think have been the greatest challenges since the start of the company? How did you try to overcome them?
5. Do you consider that social assets (such as friendship, liking, accumulated obligations, trust, and membership in a network) have played a role in the internationalisation process?
6. Social assets can be a useful feature in the employees, too. How much does this affect the recruitment policies of the company?
7. How often do you engage in cooperative strategies to obtain legitimacy and access to critical resources?
8. What is your opinion on transaction relationships (beg, borrow or salvage resources and assets to create initial infrastructure)?

## APPENDIX II

Questions in the questionnaire to the former and current employees. The questionnaire was open during the month of September 2015.

1. Internationalisation strategies are an important part of HousingAnywhere's business. Do you agree?
2. Do you feel personally involved in the internationalisation process of HousingAnywhere?
3. What is your department in the company?
4. To what extent do you agree with the following statements in regards to your work in the company?
5. How would you rate yourself regarding the following characteristics?
6. Anything else you would like to add?
7. Rank the importance of the following concepts in HousingAnywhere.
8. HousingAnywhere has a good methodology of collecting market information on housing.
9. Can you provide an example of how you personally contribute to this?
10. The market information is thoroughly disseminated in the company.
11. If you answered disagree or strongly disagree, how would you suggest to improve it?
12. HousingAnywhere creates and adapts services consistent with the market information.
13. What suggestions have you come up with so far?
14. Do you think that HousingAnywhere is an innovative company in its field?
15. Do you think that HousingAnywhere is aggressive in its international actions?
16. Do you think that HousingAnywhere has a tendency to risk-taking?
17. Would you like to add any comments?
18. Rate the importance of the following statements regarding strategic control of HousingAnywhere.
19. Select the priority for the following potential internationalisation strategies of HousingAnywhere.
20. Personal information.



