Inside the ‘Black Box’ of the 

Born Global Network

A thesis submitted for:

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, submitted to National University of Ireland, Galway for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy (Ph.D.) has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other University. All research herein is entirely my own.

Signature: ________________________

Date: ____________________________
ABSTRACT

From inception, born global firms attempt to gain competitive advantage over their competitors by using the limited resources available to them, and by the development of their sales internationally (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994). Given the lack of resources available to born globals, with respect to larger international competitors, the importance of their social capital and network ties in addressing liabilities of newness, smallness and foreignness has received limited attention (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012). How these ‘network ties’ actually operate and the dynamic positions and roles within these networks, are, as yet, also not fully understood. Therefore, this thesis addresses these issues by examining the ‘black box’ of the social networks and connectors, which born globals draw upon in their efforts to internationalise.

The thesis draws upon the extant literature on international entrepreneurship, international business, born global theory and social networking. This study adds to the ‘budding’ literature on born global internationalisation. In particular, the thesis has adopted a ‘network perspective’ allowing an examination of the elements within the born global internationalising network, based on an examination of indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production firms. An all island representative set of firms, inclusive of twenty highly successful entrepreneurs are used to empirically investigate the research questions. The study gives explicit recognition to each of the ‘links’ within the network and allows the researcher point to a ‘menu’ of connectors and ties therein, both strong and weak.

Based on these research findings, the thesis’s main theoretical contribution is the development of a potential ‘suite of connectors’ from which born globals can draw on during the internationalisation process. Explicitly, a ‘microscopic view’ of the network has revealed the links and hubs in this born global network. Overall, the ‘born global tale’ has been unveiled, highlighting each stage and part of the process for born global internationalisation.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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DEDICATION

For Giles, Arnold and my parents
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>Animation Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAFTA</td>
<td>British Academy of Film and Television Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BG</td>
<td>Born Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CGI</td>
<td>Computer Generated Imagery</td>
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<tr>
<td>CG</td>
<td>Computer Generated</td>
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<td>Co.</td>
<td>Company</td>
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<td>EI</td>
<td>Enterprise Ireland</td>
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<td>ENSR</td>
<td>European Network for Social and Economic Research</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>IE</td>
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<td>Industrial Development Authority</td>
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<td>IFB</td>
<td>Irish Film Board</td>
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<td>I-M</td>
<td>Innovation-Related Internationalisation Model</td>
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<td>International New Venture</td>
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<td>Information Technology</td>
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<td>Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer</td>
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<td>MNC</td>
<td>Multinational Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTBF</td>
<td>New, Technology Based Firm</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>Uppsala Internationalisation Model</td>
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<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>Raidió Teilifís Éireann</td>
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<td>Screen Directors Guild of Ireland</td>
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<td>SME</td>
<td>Small to Medium Sized Organisations</td>
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<td>Screen Producers Ireland</td>
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<td>TV</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The internationalisation of new and small firms is important, particularly in small domestic markets, such as Ireland\(^1\). Recently, researchers have focused on the internationalisation of small firms, in particular, drawing much attention to born global firms, which have been described as,

“A new venture with a global niche market focus from day one” (Moen et al., 2008, p. 536).

Born globals rapidly internationalise their operations and as Gabrielsson & Kirpalani (2004) have highlighted, born globals circumvent many traditional internationalisation research paradigms, in that

“from inception, (they) seek to derive significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and the sales of outputs in multiple countries” (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994, p.49).

Traditional internationalising process models have been used to try and capture the internationalising modes followed by born global firms. However, such models fail to capture the rapid internationalising approach that these firms have adopted (Knight & Cavusgil, 1996). Many scholars have questioned the traditional approaches to internationalisation and considerable research has been undertaken within this area to try and understand the internationalisation methods that born globals adopt. However, our understanding in this area is still somewhat limited. As such, there are extensive research opportunities available, to explore further the born global phenomena.

This thesis attempts to further unravel the conceptual framework developed by Andersson & Wictor (2003), which comprises of the factors that impact born global firms. The conceptual framework focuses on the ‘network’ factor and examines how these ‘network ties’ operate within the network, with respect to internationalisation.

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\(^1\) This study focuses on the Republic of Ireland. All references to ‘Ireland’ and ‘Irish’ refer to the Republic of Ireland.
The concept of ‘social capital’ and ‘network ties’ has received limited attention in previous research (Coviello & Munro, 1995; Sharma & Blomstermo, 2003). Moreover, social networks, connectors and the ‘black box’ (an unknown quality), are the key components that the born global rely on, when breaking into international markets. Therefore, this thesis describes the born global network utilised by these born global firms.

Current research suggests that born globals are “new, technology-based firms” (Moen et al., 2008, p. 537) and the considerable research available relates to ‘purest’ software industries (Garvey, 2007). As such, further research in industries beyond those mentioned is required if the field of born global theory is to ever progress. Therefore, this thesis explores a ‘novel’ sector in Ireland, the indigenous Digital, Film and TV production industry. Given the fact that born global firms often appear in small domestic markets (Andersson & Wictor, 2003), this would suggest that Ireland’s small open economy would be a suitable area to conduct such an investigation. In addition, given the importance of Hollywood and other centres of production excellence within this industry, the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production firms must quickly access customers from the international arena, if they wish to be successful.

1.2 Research Aims and Objectives

There are a considerable number of research questions that must be answered, if this field of research is to move forward. The aims and objectives of this thesis are stated clearly below;

The primary research question encompasses:

“How do born global firms manage and operate their network intermediaries and forums to drive and facilitate their internationalisation process?”

The secondary research questions attempt to,

I. Gain an understanding of the background of the entrepreneur/ founder, particularly,
- Their global mindset,
- The extent of their international experience and market knowledge,
- The degree of networking capability.

II. Identify the drivers that allow the firm to follow a rapid internationalising path.

The objective of this research is to answer key questions that will allow management and public policy makers within this industry to understand the unique nature of the born global industry, using the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production firms as an example. This research delivers an insight into the mechanism(s) employed by the born global firm and the ‘black box’ of network operations, as to how born global firms internationalise.

1.3 Justification and Originality of the Research

The economic development of the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry depends heavily on the growth of the born global firm (Audiovisual Federation Review, 1998). One of the defining characteristics of the born global is their ability to rapidly internationalise and tap into international markets. This trait is vital for the Digital, Film and TV production industry in Ireland, if they wish to remain successful in such a small domestic market.

Whilst the current research on born globals is ever increasing (Sharma & Blomstermo, 2003) much of the literature has been limited to definitions, general characterisations, motivations for international progression, as well as their international performance indicators. Unfortunately, little is understood about their networking strategies. Therefore, this thesis will examine the internationalisation of born global firms from a network perspective by drawing on multiple theories, including international entrepreneurship, international business, born global theory, social network theory, as well as incorporating the gatekeeper phenomenon.

As Jones et el. (2011) have noted, our knowledge of international entrepreneurship is developing with notable contributions in many areas of IE research. These areas
have been classified into three major types firstly, Entrepreneurial Internationalisation within which networks and social capital research have been identified, secondly, International Comparisons of Entrepreneurship and thirdly, Comparative Entrepreneurial Internationalisation (Jones et al., 2011). Together Jones et al. (2011) have categorised twenty-three articles focusing on networks in international entrepreneurship and born global firms. However, there are few studies focusing on how connectors and forums influence the internationalisation process of the born global firm.

Coviello & Munro (1995, 1997) were among the first to introduce networks and relationships in international entrepreneurship literature. This work is extended by further developing work in the areas of network process and social capital (Jones et al., 2011). While Coviello & Munro (1995) and others such as Sharma & Blomstermo (2003) have established the importance of network involvement in the internationalisation process for born globals, the information available is somewhat limited. A fuller and more in-depth appreciation of the process, the connections and links within the network is required, revealing the so-called ‘black box’ for the internationalisation process. Therefore, this thesis will attempt to establish how the network operates to facilitate a firm seeking international progression.

The rationale for further research within this field and the adoption of a network perspective has been noted by various authors of SME internationalisation (Coviello & Munro, 1995; Moen et al., 2002). Sharma & Blomstermo (2003) stated that internationalisation is “a matter of learning through networks” (p.750). This thesis attempts to plug the knowledge gap, by building on the work of Andersson & Wictor (2003) and others by investigating the network concept of internationalisation within born globals. Jones et al. (2011) highlight the importance of conducting research across themes to strengthen the theory as a whole. They also believe that the network research in international entrepreneurship is developing into something more complex, whereby authors of the field are beginning to look beyond the theory and focus on network dynamics (Jones et al., 2011).

Extending our knowledge of the network approach to a small firm internationalisation, Evers & Knight (2008) have examined the role that tradeshows
(forums) play in facilitating networks within the seafood exported, whereby
tradeshows have been described as an important ‘accelerators’ of
internationalisation. Extending on the work of Evers & Knight (2008) this work
provides a contribution to the international entrepreneurship field by presenting an
in-depth demonstration of how various connectors and forums affect born global
firms internationalisation process.

Andersson & Wictor’s (2003) model consists of an additional three factors that
influence the born global firms: the entrepreneur, the industry and globalisation,
which are also reviewed in this study. The thesis examines the ‘entrepreneur’ and
their role in the internationalising process, which has been described by some as a
“pivotal force” (Evers, 2011b, p.17). Such attempts to further augment our
understanding of the founder, as suggested by Knight & Cavusgil (2004); Andersson
& Wictor (2003) and Weerawardena et al. (2007). In particular, the founder’s
background, previous knowledge and experience are examined, prior to the legal
establishment of their firm. This research approach, attempts to provide additional
information or ‘leads’ into the born global phenomena.

The final justification for this area of investigation applied within this thesis relates
to the industry focus. As stated earlier, current born global research focuses on the
‘purest’ software industries (Garvey, 2007). While Gabrielsson et al. (2008) and
others such as Evers (2010) have noted that born globals do exist in other industries.
However, this research is still lacking and a call for more studies that extend beyond
these industries, to examine new industries and countries is warranted (Leonidou &
Samiee, 2012). This study introduces an original ‘novel’ industry, the indigenous
Irish, Digital, Film and TV production industry, which has not been explored from a
born global perspective. Furthermore, this industry has received limited research
attention, despite its remarkable international success.

1.4 Research Methods

In terms of the research approach, while longitudinal studies have been suggested as
appropriate methodological approaches to examine such an idea (Coviello & Munro,
1995; Ruzzier et al., 2006), case study investigations have also been noted as
suitable methods of deployment, allowing for the collection of rich descriptive data (Coviello & Munro, 1995). Moreover, case studies have been identified as the methodology which will provide a better understanding of the early internationalising process (Rialp et al., 2005) as they have the ability to collect in-depth data and build comprehensive cases (Knight, 2000). Therefore, this thesis employed a case study methodology to investigate the born global network.

This research approach involved examining a multi-firm embedded case with ancillary contributors such as enterprise agencies and trade bodies. The research approach utilises triangulation as a means of conducting an all-Ireland study of the industry at hand, drawing from both primary and secondary information sources. The case study included 26 semi-structured in-depth interviews, which were conducted with 20 company founders and 6 institutional support organisations.

1.5 Organisation of Thesis

The thesis comprises of eight chapters, a bibliography and eight appendices. Chapters two and three provide a literature review, chapter four provides a contextual overview of the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry, chapter five explores the methodological issues which relate to the study, chapter six outlines the research findings, while chapter seven presents the discussion, and chapter eight concludes the thesis.

Chapter two begins by defining entrepreneurship, what constitutes an entrepreneur and the move towards international entrepreneurship, before investigating the different models of internationalisation found in international business theory. This chapter also discusses several critiques of the current available research on born global internationalisation and its failure to capture- how and why the born global firms’ adopt a rapid internationalisation approach.

The third chapter describes the relevant studies pertaining to social network theory, by examining the literature relating to relationships and ties within a given network. This chapter introduces the work of Granovetter and Gladwell who have described how different sets of relationships and ties exist within a network. The thesis
examines key ‘connectors’ and ‘links’ involved in the internationalisation process. Figure 1.1 describes the structure for both literature review chapters.

Figure 1.1: Structural Form of Literature Review

Chapter four provides an overview of the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry, and in particular, focuses on its largest division – the animation sector. The chapter begins by detailing a historical overview of the industry in Ireland from its early evolution to present day. In addition, the chapter also acknowledges the international recognition and success that the industry enjoys and profiles each of the firms and their respective entrepreneurs.

The fifth chapter describes the research methodology employed within this study. The chapter begins by outlining the research question and the methodological considerations that arose. This is then followed by a discussion on the rationale of
the research approach, data collection and the analysis techniques that were employed.

Chapter six is the ‘findings’ chapter, this chapter presents the analysis from the primary research that was undertaken, relative to the research questions addressed by this thesis. This chapter describes a ‘suite of connectors’ found within the born global internationalising network, together with the strength of each ‘tie’. The importance of each ‘link’ in the network is graphically represented, as a ‘microscope view’ of ‘inside’ the network.

Chapter seven delivers the ‘discussion’ chapter. The first part of this chapter summarises the main theoretical contributions from this thesis. This chapter then combines the literature presented in chapters two and three, with the analysis of the ‘network’ presented in chapter six, to effectively fulfil the study’s research objectives. The chapter concludes with a summarised version of the born global network, which is one of the key theoretical contributions presented within this thesis.

Chapter eight concludes the thesis by providing an overview of the main contributions of the study, and the subsequent implications for management and public policy makers. The chapter outlines the main strengths and limitations of the thesis and presents several avenues for future research, closing with some concluding remarks.

1.6 Conclusion

Having introduced and outlined the structure of this thesis, the contents of each chapter are outlined and summarised in Figure 1.2.
Figure 1.2: Summary of Thesis Outline and Structure

Chapter 1
Introduction and Outline of the Thesis

Chapter 2
Literature Review on IE, IB & Born Globals

Chapter 3
Literature Review on Social Network Theory

Chapter 4
Research Context

Chapter 5
Research Methodology

Chapter 6
Case Study Findings

Chapter 7
Discussion

Chapter 8
Conclusion
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE CHAPTER I – INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND BORN GLOBALS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first of the two literature chapters, and its aim is to provide a comprehensive background to the development of research underpinning born global internationalisation. This chapter begins by defining entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur, followed by a detailed overview of international entrepreneurship and international business. Globalisation theory has also been introduced together with an overview of an SME. The chapter concludes by outlining born global theory as well as a summary of the current born global debate.

Firstly, international entrepreneurship (IE) theory has moved from just research in the field of entrepreneurship to internationalisation amongst the newest and smallest firms (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994, McDougall & Oviatt, 2000). Secondly, international business (IB) research has also confirmed that some of the theories introduced in the internationalisation literature do provide illustrative direction for multinational corporations (MNCs). However, for small and medium-sized enterprise (SMEs) this does not seem to apply. Companies involved in manufacturing adopt the thinking of the traditional models. However, there tends to be a ‘lack of fit’ with those involved in this research (Coviello & McAuley, 1999)

This research reviews the work of Jones et al. (2011), whereby 323 relevant journal articles published during the period 1989-2009 in IE, have been critiqued. Furthermore, a detailed investigation into the SME/ born global internationalisation strategies has been conducted which considers the work of many researchers and reveals the importance of the entrepreneur, the industry, globalisation and networks (Andersson & Wictor, 2003; Evers, 2011b).

International entrepreneurship is an area of interest for many academic researchers, the business community and governments across the world. Consequently, IE researchers are continually striving to provide a theory that will address born globals, as existing internationalisation theories have failed to explain them (McDougall et al., 1994; McDougall & Oviatt, 2000; Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). It is believed that
born globals endure a number of liabilities, known as “smallness, newness and foreignness” (Gabrialsson & Kirpalani, 2012, p.8) and as Rennie (1993) suggests, these firms need all the government support available to overcome these difficulties. As a result numerous researchers such as Evers (2010); Evers (2011b) have successfully captured the factors that are believed to influence the internationalisation of new ventures at inception. Entrepreneurship literature abounds with definitions for the ‘entrepreneur’, drawing attention to their characteristics and global mindset which is important in terms of studying those in this investigation - born globals. However, we still only have a limited knowledge on the entrepreneurs themselves (Verhees & Meulenberg, 2004), and even less is understood about the network in which they operate and their ability to penetrate international markets. Therefore, researchers are calling for studies that employ a network perspective to examine the internationalisation process of born global firms (Coviello & Munro, 1995; Moen et al., 2002).

The various definitions of entrepreneurship, entrepreneur and international entrepreneurship are outlined in the following sections, to establish the most suitable terms to use to further investigate the ‘born global’ phenomenon.

2.2 Defining Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a multifaceted phenomenon that cuts across many disciplinary boundaries (Low & MacMillan, 1988). Furthermore, the phenomenon can be productively examined from disciplines as varied as history, sociology, economics, psychology and anthropology (Low & MacMillan, 1988; Carson et al., 1995).

Defining the term ‘entrepreneurship’ has progressed from, understanding ‘who the entrepreneur is’, to establishing, what influences a firm and a market have on, how, where, and why new enterprises are founded’ (Thornton, 1999). Gartner (1989) has defined entrepreneurship as one(s) who create(s) organisations and he also believes that what distinguishes ‘entrepreneurs’ from ‘non-entrepreneurs’ is their ability to create firms (p.47).
In addition, Cunningham & Lischeron (1991) describe six ‘schools of thought’, which attempt to aid our understanding of the entrepreneurial process i.e., the development, birth and growth of firms, which is now the central focus of this phenomenon according to Reynolds (2000). This information helps to explain what an entrepreneur does, as well as outlining the functions and processes which are important (Appendix 1- The Approaches Describing Entrepreneurship, by Cunningham & Lischeron, 1991). Cunningham & Lischeron (1991) established that there was no single discipline which could provide the tools necessary for controlling an entrepreneurial enterprise. As such, trying to define this field continues to prove difficult.

The ‘schools of thought’ introduce the entrepreneurial process, which are described by Cunningham & Lischeron (1991) as a process that involves “creating the idea, assessing one’s personal abilities, and taking actions now and in the future” (p.57). Overall the process assumes that the entrepreneur has the responsibility for the undertaking, or in some cases they will distribute the risks and rewards from it. The following figure helps to demonstrate the entrepreneurial process:

Figure 2.1: The Entrepreneurial Process

![Diagram of the Entrepreneurial Process]

Source: (Cunningham & Lischeron, 1991, p.57)

After examining entrepreneurship, the next section of the literature review will
explore ‘who is an entrepreneur’ and in particular what distinguishes an ‘entrepreneur’ from a ‘born global entrepreneur’.

2.3 Defining an Entrepreneur

Cantillon (1755) was one of the first to recognise and introduce the term ‘entrepreneur’. Since then, many definitions have been suggested, a provider of capital and/or a risk taker. Schumpeter (1934) was one of the first to introduce the notion of a modern entrepreneur in his study on the theory behind economic development. He described them as one, which generates new ideas and produces a variety of resources, which in return stimulates the economy (Schumpeter, 1934). Various definitions had been put forward, “an innovative individual who creates and builds a business from non-existence” (Schwartz, 1976, p.47), or ‘those who develop a niche in the market, or develop a strategy to satisfy some need’ (Cunningham & Lischeron, 1991, p.45). Cunningham & Lischeron (1991) further examined this translation of the actual term itself in their research, indicating it denotes to ‘undertake’. Entrepreneurs have also been described as, “those individuals who start a new business which they own and control” (Cromie & Hayes, 1988, p.86), or “a person who establishes a business” (Carland & Carland, 1991 p.63).

Given the numerous definitions currently available, Gartner (1989) constructed a table of thirty-two different definitions, which included many prominent ones (Appendix 2 – Definitions of the Entrepreneur by Gartner, 1989). However, in attempting to define an entrepreneur, Binks & Vale (1990) concluded that the following definitions covered most of the variations.

1. “Entrepreneurs must be identified as being reactive, they are agents of adjustments;
2. They are those who cause economic development by introducing and innovating ideas which fundamentally rearrange the allocation of the factors of production;
3. They do more than merely survey the market process, they change it, but in a gradualistic rather than fundamental manner” (Binks & Vale, 1990, p.9).
In addition, Chell *et al.* (1991) further described the typical entrepreneur as being opportunistic, adventurous, an ideas person, a high profile image-maker and an innovator with a propensity to accept a broad financial strategy. This descriptive statement demonstrates the imaginative and active nature of entrepreneurship.

Currently, there is a lack of agreed clarity on what exactly the entrepreneur is or what he or she actually does. Some suggest they are originators of a new business, which excludes those who inherit or buy an existing enterprise, others, suggest the term entrepreneur should only apply to the inventive activities of creators. However, this description could discriminate most of those practising entrepreneurial and business activities (Cunningham & Lischeron, 1991). Some academics and researchers also advocate that these persons are small business owners rather than entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is not surprising that an agreed definition has not been widely accepted for the entrepreneur.

The personal qualities of the entrepreneur are important for starting a new business, according to Cromie & Johns (1983). They believe that it takes a particular type of person to set up their own business, and that entrepreneurship is seen as an actual personality characteristic. Furthermore, they recognise that certain circumstances and social dissatisfaction are linked to the process but argue that under similar situational circumstances, some people will set up in business while others will refrain. Numerous entrepreneurial characteristics have been identified (Chell *et al.*, 1991). However, few of them are general to all studies (Chell *et al.*, 1991). Chell *et al.* (1991) and others disagree that the need for achievement and desire to do well is the basic characteristic for most of the entrepreneurs. However, the Bolton Report (1971) stressed that the desire for independence is a basic characteristic of the small firm owned-manager. Another related personality characteristic of an entrepreneur is internal locus of control, and according to Welsh & Young (1983), entrepreneurs have been portrayed as being in control of their own destiny. Internal locus of control refers to the confidence that outcomes are consequences of one’s own performance (Rotter, 1966). Individuals with internal locus of control consider that they are in control of their own future and that luck and fate have only a weak influence on results and events. In addition to entrepreneurial characteristics, other
studies have suggested that the entrepreneur has more determination, self-confidence, and they are also more willing to take risks.

A person or business that acquires this quality, and is prepared to take the risk, is recognised as an entrepreneur (Chell et al., 1991). However, as Andersson & Wictor (2003) stated, “starting a new firm is not the main aspect that distinguishes an entrepreneur” (p. 255), but rather they are viewed as individuals who perform entrepreneurial activities (Andersson, 2000), for example opening new markets, is seen as an entrepreneurial innovation (Schumpeter 1934). Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the entrepreneurial actions that characterise a born global entrepreneur are their rapid internationalisation traits (Andersson & Wictor, 2003).

Andersson (2011) understood that the entrepreneur influences the international activities of the business as well as its development. This opinion is similarly reflected by other academics such as Wright et al. (2007), who believe the entrepreneur plays a central role in the business internationalisation process, particularly the born global business, as it has been suggested, that it is these individuals who have the dedication and ability to drive the company forward. Further to this, Cavusgil et al. (2013) suggested that the born global ‘trend’ has opened a new field of inquiry – international entrepreneurship.

2.4 International Entrepreneurship Theory (IE)

According to Oviatt & McDougall (2005) the term international entrepreneurship is multidisciplinary, like that of entrepreneurship, and researchers have found that the two subjects are interconnected, international business, focuses on the large multinationals, whereas entrepreneurship tends to focus on SME’s within the home market. Recent studies have focused on various frameworks and theories which include international business, entrepreneurship, anthropology, economics, psychology, finance, marketing, and sociology (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). International entrepreneurship is a broad and important field of research which still demands considerable study, and there are many opportunities to promote multidisciplinary and multi-country collaborations (Zahra & George, 2002; Oviatt & McDougall, 1994).
2.4.1 Defining International Entrepreneurship

The development of international entrepreneurship has significantly transformed over the past decade. The phrase international entrepreneurship was initially used by Morrow (1988) and described by Zahra & George (2002). Morrow’s manuscript describes the modern technological improvements and cultural responsiveness that was seen to unlock earlier unexploited foreign markets to fresh business enterprises. An empirical study conducted by McDougall (1989) comparing domestic and new international ventures sparked considerable interest in the field of international entrepreneurship. Oviatt & McDougall (2005) explained that, as additional studies were conducted into this area of research, interest began to grow on the subject. The dedicated study of international entrepreneurship ‘took off’ compared to that of its previous rival, venture internationalisation. The importance of international entrepreneurship has been extensively described in various journals, forums and special issues (McDougall & Oviatt, 1997; 2003; Zahra & George, 2002; Oviatt & McDougall, 2005).

In an attempt to define international entrepreneurship, an earlier definition by McDougall (1989) concentrated on the internationalisation of new firms, which excluded the existence of established firms. McDougall & Oviatt (2000), reviewed the literature and suggested a more meaningful definition for the term ‘international entrepreneurship’,

“International entrepreneurship is a combination of innovative, proactive, and risk-taking behaviour that crosses national borders and is intended to create value in organisation” (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000, p.903).

Zahra & George (2002) also described the term international entrepreneurship as:

“The process of creatively discovering and exploiting opportunities that lies outside a firm’s domestic markets in the pursuit of competitive advantage” (Zahra & George, 2002, p.261).
The definition of international entrepreneurship has developed in recent times to include corporate entrepreneurship rather than solely focusing on new enterprises (Birkinshaw, 1997; Zahra et al., 2000; Zahra & George, 2002).

Nevertheless, as Oviatt & McDougall (2005) suggested, the meaning of the term international entrepreneurship is still the subject of continual discussion, and its definition is constantly evolving. Shane & Venkataraman (2000) recognised entrepreneurship as an:

“Examination of how, by whom, and with what effects opportunities to create future goods and services are discovered, evaluated and exploited” (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000, p. 218).

Shane & Venkataraman’s (2000) definition of international entrepreneurship was questioned (Oviatt & McDougall, 2005) and Andersson (2011) suggests that it “depicts opportunities as objective phenomena in the environment”. However, McDougall & Oviatt (2003) believed that this approach could be adopted promoting opportunities that could be authorized as well as further discovered. As a result, McDougall & Oviatt (2003) refined their initial definition and suggested the following:

“International entrepreneurship is the discovery, enactment, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities- across-national borders- to create future goods and services” (McDougall & Oviatt, 2003, p.540).

Oviatt & McDougall (2005) stated, there are two aspects to be examined with respect to international entrepreneurship, they believe one of the features focuses on the ‘cross-national-border behaviour of entrepreneurial actors’, while the other focuses on the ‘cross-national-comparison of entrepreneurs’, this includes the situation which they are involved in, as well as their continuing behaviour. Dimitratos & Plakoyiannaki (2003) further extended the work of McDougall & Oviatt (2003) and developed their own definition for international entrepreneurship,}

“International entrepreneurship is an organization-wide process which is embedded in the organizational culture of the firms and which seeks
through the exploitation of opportunities in the international marketplace to generate value” (Dimitratos & Plakoyiannaki, 2003, p.189).

Further, Dimitratos & Plakoyiannaki (2003) have linked five different fundamentals of international entrepreneurship. Firstly, it is an organization-wide occurrence, which extends across all links of the chain of command within the organisation and its geographical limits (Dimitratos & Plakoyiannaki, 2003). Secondly, it is a dynamic and evolving process i.e., a lengthy process in terms of evitable results (Zarah & George, 2002). Thirdly, it is fixed within the organizational culture of the enterprise, and it may be an important contextual issue to international entrepreneurship motives (Liesch & Knight, 1999; Naranjo-Valencia et al., 2011). Fourthly, it revolves around the detection of opportunities in the international market environment (Dimitratos & Plakoyiannaki, 2003). Lastly, it involves setting an aim at value creation for the company, regardless if the profits may seem distant (Dimitratos & Plakoyiannaki, 2003).

Oviatt & McDougall (2005) advocate that the field of international entrepreneurship is an important topic, from which the term ‘international new venture’ is found. Explaining this acceleration of the internationalization process is at the centre of their research (Hurmerinta-Peltomaki, 2004). These new ventures include engaging in international activity at an early stage of the business lifecycle, which is a form of early internationalisation. In the following sections, the key ideas that have been described in the literature will be addressed.

Acs et al. (2003) described the field of international entrepreneurship as vague, allowing opportunity for further investigation and numerous questions, which still have yet to be answered (Brush, 1993, 1995; Giamartio et al., 1993; Wright & Ricks, 1994; Hitt & Bartkus 1997; McDougall & Oviatt, 1997; 2000). While the field of study has extended since these comments were published, academics such as Kiss et al. (2012) continue to raise numerous new research questions for scholars in the field.
The definition by Dimitratos & Plakoyiannaki (2003) integrates the fundamentals for the international entrepreneurship described by the previous authors, and together provides a comprehensive definition for international entrepreneurship, which is used to develop an understanding of the ‘born global’ Digital, Film and TV production companies in Ireland.

Gabrielsson & Kirpalani (2012) suggested that researchers of international entrepreneurship theory should continue with their debate, regarding the application of internationalisation theory to born global firms, as the traditional theories do not explain the modern approaches adopted by such companies. This may be as a result of the three liabilities which are linked to such companies, namely, “smallness, newness and foreignness” (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012, p.8). Therefore, the next step in the literature involves examining international business theory which aids in explaining the internationalisation process followed by those companies which are innovative and are competing in ‘creative industries’.

2.5 International Business Theory (IB)

Hymer (1960) developed the underpinnings for the examination of internationalisation, by applying the theory to international business. Buckley & Casson (1976) further developed the modern internationalisation theory by extending Coase’s (1937) work on internationalisation to a theory of larger enterprises. It has been established that the subject itself is at the core of the field of international business (Hutzchenreuter et al., 2007).

The internationalisation process of a company has been the topic of a great deal of investigation over the past two decades (Madsen & Servais, 1997). Internationalisation is used to illustrate “the gradual, incremental pattern for a company’s expansion into international markets” (Erramilli et al., 1999). Rugman (1981) previously suggested that internationalisation it is the method that companies use, to establish markets internally and where the internal pricing strategies permit that specific market to work cost-effectively, as in the case of external markets. Throughout the years, researchers have used internationalisation theories to examine how a company becomes involved in internationalisation operations, as well as how
the company builds resource assurance in the overseas market (Erramilli et al., 1999). As Davidson (1980) outlined, such theories have been used to explore entry methods to markets and also the market selection procedures, which are also carried out. Overall, there has been numerous studies carried out in the field of internationalisation in the past number of years, from the original work of Hymer in 1960, to the extensive research carried out by Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul in 1975 which is still used today, along with the work of Madsen & Servais (1997), Oviatt & McDougall (1997), Weerawardena et al. (2007), Lopez et al. (2009) and Gabrielsson & Kirpalani (2012).

While international business theory has moved towards a theory for examining large enterprises, as adopted by Buckley & Casson (1976), some authors have continued to use this theory to investigate the small enterprise internationalisation process (Wheeler et al., 1996). However, like many theories, several criticisms have been put forward regarding internationalisation theory, for example problems such as, testing the theory and its explanatory power (Buckley, 1988). What’s more Casson (1992) maintains that the theory is both insignificant and over-estimated in terms of examining those involved in rapid internationalisation. Furthermore, researchers have noted that born globals do not follow the traditional stage models, as such models have an element of ‘risk-averse behaviour’ (Gabrielsson & Kirpanlani, 2012). Born globals tend to overlook risk, therefore traditional models are unsuitable when trying to capture the internationalisation of born globals (Gabrielsson & Kirpanlani, 2012). Given such debate regarding a suitable model, it is important to investigate the learning and innovation adoption models, which may aid in explaining the internationalisation process of a company. The appropriateness of the model(s) is further discussed in the following sections of this thesis.

2.5.1 Internationalisation Process Models

To some extent, the two traditional international process models, which have appeared in Europe and the US are relatively similar (for a recent discussion see Hotho & Champion, 2011). The first model, and most important of the two, has been described in an article by Andersen (1993), as ‘The Uppsala Internationalisation Model (U-M)’ by Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul (1975) and Johanson & Vahlne (1977). The second model, constructed by Bilkey & Tesar (1977), Cavusgil (1980),
Czinkota (1982) and Reid (1981) is known as ‘The Innovation-Related Internationalisation Model (I-M)’.

2.5.1.1 The Uppsala Internationalisation Model

As Andersen (1993) outlined, ‘The Uppsala Internationalisation Model (U-M)’ proffers that a company tends to internationalise like “rings in the water”, gradually gaining market knowledge which in return tends to reduce the degree of market uncertainty as well as risk. A firm following this internationalisation model follows a gradual slow progression towards geographical markets, product policy and market entry modes (Madsen & Servais, 1997). The distinctiveness of the U-M model was cited by Johanson & Vahlne (1977) from the work of Ahoroni (1966) as they consider internationalisation to be “the result of a strategy for optimum allocation of resources to different countries where alternative ways of exploiting foreign markets are compared and evaluated” (p.23). Johanson & Vahlne (1977) “see it rather as the consequence of a process of incremental adjustments to changing conditions of the firm and its environment” (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, p.35). Johanson & Wierdersheim-Paul (1975) found that companies tend to internationalise following a ‘chain of establishment’. The four stages are distinguished in the following figure;

Figure 2.2: Incremental Pattern (1): ‘Chain of Establishment’

Source: (Adapted by Author from Johanson & Wierdersheim-Paul, 1975, p.307)
Johanson & Wierdersheim-Paul (1975) also concluded that these companies tend to firstly penetrate new markets relatively close to their geographical location, introducing the concept of ‘psychic distance’, which is seen as the second incremental pattern followed by such rapid internationalising companies. The following figure outlines the direction taken by such firms:

Figure 2.3: Incremental Pattern (2): ‘Role of Psychic Distance’

Psychic distance can be defined as the “sum of factors preventing or disturbing the flow of information between firms and markets in terms of differences in language, education, business practices, culture and industrial development” (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977, p.24). Johanson & Vahlne (2003) have further described the reason for these patterns. They believe that companies lacking in knowledge regarding foreign markets have significant obstacles when they try to expand internationally (Johanson & Vahlne, 2003). They understand that a company acquires knowledge when they begin to work within specific markets, allowing the company to obtain business opportunities and in return develop new market commitments (Johanson & Vahlne, 2003). As Johanson & Vahlne (2003) outlined, “these commitments lead to learning and the ability to identify new market opportunities, as knowledge is developed gradually international expansion takes place incrementally” (Johnanson & Vahlne, 2003, p.89). However, there are significant challenges to the Uppsala research. One such challenge has stated that factors, which influence
internationalisation in the modern day, have significantly changed since the time of the Uppsala model (Bell & Young, 1998).

2.5.1.2 The Innovation Related Internationalisation Model

The second traditional model also described a company’s slow international expansion progress. This model is known as ‘The Innovation-Related Internationalisation Model’, which originated from the work of adoption processes by Rogers (1962). This model examines the internationalisation process as an inventive route of exploitation followed by adopting new ways of conducting future business (Madsen & Servais, 1997). Although the model identifies that the process is an incremental one, it varies in the number of stages and it also suggests that there is a discrepancy in the internationalisation procedure of small companies as opposed to large companies (Cavusgil, 1980). The five-stage internationalisation process of a company has been identified by Cavusgil (1980) as: 1) Domestic Marketing, 2) Pre-Export Stage, 3) Experimental Involvement, 4) Active Involvement 5) Commitment Involvement. The other stage processes introduced by authors such as Bilkey & Tesar (1977), Czinkota (1982) and Reid (1981) represent similar stages and comparable ‘psychic distance’ speculation as that of Cavusgil (1980). Outlined below is Cavusgil’s (1980) model,
2.5.1.3 Learning and Innovation Model Debate

In general, both models have certain similarities. As Madsen & Servais (1997) suggest, both models represent the concept of internationalisation as an ‘incremental process’ which is generated by a number of stages, whereby knowledge is accumulated. Also, the underlying notion for both models is that companies are well established in their home marketplace prior to international expansion. This questions both the models ability in terms of examining born globals given their rapid internationalisation approach. There are also differences in both models, for example the innovation model centres on primarily exporting, whereas the Uppsala model includes international connected activities.

Even though there is positive support for the Uppsala model, there is also an undeniable degree of criticism. Johanson & Vahlne (1990) stated that their model has an inadequate analytical worth. They also understand that the model is built on the notion of companies seeking to minimise risk and increase profit margins and as a result, both features will affect the decision making process (Johanson & Vahlne,
However, both models add to the understanding of the small firms internationalisation process, and in particular the Uppsala model provides a general conceptualisation of a small firm’s internationalisation approach. However, these models are seen as insufficient frameworks in terms of getting an insight into the routes taken by born global companies (McDougall et al., 1994), as the approaches fail to capture the knowledge gained by such firms and their entrepreneurs before the firm becomes a legal establishment (Weerawardena et al., 2007). Such disagreements have given rise to the born global debate, indicating that “a firm’s internationalisation does not have to go through the progressive accumulation of resources and capabilities” (Lopez et al., 2009, p.1229).

The literature suggests that born global firms do not follow traditional models in relation to internationalisation, as they are seen to become involved in internationalisation from inception (i.e. reason they have been labelled born globals). Additional data suggests that these companies follow a more detailed model which is in concurrence with that of evolutionary judgements (Madsen & Servais, 1997). However, conflict in this area is on-going, as some authors find similarities in the trends of the born global firms, and the traditional models and basic assumptions are still believed to be valid (Madsen & Servais, 1997). Others have reported that born globals internationalise promptly following the ‘start-up’ stage in a more ‘leapfrogging’ / ‘fashion’ rather than following a steady developing approach (Bell, 1995; Madsen & Servais, 1997; Rialp et al., 2005). Further research found, that none of the firms they examined followed the traditional models, focusing on internationalisation rather than solely on their home market (McDougall et al., 1994). Studies also revealed that these companies followed a rapid internationalising route rather than an incremental path containing the many stages which is assumed by the Uppsala model (Knight & Cavusgil, 1996; Bell et al., 2003; Moen & Servais, 2002). Cavusgil (1994) also suggested that “gradual internationalisation is dead”. This statement was further supported by Johanson & Vahlne (2003) who cite authors who have used the older models of gradual internationalisation for examining the direction taken by born globals, however these models are unsuitable for examining the internationalisation of these firms. Andersen (1993) previously stated that in order to assist in the understanding of the literature available, further thorough research into a theoretical model is still required. Fillis (2001); Oviatt & McDougall
(2005) and Jones & Coviello (2005) suggest that researchers should combine the research findings on international business and entrepreneurship, to develop a new model. Madsen & Servais (1997) previously stated that it is not essential to search for novel theories on born globals, but rather use the present theories to gain an understanding of such companies, which is a critical issue. In addition, Johanson & Vahlne (2003) also suggest that establishing a model that can fully describe the initial stages of a company’s internationalisation procedures is superior to that of the original model.

To conclude, such learning and innovation models have previously been used to examine both large and small companies’ modes of internationalisation as well as their international activities. However, research suggests that they only describe the change of procedures and fail to give a valid explanation for the approach used by a company for their development. Moreover, such models fail to describe the accelerated internationalisation route adopted by born globals. As such, further research is required to explore the role taken by born globals rather that applying the traditional internationalising models (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Therefore, it is necessary to examine newer models which try to describe the internationalisation route followed by these born globals, from a network perspective, as research indicates this tends to be the approach taken by such.

### 2.5.2 New Network Internationalisation Models

The network approach to internationalisation adopted by these models can be used to gain an insight into the company’s behavioural activities with respect to their internationalisation. This research approach was employed comprehensively in work of Evers & Knight (2008). In their study of the seafood sector they employed the network approach to small firm internationalisation as a means of examining the role of tradeshows in the born global’s path of international expansion (Evers & Knight, 2008).

Based on the criticisms and unsuitability of the tradition models such as the Uppsala Model, further network models have been developed. The first model to be examined known as the ‘Business Network Model’ by Johanson & Vahlne (2003) outlines the
findings of recent research, describing the changes from their previous traditional model, as a result of advancements in the twenty-first century. The second conceptual framework and systems of relationships model to be examined is from the work of Weerawandena et al. (2007) which also tries to gain an insight into the mode followed by rapid internationalising firms.

2.5.3 Business Network Models

Given the continual debate and need for a suitable model to examine the internationalisation route adopted by rapid internationalising firms, Johanson & Vahlne (2003) have labelled their latest model as the ‘Business Network Model’. Business networks have been defined by Anderson et al. (1994) and cited by Johanson & Vahlne (2003) as a “set of interconnected business relationships, in which each exchange relation is between businesses firms conceptualised as collective actors” (p.92). A previous study by Hakansson (1982) and Ford (2002) has also established that a close, ongoing relationship among companies conducting business with each other is considered crucial to those who are involved. For example, Evers & Knight’s (2008) study of the seafood industry suggests that a firm exploits trade shows (knowledge hubs) to gain access to their business network. Johanson & Vahlne (2003) outlined that “it takes time and resources to build relationships”. The findings from Johanson & Vahlne (2003) suggest that most of the firms are involved in a controlled number of business relationships with significant supplier firms and customer alike. Each business has further relationships with other associated companies. Therefore, these companies are part of “an unbounded business network” (Johanson & Vahlne, 2003).

Johanson and Vahlne (2003) have outlined the main arguments which exist in their new theory as:

- “Barriers to relationship building;”
- Relationship commitment and learning;
- Internationalisation versus international network development;
- Business experience and networks;
- Network relationship development in internationalisation” (Johanson & Vahlne, 2003, pp. 92-96).
This model combines the notion of empirical ‘learning-commitment’, which is seen as being at the heart of the previous models, focusing on the same concept for business network relationships (Johanson & Vahlne, 2003).

Johanson & Vahlne (2009) have revisited their 1977 ‘Uppsala’ model as a result of the changes in, company behaviour, economic and regulatory environments, research frontiers as well as the development of new concepts and understandings. Taken together, these issues have transformed the business world into a so-called ‘web of relationships’ or ‘a network’ that was previously believed to be a “neoclassical market with many independent suppliers and customers” (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009, p.1412). Therefore, with this in mind, Johanson & Vahlne (2009) believe their original model must be further developed, by incorporating the ‘network research’ described by researchers such as Welch & Welch (1996); Chen & Chen (1998); Ellis (2000); Chetty & Holm (2000); Elango & Pattnaik (2007); Loane & Bell (2006) and Coviello (2006); Evers & Knight (2008) and Jones et al. (2011). The work of Johanson & Vahlne (2009) differed from the other research groups by focusing on “business networks as a market structure in which the internationalising firm is embedded and on the corresponding business network structure of the foreign market” (p.1413). The older 1977 dynamic internationalisation model, conceives that the result of a choice contributes to the development of another. The previous 1977 model overleaf indicates a circular process, in that market commitment and knowledge affect commitment decisions and current activities, which in turn results in altering the company’s level of market knowledge and commitment.
Similar to the 1977 model, the 2009 business network model is made up of two sets of variables (State and Change/ Stock and Flow). These variables are pertinent to both sections of the relationship, each having an effect on the other (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). However, the fundamentals of the original model remain the same, while there is a considerable amount of change in the relationships being examined (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). The previous 2009 model described in Figure 2.6 indicates a similar circular process, in that knowledge opportunities and the network position affect the relationship commitment decisions and the learning, creating and trust building, which results in altering the companies’ knowledge opportunities and network position.
Evers & Knight (2008) note that, “how small firms acquire, develop and maintain networks relevant to their dynamic environments has gone largely unstudied” (p. 555). Supporting the research call of Evers & Knight’s (2008), Evers et al. (2012) examine network actors within the concept of dynamic capabilities in an attempt to explore how international new ventures develop. Therefore the following section introduces and explores dynamic capabilities and its roles in the born global internationalisation process.

### 2.5.4 Conceptual Framework and Systems of Relationships

As Evers et al. (2012) have suggested there is a limited amount of research that examines dynamic capabilities from an international new venture perspective. However, given the shortcomings of the Uppsala Model, Weerawardena et al. (2007) have developed a new ‘conceptual framework and system of relationships’. The framework merges a firm’s dynamic capabilities and competitive advantage, supporting the work of Evers (2011a), which was outlined by Teece et al. (1997), as well as organizational learning theory identified by other researchers such as Bell et al. (2002).
In order to examine the Weerawardena et al. (2007) framework, we need to understand ‘dynamic capability’. Teece et al. (1997), who are believed to be the seminal authors for dynamic capabilities (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009) refer to a firm’s ability in accomplishing competitive advantage as, dynamic capability. Their understanding of ‘dynamic’ relates to “the capacity to renew competences so as to achieve congruence with the changing business environment” (p.515). For instance, novel responses, timing and rapid technological adjustments are critical. They also recognise ‘capabilities’ as “appropriately adapting, integrating and reconfiguring internal and external organisational skills, resources, and functional competences to match the requirements of a changing environment” (p.515), (Teece et al. 1997). In general, the main focus of dynamic capabilities relates to a firm’s competencies and performance (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009).

However, the phrase ‘dynamic capabilities’ is still the subject of much debate. Teece et al. (1997) in their early work on this concept defined dynamic capabilities as:

“The firm’s ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environments”
(Teece et al., 1997, p.516).

Many researchers have put their own interpretation on dynamic capabilities and have tried to narrow the broad definition which was originally applied by Teece et al., (1997). For example, Eisenhardt & Martin (2000) who was cited by Easterby-Smith et al. (2009) understood dynamic capabilities to “represent best practices and exhibit equifinality” (p. S3). Furthermore, Eisenhardt & Martin (2000) also believed that dynamic capabilities weren’t a foundation for a firm’s competitive advantage. However, Teece (2007) published work stating that, “dynamic capabilities are the foundation of enterprise-level competitive advantage in the regimes of rapid (technological) change” (p. 1341). In response to the argument between Eisenhardt & Martin’s, Teece (2007) believes “while best practices will not lead to competitive advantage, they are unlikely to constitute dynamic capabilities” (p.S3) cites Easterby-Smith et al. (2009).
Zahra et al. (2002) have also penned their own definition for dynamic capabilities, which states that-

“The abilities to reconfigure a firm’s resources and routines in the manner envisioned and deemed appropriate by its principal decision-maker(s)” (Zahra et al. 2002, p. 918).

A more recent interpretation for dynamic capabilities put forward by Helfat et al. (2007) incorporating the work of Teece et al. (1997) and Eisenhart & Martin (2000), stating that-

“The capacity of an organisation to purposefully create, extend, or modify its resource base” (p. 4).

Establishing a suitable definition has proven difficult, however as Easterby-Smith et al. (2009) suggest “dynamic capabilities are responses to the need for change or new opportunities, and the changes can take many forms: they involve the transformation of organisational processes, allocation of resources and operations” (p. S4) This statement further reinforces the original work published by Teece et al. (1997), and they believe that a company’s dynamic capabilities are influenced by three factors, as described by Tsai & Jhang (2010). Firstly, processes, this relates to the way duties are conducted within the company, for instance a company’s routine. Secondly, positions which relates to the amount of ‘technology and intellectual property’, which exists within a company, the number of customers, and the companies’ relationship with its suppliers. The third factor is known as, paths. This refers to the various routes obtainable to a particular company, as well as identifying the opportunities available in the future.

The work of Easterby-Smith et al. (2009) suggests, that organisations have many different dynamic capabilities, and these include: idea generation capabilities, market disruptiveness capabilities, new product development capabilities, and marketing capabilities, or in some cases, new process development capabilities (Easterby-Smith et al., 2009). Evers et al. (2012) also build on this argument suggesting that because markets are dynamic, “it is the capabilities by which firms acquire resources and the
ways they deploy them to match the changes in their market environments that are significant” (p.48).

Furthermore, Weerawardena et al. (2007) suggest that the process of constructing capabilities in a born global firm is motivated by “entrepreneurial owner-managers with a global outlook” (p.299), before they experience an international and learning direction. The following figure outlines the model that was proposed by Weerawardena et al. (2007);
Figure 2.7: The Proposed Dynamic Capability Model of a Born Global Firm’s Accelerated Internationalisation.

Source: (Adapted by Author from Weerawardena et al., 2007, p. 299)
This model draws on ‘organisational learning theory’, which provides a new conceptualisation of the factors leading towards a firm’s rapid internationalizing. In addition, the model also offers a direction on how to target the development of policies which are proposed to promote an increase in the number of companies internationalizing (Weerawardena et al., 2007). The model allows for the investigation of the born global phenomena and the business network theory that was proposed by Johanson & Vahlne (2003; 2009), given that the deviations observed for born globals and internationalisation theories do not fit the modes of internationalisation followed by modern companies (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012). Furthermore, the literature presents a review of social network analysis theory, by examining the ‘network’ approach adopted by such companies throughout their internationalisation process. This angle of investigation builds on the studies conducted by Evers & Knight (2008) and also, those highlighted in the work of Jones et al. (2011).

The following section introduces globalisation, which is considered a major driving force behind the rapid internationalisation path adopted by born globals.

2.6 Globalisation

In order to discuss the ‘born global’ phenomenon, it is first necessary to briefly examine what the term ‘globalisation’ means, as well as examine the ‘drivers’ of globalisation and how it impacts and influences such companies. The word ‘globalisation’ is in everyday use (Parker, 2005). The primary focus for the term ‘globalisation’ described throughout this thesis is on the global economy and the ‘globalisation of markets’ (Cavusgil et al., 2013), rather than other forms of globalisation, such as political, cultural or social. The term globalisation can be used to describe many things, and as its definitions differ in significant ways (Parker, 2005). Ohmae (1995) believes globalisation to be the absence of borders and barriers to trade, while Dicken (1992) suggests it as a shift in the traditional patterns of international production, investment, and trade. It is difficult to understand what a firm going ‘global’ actually means. As a result of the globalisation debate, Parker (2005) explored the concept of globalization and further defined the term as;
“Globalisation is a process whereby worldwide interconnections in virtually every sphere of activity are growing. Some of these interconnections lead to integration/unity worldwide; others does not. Together global interconnections and the relationships they forge represent a historically unprecedented process that is rapidly reshaping the context for many activities (Held et al., 1999 cited by Parker, 2005).
The result is blurred boundaries within and between organisations, nations, and global interests” (Parker, 2005, p. 5).

Ruzzier et al. (2006) believes that globalisation refers “to a stage in which the firm’s operations are managed on a global scale and not just a few selected countries” (p. 477).

2.6.1 The Globalisation Debate

The above definition clearly defines the meaning of the term globalisation. However, there are many contrasting perspectives on the globalisation debate (Cavusgil et al., 2013). Firstly, there is a large body of opinion known as the ‘hyber-globalist’, who follow the belief of Ohmae (1995) closely, in that we reside in a ‘borderless world’, given rise to the so-called ‘end of geography’ in that the world over is the identical. According to Dicken (2007) the hyber-globalist sees the world as a myth, in that it doesn’t exist. The second opinion group is known as the ‘sceptical internationalists’ outlined by Dicken (2007) who argued that the ‘newness’ of our present state of affairs was greatly inflated. On the basis of much quantitative work, Hirst & Thompson (1992) further outlined that while we do have an international economy, we do not have a completely globalised economy. The final opinion group refer to it as ‘grounding globalisation’, such believe that ‘qualitative changes’ have been taking place in the worldwide economy (Dicken, 2007). For example Coe et al. (2008) questions the ‘where’ and ‘how’ of the “material production, distribution and consumption of goods and services” (p.272), as the previous geographies of such are being disturbed and therefore new ones are replacing them.

In addition, Parker (2005) has also suggested, that in some cases authors use the term ‘internationalisation’ to portray the same meaning as globalization. Buckley &
Casson (2009) stated that internationalisation is seen as a broad notion of explaining the organisations boundaries. They went further to suggest that “it applies not only to the geographical boundaries of the firm, but also to other boundaries, such as the boundary of a firm’s product range, which is normally studied as a separate subject, namely product diversification” (Buckley & Casson, 2009, p. 1566). Coviello & McAuley (1999) acknowledge the many definitions for internationalisation that have been presented. Johanson & Vahlne (1977) define internationalisation as “a process in which firms gradually increase their international involvement” (p.23). However, the research conducted by Welch & Luostarinen (1988) did not consider any inward forms of internationalisation, for example importing, establishing buying an office overseas and engaging in direct foreign investment to supply the domestic market and inward technology transfer. Thus, internationalisation can have both forward and reverse characteristics. Internationalisation classified by Beamish (1990) states that “the process by which firms both increase their awareness of the direct and indirect influence of international transactions on their future, and establish and conduct transactions with other countries” (p.77).

As both definitions (Internationalisation and Globalisation) can be used to suggest the same meaning, the following paragraph attempts to clarify the distinction between both of these terms. Sera (1992) cited by Parker (2005) explains,

“Internationalisation connotes expanding interfaces between nations sometimes implying political invasion or domination. Internationalisation of business, therefore, is a concept of an action in which nationality is strong in people’s consciousness. It means the flow of business, goods or capital from one country into another. Globalisation, by contrast, looks at the whole world as being nation less and borderless. Goods, capital, and people have to be moving freely’ (Parker, 2005. p. 9)

While the ‘globalisation of markets’ has been defined by Cavusgil et al. (2013) as “ongoing economic integration and growing interdependency of countries worldwide”, (p.301), there are many drivers believed to be responsible. Cavusgil et al. (2013) labelled five drivers of markets globalisation, to include the world
reduction of barriers to trade and investment, market liberalisation and adoption of free market, industrialisation, economic development and modernisation, integration of world financial markets and advances in technology. However, despite the many drivers of globalisation being noted through the years, internationalisation has not been replaced (Ruzzier et al., 2006).

For the purpose of this thesis it is believed that the hyper-globalists perspective on globalisation proves to be the most effective approach to use in terms of further investigating such rapid internationalising SME’s, given their ‘borderless’ view of the global economy, which has also been defined in Parker’s (2005) clarification of globalisation and internationalisation. By noting the drivers of globalisation as described by Cavusgil et al. (2013), the next step, involves clearly defining an SME, in advance of their exploration, as to what mode of internationalisation the born globals involved in this study follow. However, prior to this, noting Immink (2013) new concept of, Global Small Businesses may be worthwhile, as he believes technology allows you “to go global overnight...allowing everyone to follow their passion , heart and dreams” (p.1). Immink (2013) understands that the industrial revolution is over, the information technology revolution is about to pass and we are now in the move towards, entrepreneur revolution (Immink, 2013), which is a part of the success of the born global, Digital, Film and TV production firms.

2.7 Defining Small/Medium Enterprise (SME’s)

A SME according to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which was cited by Parker (2005), is an independent firm that is not a subsidiary of another company. According to Stokes (2000) numerous attempts have been made by researchers to define and clearly characterize SME’s. There has been no collectively accepted definition for a firm’s size, mainly because of the diversity in business, and sectorial differences (Beesley & Wilson, 1981: Reid, 1982). Quantitative definitions are developed on criteria such as, a company’s annual sales revenue or the number of employees employed in the company. This method is most commonly used in order to define a SME and this defining tool is very popular with policy makers and researchers alike (Curran & Blackburn, 2000). According to Parker (2005) the OECD puts an upward limit on the number of employees, which is
250, however in the USA, SME’s are seen to employ up to 500 employees. Table 2.1 published by Loane (2004) describes how a company’s size is estimated by employees from a number of different origins:

Table 2.1: Firm Size, Measured by Employee Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Micro</th>
<th>Very Small</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Large</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>5-19</td>
<td>20-99</td>
<td>100-250</td>
<td>&gt;500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10-99</td>
<td>100-250</td>
<td>&gt;250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENSR</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>10-49</td>
<td>50-250</td>
<td>&gt;250</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10-99</td>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>&gt;500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>20-99</td>
<td>100-499</td>
<td>&gt;500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Loane, 2004, p. 21)

Another quantitative method used to define SME’s is their financial assets. According to Parker (2005), in the European Union, SME’s are required to have an annual revenue of forty million or less and balance-sheet valuations of less than twenty-seven million euro. However, using this approach can prove problematic; as researchers have been known to put sales revenues in different bands.

In relation to the qualitative measurements of a firm’s size, these are usually founded around the ownership of a firm and its market characteristics. According to the Bolton Report (1971) an SME has three obvious characteristics:

- “Small firms are managed by their owner(s) in a personality way;
- It has a relatively small share of the market in economic terms;
- It is independent in the sense that is does not form part of a larger enterprise and its ownership is relatively free from outside control in its principal decisions” (Stokes, 2000 p. 6).

Such recently defined statements provide a foundation for further terms such as ‘born global’ (the recent rapid globalization phenomenon) (Etemad & Wright, 2003).
After researching both qualitative and quantitative methods, any SME selected for this research must satisfy the following criteria, in order to fulfil the research objectives:

- It must employ up to or less than 250 employees;
- It must be managed by its owner(s);
- It must be independent in nature.

Further to defining an SME, the subsequent section of the literature will explore the theory relating to a born global firm, an SME involved in rapid internationalisation, which is at the ‘heart’ of this investigation.

### 2.8 The Born Global Theory

As previously discussed, the topic of international entrepreneurship (IE) now focuses on international new ventures (INVs) and/or born globals (Oviatt & McDougall, 1997; 2005; Madsen & Servais, 1997; Knight & Cavusgil, 1996; 2004; Weerawardena et al., 2007), which are, by definition, start-ups that grow global at inception, or soon after. Born globals are a ‘new breed’ of company, which demonstrate rapid and committed internationalisation (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012). They are commonly labelled as ‘born globals’, however, in recent literature, the terminologies for such small companies vary.

The born global firms began with a very ‘borderless’ view of their existing markets and further developed various strategies to promote rapid international expansion (Knight et al., 2004). This movement supports the view of the ‘global village’ or ‘converging commonality’ described by Levitt (1983) who suggested that this rapid development is driven by the advancement of communication technology and economic progression (Rennie, 1993). The ‘borderless world’ (Ohmae, 1989) allows the advancement for born globals, an ‘end of geography’, suggests we are all competing in one large arena.
2.8.1 Defining a ‘Born Global’ Firm

The ‘Born Global’ firm, an entity that strives to be international from early in its development, can be classified as one with ‘accelerated internationalisation’ (Weerawardena et al., 2007) or one that has gone through a faster mode of internationalisation than expected for its age, size and nature (Lopez et al., 2009) or as ‘new, technology-based firms (NTBF’s)’ (Moen et al., 2008). Rennie (1993) was one of the first authors to recognise the born global phenomena. McKinsey & Co. (1993) coined the term ‘born global firms’. Since then, many authors have used different terms and explanations to aid in delivering a meaningful definition for the phenomenon. For example, the most recent definition by Moen et al. (2008) defines a born global firm as, “a new venture with a global niche market focus from day one” (p.536). However, Rasmussen & Madsen (2002) have stated that there is no clear definition to characterise a born global firm. However, born global’s are said to ‘export seventy-five percent of their total sales’, after being in business for three years or less (Rennie, 1993; OECD, 1997; McDougall & Oviatt, 2000; Autio & Sapienza, 2000). However, McKinsey & Co. (1993) have noted that the time periods tends to be less than two years, while Christensen & Jacobsen (1996) suggest firms began exporting within their first year of operation, suggesting that different companies take different directions when internationalising. In addition, Lindmark et al. (1994) demonstrated that firms who were set up in the previous ten to fifteen years began exporting earlier than older firms in similar operations. Finally Zhou et al. (2010) recently suggested that an ‘international new venture’ is one that internationalises within three years from inception.

Following this non-traditional approach adopted by the born globals, Oviatt & McDougall (1994) suggested that the final defining factors relating to these companies are associated with the age of the company when internationalising rather than the actual size of the company. Knight et al. (2004) also agree with this concept, and classify born globals as those companies which have became involved in internationalisation within the first three years of their establishment, demonstrating that these companies internationalise soon after their founding. These small internationalizing companies have distinctive features, including, an international ‘outlook’ (Oviatt & McDougall, 1994). Casson (1982) further stated that such firms
are concerned with the ‘value added’, not the number of ‘assets owned’. This is similar to the definition offered by Oviatt & McDougall (1994), Knight & Cavusgil (1996) who coined the term ‘born global’ and described it as:

“Small, (usually) technology-oriented companies that operates in international markets from the earliest days of their establishment”
(Knight & Cavusgil, 1996, p.11).

An unambiguous definition for the born global company has also been defined using current research. The following table classifies the born global under three main headings, which will be used throughout this thesis.

Table 2.2: Defining a ‘Born Global’ Firm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The ‘Born Global’ Firm</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Size of firm</strong></td>
<td>SME &lt;$100m Revenue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years from firm formation to becoming involved in international sales</strong></td>
<td>0-2 Years From Inception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage of total sales from international markets</strong></td>
<td>&gt;25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Market focus</strong></td>
<td>Niche</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Adapted by Author from Garvey, 2007, p.56)

2.8.2 Research to Date on the Born Global Theory

There have been numerous studies conducted investigating born globals since the phenomenon emerged in the international business and entrepreneurship literature in the late 1980’s (McDougall, 1989; Jolly et al., 1992). Prior to this, much of the internationalisation research focused primarily on large enterprises. One of the first authors to publish articles describing the born globals was Rennie (1993). Additional information on the born global phenomenon was published soon after by McKinsey & Co. (1993). Other authors that have contributed to born global research include Oviatt & McDougall (1994), Madsen & Servais (1997) as well as more recent
authors such as Weerawardena et al. (2007), Lopez et al. (2009) and Gabrielsson & Kirpalani (2012).

Research has been carried out on an individual country bases, as well as in comparative cases, in locations such as Australia, New Zealand, USA, the UK, Switzerland, Germany, France, Brazil, Israel, Singapore, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, Norway and Finland according to the work of Garvey (2007). However, no data has ever been published for born global companies within the island of Ireland.

With regard to the actual industry where most born global research has focused, Garvey (2007) suggests research has been mainly conducted in the purest software industries, together with those involved in high innovation design (Falay et al., 2007). Furthermore, Gabrielsson et al. (2008) noted that born globals also exist in, low-tech industries as well as in the shoes, apparel, furniture and traditional food industries. Most of the research that has been published to date has focused on a cross section of the industries detailed above. However, there has been little or no research conducted within the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis was to identify born globals within the island of Ireland.

2.8.3 The Importance of Born Global Firms

The study conducted by Rennie (1993) suggested that even though born globals are small companies, there are two reasons why they are important and these relate to their abilities, which are:

- “Strikingly competitive against larger established players, and their competitiveness has increased significantly in the past two decade;"

- “Managing profitability, fast-growing global business systems in a way that was impossible twenty or even ten years ago” (Rennie, 1993, p.47).
A study by Moen et al. (2008) which cited the work of Rennie (1993) demonstrated the value of these firms. In Rennie’s study, “20% of new trade growth in Australia comes from born global SME’s” (p. 3). Such results demonstrate the importance of these creative companies in any modern economy.

2.8.4 Terminologies Used for Born Global Firms

Throughout the literature the terminologies used to refer to the same phenomenon varied considerably. Some of the more recent terminologies included; international new ventures, new ventures, rapid internationalisers, global start-ups and early internationalising firms. Born globals have also been referred to as committed internationals, internally focused ‘knowledge-intensive’ firms, ‘deviations, inconsistencies, variations to the stages models of internationalisation’ and ‘instant internationals’ and ‘high-technology start-ups’ (Luostarinen & Gabrielsson, 2004). It has also been established that many terms are used to explain a firm’s rapid internationalisation concept. As McDougall & Oviatt (2003) stated, there are no obvious definitional differences between the terminologies used.

2.8.5 How Does Born Globals Compete?

In order to investigate the born global process of internationalisation, it is important to examine how exactly such firms compete internationally. As many authors suggest, in order for born global companies to compete and maintain their position they must:

- Implement cutting edge information and communication technology systems (Rennie, 1993; Andersson & Wictor, 2003);
- Be creative in product design, i.e. A Unique product or introduce a new way of conducting business (Andersson & Wictor, 2003);
- Employ competitive pricing strategies (Rennie, 1993);
- Maintain a strong customer focus, as these firms ‘own customers, not products’ (Rennie, 1993);
- Be customer orientated (Aspelund & Moen, 2001);
- Provide quality and value (Rennie, 1993, Knight et al., 2004);
- Become involved in differentiated strategies (Knight et al., 2004).

2.8.6 Barriers to Internationalisation for Born Globals

Even though born global firms have their own unique competitive advantage, barriers within the process also exist, given their ‘lack of fit’ with traditional internationalisation models, which has previously been discussed. Therefore, getting an insight into the barriers encountered by these rapid internationalising born globals is a very important issue. As Morgan (1997) suggested, general internationalisation barriers can occur at any stage in the internationalisation process.

With regard to the barriers to internationalisation for entrepreneurial SME’s for example, born global research suggests that there is “a notable gap in the literature” (Shaw & Darroch, 2003, p. 5). It is assumed that smaller companies maybe more severely affected than larger business’s given their natural resource constraints and limitations. In particular, rapid internationalising born globals maybe the victim of many internationalising barriers. General factors which are believed to hinder the work of the born global firms have been noted as, lack of credibility, access to finance, market information, innovative and international mindset as well as limited ICT (Rennie, 1993). Despite this, the research has indicated that many of these companies mentioned experience high growth rates even though they do have an extensive need for funding (Moen et al. (2008). The barriers encountered by each rapid internationalising born global are more than likely influenced by the unique situation within that particular company. As Bell (1994) reported, the companies resources, knowledge, expertise, as well as many other factors will have an impact on the degree of the problem. To conclude, Gabrielsson & Kirpalani (2012) suggested that ‘aversion to risk-taking’ is a further constraint to internationalisation. However, companies ‘can’ and ‘do’ overcome many of these constraints by networking with, for example, suppliers and distributors as well as using technology to seek a competitive advantage (Freemann et al., 2006).
2.8.7 Entry Modes for Born Globals

Born globals have many resource constraints that may hinder some entry modes explained Solberg (2012). Solberg (2012) further elaborated on the work inspired by Gabrielsson & Kirpalani (2004) and created a list of possible entry modes, which are most relevant to born globals seeking international markets.

- "New Owners taking over, funneling the product/service through its own international distribution network;
- Alliance with a large independent licensing or distribution partner;
- Gradual International involvement through agents/distributors in individual countries;
- Franchising to partners in individual markets;
- Setting up Sales Subsidiaries in individual markets" (Solberg, 2012, p. 62).

The above list outlines the most realistic approaches pursued by born globals seeking global markets; however the reasons for the emergence of such companies will be further examined.

2.8.8 The Reasons for the Emergence of Born Globals

For the purpose of this thesis it is important to understand the drivers behind such, unique competitive companies. In the research conducted by Madsen & Servais (1997), the question ‘Why does it happen?’ was examined. Firstly, new markets/industry conditions were described as being a contributing factor, as they are simply seen to ‘pull’ the company into the marketplace quickly (Madsen & Servais, 1997; Servais & Rasmussen, 2000; Moen, 2002; Andersson & Wictor 2003). Further, the increase in product specialisation allows for the development of niche markets, which in turn results in a large numbers of companies manufacturing particular components, which are all sold in the international arena meeting the “growing convergence of consumer tastes and needs” (Leonidou & Samiee, 2012, p.22). The home market can hinder scope and furthermore given the availability of financial resources globally, an entrepreneur could have access to these assets (Madsen & Servais, 2007). This type of behaviour has been referred to as ‘regulatory
environment’ (Leonidou & Samiee, 2012), as the home market is forcing a firm to go global from inception. This facilitator can also be referred to as ‘niche markets’ (Knight & Cavusgil, 1996) or overall as ‘environmental factors’ that drive internationalisation (Leonidou & Samiee, 2012).

Secondly, advancements in information technology have eased rapid internationalisation modes, as product and service specialisation and customisation is a very feasible option (Madsen & Servais, 1997; Knight & Cavusgil, 1996, 2004). The arrival of the internet has also provided born globals with a ‘powerful channel’, allowing them to ‘elbow’ their way into various markets (Sinkovics & Pezderka, 2010). Transportation and communication has also been improved, given the many modes currently available, this has improved ‘day-to-day’ business practises (Madsen & Servais, 1997; Knight, 2000; Aspelund & Moen, 2001; Knight & Cavusgil, 2004).

Thirdly, another changing factor is the performance of the people involved in the business (entrepreneurs), i.e. improved human resources. This has enabled companies to further exploit potential technological developments, gaining information on possible markets, which is the direct result of higher standards of education (Madsen & Servais, 1997; Moen, 2002; Andersson & Wictor, 2003). The entrepreneurs from born global companies are understood to have a global mindset, which encourage internationalisation from the outset (Andersson, 2011). This type of ‘driving factor’ has been described broadly by Leonidou & Samiee (2012) as ‘managerial factors’.

Fourthly, networks are seen as an important driver for internationalisation as described by Andersson & Wictor (2003), both from a personal and organisational perspective. Finally, Knight & Cavusgil (2004) believe market globalisation to be another important driving factor, as companies are becoming more involved in international production, sourcing and marketing as well as engaging in, cross-border alliances for product development and distribution (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004; Rialp et al., 2005). Each of the driving forces can only get stronger in the future because of the advances in our society as well as the current era of globalisation (Andersson & Wictor, 2003; Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). This can only augment the ability of born
globals (Madsen & Servais, 1997), and as Knight & Cavusgil (1996) and Knight (2000) suggested, because of globalisation, boundaries between the home markets and global markets are gradually getting less important, as firms begin to grow their profile abroad. SME’s are important players in world trade as well as in the national economies, even though there is little understanding as to how and why they prosper (Knight, 2000). In summary, Gabrielsson and Kirpalani (2012) have identified four trends, which are responsible for the emergence of born globals, namely, ‘globalisation of market conditions’, ‘development of technology’, ‘capability development of people and small firms’ and ‘home market conditions’ (p.6).

The following conceptual framework by Andersson & Wictor (2003) summaries these main factors:

Figure 2.8: Conceptual Framework

Source: (Adapted by Author from Andersson & Wictor, 2003, p. 254)

The above framework, adapted from Andersson & Wictor (2003), will be used to structure the overall direction for future research within this area. This will allow a
greater understanding of the variables, which influence the internationalisation path taken by companies. These issues are, discussed below;

Entrepreneur - Firstly, the entrepreneur is believed to be the most common behavioural variable examined in the born global research (McDougall et al., 1994; Madsen et al., 1999 and McAuley 1999). This area of international entrepreneurship has grown in recent years (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000). Research has investigated both individual entrepreneurs as well as entrepreneurial behaviour within the various departments within the company (Andersson & Wictor, 2003). As outlined previously, entrepreneurs are ‘individuals who carry out entrepreneurial actions’ (Andersson, 2000). Thus, by studying entrepreneurial activities, one may acquire some insight into the international behaviour of the company (Andersson & Wictor, 2003). Oviatt & McDougall (1995) stated that the most important information connected with the born global entrepreneur, is capturing their global vision form inception. In addition, the entrepreneur’s experience of top management is also an important and valuable attribute (Oviatt & McDougall, 1995; 1997, and Bloodgood et al., 1996), as well as their record as an entrepreneur. These findings are significant markers for born global progression (McDougall et al., 1994; Madsen & Servais, 1997).

Industry – Born globals are found within many industries, Boter & Holmquist (1996) believe their industrial characteristics are of greater importance than their company’s nationality with regard to international development. Such companies are seen to have a global focus (Madsen & Servais, 1997). According to Andersson & Wictor (2003) born global firms view the various industrial factors as being very important, for example, the industrial growth rate, the sectors current dominance (products/services) as well as their industrial attributes i.e. customers/suppliers. Born global SMEs are believed to take part in the rapid internationalisation as a result of industrial drivers. These include, high-tech innovative market ‘callings’, shorter product lifecycles and high R&D costs in existing markets, which in turn encourages born global SMEs to act globally in order to survive and grow their business (Litvak, 1990; Coviello & Munro, 1995). Industries can also experience many internal and/or external challenges, for example new government legislation. As a result, it is a continual battle for companies to remain competitive and innovative while
maintaining their growth and product quality. However, Oviatt & McDougall (1997) suggest that the born global entrepreneur will seek entry into overseas markets, if venture competitors and/or customers are globally located. Even though rapid internationalising companies are found throughout different industries, they all share common characteristics in that the products/services they offer are ‘highly innovative’ (Rennie, 1993; McDougall et al., 2003) as well as additive in value (McKinsey & Co., 1993). Knight & Cavusgil (1996) acknowledge the increase in the number of companies that are involved in medical, environmental, computing and software products and services that are operating in niche markets, each company offering their own unique competitive advantages (Knight & Cavusgil, 1996; Knight, 2000).

Globalisation – Many authors advocate that the recent trends in globalisation, such as developments in ICT and transportation, have made it easier for their companies to expand international (Levitt, 1983; Ohmae 1995 and Parker 2005). These advancements have facilitated the growth of born globals (Rennie, 1993 and Knight & Cavusgil, 1996). However, such trends cannot on their own explain why there is an increasing emergence of born globals (Andersson & Wictor, 2003). Andersson (2000) stated that there was a need for “resourceful individuals and firms that choose to recognise the opportunities offered by the international globalisation” (Andersson & Wictor, 2003, p.254). Undoubtedly, research has suggested that the SME’s are greatly affected by globalisation and it is this driving force that pushes companies to develop globally. One of the drivers for globalisation is the change in the global economy, the increase in, liberalisation, size of the EU market and e-commerce, which together modulates the behavioural pattern of the SME’s.

Networks – The final variable relates to networks and their importance in terms of developing an understanding of the international networks, both from a personal and organisational prospective, as described by Andersson & Wictor (2003) from the work published by Majkgard & Sharma (1998). Previous research has indicated that networks are important for business start-ups (Andersson & Wictor, 2003), and that new companies depend on relationships, be it with financiers, suppliers and/or customers (Oviatt & McDougall, 1995). The research has not only focused on formal networks but also the importance of informal networks (Knight & Cavusgil, 1996;
McAuley, 1999). While networks have been viewed as important in terms of international expansion, Rasmussen et al. (2000) suggested in their study that the many founders for born globals were not involved in networking during their establishment. However, it has been established that ‘networks’ are important in terms of understanding a company’s international development, as well as its approach to local networking (Andersson & Wictor, 2003; Johannisson, 1994). The work of Coviello & Munro (1995) also highlighted the importance of networking in terms of the international development of the entrepreneur. The authors suggest that the mode of entry and market selection for certain SMEs is heavily ‘shaped’ by the ‘network players’ Coviello & Munro (1995), thus this reinforces the importance of network analysis with respect to the path and patterns for internationalisation, that these companies follow.

This thesis will pay particular attention to the ‘network’ variable and further research into this area is warranted (Andersson & Wictor 2003). How exactly the network variable has come about in the born global internationalising process, and more importantly, getting an internal view of the born global network will be the primary focus for this investigation.

In order to get a greater in-depth knowledge of the born global phenomena, Madsen & Servais (1997), Oviatt & McDougall (1997; 2005) believe that by examining company variables such as, the background of its founder(s) (the decision maker) is important, as these individuals influence the internationalisation path taken by the companies. Other factors such as experience gained from living overseas, education, work experience acquired in international markets, all form the mindset for such founders to build networks for new business ventures (Knight & Cavusgil, 1996; Madsen & Servais, 1997; Oviatt & McDougall, 1997). In addition, it is believed that the founder of the business doesn’t see borders as an obstacle but rather he/she may view them as an open market “waiting to be exploited” (Madsen & Servais, 1997, p.567).

Oviatt & McDougall (1995) have suggested that market knowledge is a factor, which moderates the pace of a company internationalising. As described by Yeoh (2004); Zahra et al. (2000) and Oviatt & McDougall (2005) this variable has received a
limited amount of attention. These authors outlined the role of knowledge in a born global companies internationalising process, by placing an ‘organisational learning perspective’ (Yeoh, 2004; Zahra et al., 2000; Oviatt & McDougall, 2005). Weerawardena et al. (2007) defined the knowledge from an organisational perspective as; “The validated understanding and beliefs in a firm’, while organisational learning is conceptualised as the capacity of a firm to process knowledge, add new knowledge and use this knowledge in strategic decision-making for competitive advantage” (Weerawardena et al., 2007 p. 296). However, it has been suggested by Weerawardena et al. (2007) that this approach fails to deliver ‘how learning leads to new routines’.

The networking approach described by Madsen & Servais (1997) is one that can be used to analyse a company’s activity, as it describes the benefits of ‘industrial networks’, even though they develop over a long period of time. There is a high level of loyalty between businesses and companies, which tend to build connections and bonds between each other. Madsen & Servais (1997) describe another important model, which should be considered when studying born globals. This relates to the notion of ‘pre-export behaviour’ (Madsen & Servais, 1997). This model examines the interrelationships between the entrepreneur/founder, the company itself as well as the environment that the company trades in (Madsen & Servais, 1997). Madsen & Servais (1997) stated that in order to successfully examine a born global firm, the ‘time perspective should be extended beyond its birth’, as the ‘genes’ of the company are understood to have taken root before the actual birth of the business. This may be because of the experience and networks encountered by its founder. This then leads us to question whether a born global can be viewed as a new company at all? However, Madsen & Servais (1997) clarifies this from a legal perspective, that a born global company is new, although it’s “capabilities and skills were born and matured prior to its legal birth” (p.565). Therefore, the model outlined overleaf proposed by Madsen & Servais (1997) offers a framework, which can be used to further examine born globals. However, the theoretical concepts remain underdeveloped.
This model assists in capturing the knowledge and learning process of the born global company, Teece et al. (1997) and Zollo & Winter (2002) provided a dynamic capabilities framework which, argued Weerawardena et al. (2007), is one which has the ability to ‘develop a sound conceptual framework’ to capture the questions regarding the rapid internationalising approach taken by the born globals.

2.9 Proposed Framework

The following framework has been adapted from Weerawardena et al. (2007) and Andersson & Wictor (2003) and will be used throughout the thesis as a framework for the further investigation for internationalisation of born global firms. Such frameworks link the ‘network’ variable which is the central focus of this research, creating research originality and the notion of ‘networking capability’ by Weerawardena et al. (2007) to create one substantial frame accounting for all proposed research paths.
Figure 2.10: Proposed Dynamic Capability Model and Conceptual Framework for a Born Global Firm involved in Accelerated Internationalisation.

Source: (Adapted by Author from Weerawardena et al. (2007) & Andersson & Wictor (2003))
This framework combines two substantial models into one creating a single model pertaining to the topic of research. The propositions originally outlined by Weerawardena et al. (2007) remain unchanged, as do the variables described by Andersson & Wictor (2003). By using this adapted dynamic capability model and the conceptual framework for a born globals accelerated internationalisation, the methodological approach and interview questions are derived.

2.10 Literature Critique, Challenge and Debate

Researchers have challenged the traditional internationalisation approaches, which were highlighted in the opening paragraphs of this chapter. Clearly a ‘lack of fit’ has been identified for these companies, and researchers are trying to work out the deviation from ‘modern’ rapid internationalising companies (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012).

Overall, there is much debate regarding the born global phenomenon, for example, in terms of achieving suitable terminology, determining the key drivers of a firm’s rapid acceleration towards internationalising, to establishing a suitable theoretical model which may be used to examine the mode of internationalisation taken by the born globals.

Born globals tend to ‘leapfrog’ many stages in the traditional models of internationalisation (Aspelund & Moen, 2001). These businesses are very different from the traditional SME’s in that, their roots, expansion measures and their choices of entry to foreign markets differs considerably (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012). As outlined within this thesis, many suitable models can be used to further examine the born global internationalising path. However, there is a greater need for models that can fully describe this process in its entirety as well as evaluate the key factors in the progression path.

While Leonidou & Samiee (2012) have noted that this research field is in its ‘early stages’, which on its own provides an avenue for further research, the born global phenomenon, despite the fact that it has been described as a ‘new field’ (Cavusgil et al., 2013) has been critiqued by many academics in recent years. However, there are
limitations surrounding the diversity of countries used in the studies (Leonidou & Samiee, 2012), as well as restrictions regarding the type of industries explored (Gabrielsson et al., 2008); as such this presents an opportunity to explore further research in this area. Further research avenues include examining the born global internationalising process, introducing the network concept, as suggested by various authors, including Coviello & Munro, 1995 and Moen et al., 2002.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter provides a comprehensive background of the development of research on international entrepreneurship, international business and born globals. Such a review is important for explaining the role of internationalisation theory which has lead to the appearance of the relatively new phenomena, - born globals.

The following chapter provides a review of social network theory. In addition to examining the ‘network’ variable which is outlined by the work of Andersson & Wictor (2003), this thesis also investigates the concept of social network analysis, Gladwell’s theory of ‘connectors’ (Gladwell, 2000) and Granovetter’s theory of strong/weak ties (Granovetter, 1973; 1983). These theories are used to investigate how networks are established and which connectors in the internationalisation process have made the born global phenomenon possible.
CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE CHAPTER II - SOCIAL NETWORK THEORY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter describes how the field of international entrepreneurship has evolved over the past number of years, accommodating rapidly internationalising firms – born globals. Therefore, given the lack of resources which born globals tend to have compared with larger international competitors, the importance of social capital and network ties in addressing their liabilities of newness and smallness, has received only some attention. However, how these network ties actually operate and the nuances inside of these networks are, as yet, not fully understood. Therefore, this chapter explores the literature pertaining to relationships and ties within a network, which is found at the core of social network theory.

In order to get an insight into social network analysis, chapter three reviews social networks and theories such as Granovetter’s ‘strength of weak ties’ as well as Gladwells understanding of social epidemics which clarify, how difficult sets of relationships between various members of a social system affect behaviour and beliefs (Monge & Contractor, 2003). The findings from these theories collectively demonstrate a degree of precision to the notion of the old cliché as clarified by Whelan (2009) “it’s not what you know, it’s who you know, that really matters” (p.42). Burt’s ‘structural hole theory’ has also been briefly examined towards the end of the chapter. As he describes, drawing on Granovetter’s concept of networks, holes in the social structure create “brokerage opportunities” (Burt, 2000, p.34). While these theories enlighten the general social network theory, Allen’s (1977) introduction of the technological gatekeeper provides a key point of departure for this study. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the key ‘connectors’ in the internationalisation route for those involved in the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry.

Progression of the literature on social network theory must first begin with a definition of social network analysis itself, and a brief summary of its use(s).

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2 Elements of this chapter is also presented in Smith et al. (2012)
3.2 Social Network Analysis: A Definition

The term social networks first appeared in research over fifty years ago, and since then an extensive review has been carried out (Vivian & Sudweeks, 2003). Barnes (1954) has been recognised as the researcher who coined the term, social networks. In his study of a Norwegian island parish, he saw such an idea as an addition to social relations. The theory itself can apply to a wide range of human organisations i.e. from small groups of individuals to complete global nations (Ethier, 2009; Kadushin, 2005). Human beings are also social creators and rather than living in isolation, people generally prefer to live together in communities, towns or large cities (Whelan, 2009). Throughout our lifetime we become members of many social networks, expanding from our own families and friends to colleagues at, school, travel, work, interest groups and sport clubs. Therefore, it can be said our so-called ‘personal world’ revolves around social networks. Social network analysis has many different fundamental concepts, which are presented in the subsequent sections of this study.

In relation to the term itself, Barnes (1954, p.43) claimed that all of our “social life” was made up of “a set of points which are joined by lines” to form a “total network” of relations. Further to this, a study carried out by Haythornthwaite (1996) describes social network analysis as:

“An approach and set of techniques used to study the exchange of resources among actors (i.e. individuals, groups, or organisations)” (Haythornthwaite, 1996, p.323).

One example of the type of resources being referred to is ‘information’, as Haythornthwaite (1996) outlined “regular patterns of information exchange reveal themselves as social networks, with actors as nodes in the network and information exchange relationships as connectors between nodes” (p.323). Other types of resources being exchanged can be tangible for example goods, services, money or intangible for instance social support or influence (Haythornthwaite, 1996). Further to this Haythornthwaite (1996) also describes the values which are found in the theory, which will be outlined in section 3.3.1.
3.3 Social Network Concepts

In order to fully understand social network theory, it is important to get an understanding of the various different concepts which are at the heart of network analysis. These concepts include: actor, relational tie, dyad, triad, subgroup, group, relation and network as denoted by Wasserman & Faust (1994).

An Actor - From our knowledge of social networking, we understand that social network analysis is involved with establishing how links between various different social entities are formed as well as the consequences of such developing (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). In this case Wasserman & Faust (1994) understand an actor as a social entity, for example individuals within a group, or departments within an organisation.

Relational Tie – As Wasserman & Faust (1994) outline, actors are connected together by social ties. These same authors define a tie as a connection that “establishes a linkage between a pair of actors” (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p. 18).

Dyad – As explained previously, a relationship or a connection forms a tie which links two actors. Much of the network analysis seeks to gain an understanding of the ties amongst two pairs explains Wasserman & Faust (1994), and the unit of analysis used in this investigation is referred to as a dyad. A dyad usually contains a pair of actors and the links between a pair, which seeks to formulate the route taken by such (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

Triad - A triad is similar to that of a Dyad, however in this case a Dyad seeks to explore greater number of actors. Relationships examined in these types of studies, explore a subset of three actors and the links between them as well as their developing patterns (Wasserman & Faust, 1994).

Subgroup – Wasserman & Faust (1994) explain how “dyads are pairs of actor and associated ties, triads are triples of actors and associated ties” (p.18), therefore, a subgroup of actors can be defined among a subset of actors as well as their associated ties.
Group - Wasserman & Faust (1994) have defined a group as a “collection of all actors on which ties are to be measured” (p.19).

Relation – A relation has been described as “the collection of ties of a specific kind among members of a group is called a relation” (Wasserman & Faust, 1994, p.20). An example of such relates to “set of friendships among pairs of children in a classroom” suggests Wasserman & Faust (1994, p.20).

Network – The term network, has been described as a “set of objectives (people or groups of people), or nodes (a mathematical term for an objective), and a mapping (directional or bi-directional) or description of the relationship between the objects” (Ethier, 2009, p.1). Figure 3.1 outlines the simplest network form, which contains two objects, A and B, and one relationship that connects both nodes;

Figure 3.1: Network I

Nodes A and B, for example are two human beings, and the relationship connecting them together are that they are together in the same room (Kadushin, 2005). Further to this there are two types of directional relationships or mapping approaches which can be adopted. Firstly, directional mapping is an example of this type of relationship, for example if individual A admired individual B, but individual B had no feelings for individual A in return (Ethier, 2009). The following figure portrays this relationship;

Figure 3.2: Network II

The second relationship approach is known as, bi-directional mapping (Ethier, 2009). An example of this type of relationship would include if the feelings of both
individuals A and B were mutual, (Ethier, 2009), this is represented in the subsequent figure;

Figure 3.3: Network III

Further to these simplistic examples, it was noted that there can be more than one relationship between each of the connected nodes; these are seen as multiplex relationships (Kadushin, 2005). Lastly, it has been established that networks link individuals, groups, organisations and societies which can be seen in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Conceptual Model (of a Network Society)

Outlined above is the network concept. The next step involves reviewing the theories that have contributed to the terminology, social network analysis.
3.3.1 Principles of Social Network Analysis - Relationships and Ties

Relationships are found at the centre of social network analysis, where they “indicate a connection between two or more people or things” (Haythornthwaite, 1996, p.326). As Haythornthwaite (1996) explains pairs of actors who continue to be part of a relationship are ‘linked’ by that particular relationship (e.g. pairs may be work colleagues), they can also be ‘linked’ together by a number of relationships (e.g. as well as work together, they may possibly socialise together). Haythornthwaite (1996) further explains how pairs of actors are ‘tied’ through the relationships they tend to sustain. Therefore a tie portrays “the aggregate connection between pairs” (Haythornthwaite, 1996, p.326). From this it can be revealed that social network analysis focuses on the precedent patterns between actors and relationships, as well as detecting the ties between pairs and examining the relationships which derive from such (Haythornthwaite, 1996).

There are three main attributes of relationships which have been identified in the article by Haythornthwaite (1996). Firstly, relationships are characterised by their content and this is dependent on the particular case being examined for example, Haythornthwaite et al. (1995) conducted a study employing, factor analysis, to explore the relationship content in a computer science research. The second feature of a relationship is the actual direction in which information is being delivered from one individual to another and as Haythornthwaite (1996) outlined a directed/asymmetrical flow of information or resources indicate that such is constantly flowing in the same direction e.g. manager to employee. It must also be noted that relationship direction can be undirected. This flow tends to be either not calculated or maybe seen as insignificant (Haythornthwaite, 1996). Finally, as Haythornthwaite, (1996) outlined, another attribute of a relationship relates to its strength, which refers to the power of the relationship or the value of the link to which the relationship strength can be measured. An example of this may relate to a relationship where a large volume of goods being exchanged in comparison to a relationship were a small number of the same items are being exchanged (Haythornthwaite, 1996).

In order to further explain the concept of tie strength which examines the ties connecting actors (Haythornthwaite, 1996), it is firstly important to gain an understanding of what defines a ‘connector’. Gladwell (2000) cites an experiment
conducted by Stanley Milgram in the 1960s, exploring how human beings were connected. Findings indicated that,

“A very small number of people are linked to everyone else in a few steps, and the rest of us are linked to the world through those special few” (Milgram 1967, cited by Gladwell, 2000, p.37).

These small numbers of individuals are referred to as ‘connectors’, as they are those who link us up with the rest of the world, and bring us together with our social loop (Gladwell, 2000). Gladwell (2000) further describes connectors as individuals with a unique ability, which brings the world together, as they are seen as someone who knows everyone, i.e. a people’s person, as they have an exceptional natural knack of making friends and social connections. What makes a connector important is the, kind of people they know, because of their tendency to engage in various different worlds, it is then because of this that they can connect the different niches, subcultures and worlds together (Gladwell, 2000). In order to describe the function of connectors Granovetter (1983) carried out an investigation of hundreds of employees, interviewing them in detail regarding their employment history and how they found their jobs. The majority of employees had found their jobs through ‘personal connections’ these were mostly found to be, weak ties (a sociologist’s description of a friendly yet casual connection - Gladwell (2000), or an acquaintance, Granovetter (1995)), outlining that selected individual’s weren’t getting their jobs through their close friends/’strong ties’ but rather through their acquaintances (Granovetter (1983)). Granovetter’s interpretation of this was that we occupy the same world as our so-called ‘close friends’, e.g. work together, indicating that we have similar knowledge, however regarding our acquaintances, they operate in a very different world to that of us, and they are seen to symbolise a foundation for social power (Gladwell, 2000). Granovetter (1973) highlights the importance of ‘the strength of weak ties’, as these are what we rely on to give us the needed power as well as provide us with new information or an entrance to opportunities and locations in which we do not belong. This is of critical importance for rapid internationalising born globals. Such people/information specialists are those who shape the course taken by social epidemics, and “with the slightest push – in just the right place – it can be tipped” (Gladwell, 2000, p.259).
While most academics refer to those that create or aid ‘connections’ or links’, as ‘connectors’ or ‘networkers’, such may also be referred to as ‘facilitators’. Cavusgil et al. (2013) defines a facilitator in international business as,

“Independent individuals or firms that assist the internationalisation and foreign operations of focal firms and make it possible for transactions to occur efficiently, smoothly, and in a timely manner” (p.50).

Cavusgil et al. (2013) also suggested that such firms or individuals are specially equipped, with backgrounds in for example, law, banking, consultation and distribution activities, whereby they aid companies seeking international expansion through reliance on information technology to perform their facilitating actions. Similar to this, an ‘agent’ denotes comparable characteristics to that of a facilitator. Cavusgil et al. (2013) introduced an agent as “an intermediary that handles orders to buy and sell commodities, products and services in international transactions for a commission” (p.53). The work of O’Gorman & Evers (2011) summarised the notion of individuals or firms that have been referred to as connectors, networkers, agents, facilitators and intermediaries as ‘intermediary network actors’. Thus, this combines all terminologies and definitions. Therefore, while such individuals demonstrate similar duties, identifying their existence is at the heart of this investigation.

Additionally, building on the work of Granovetter (1973, 1983), Burt (1992) developed a theory which helps to get an insight into the circulation of information within such networks. Burt’s (1992; 1997) theory of structural holes, reserves information, considering the transfer of information within social networks. Drawing on many network concepts, particularly Granovetter’s (1973) view of ‘the strength of weak ties’, Ronald Burt developed a theory which reflects on the circulation of information as a competitive advantage. In Burt’s view, gaps in a social network (structural holes) “create brokerage opportunities” (Burt, 2000, p.34) and as Hargadon & Sutton (1997) have noted, structural holes signify that there are different flows of information between the people on each side of the ‘hole’. When a weak connection exists between groups, a ‘hole’ in the markets social structure becomes apparent (Burt, 2000). Therefore, an individual whose relationship has the
ability to span the hole, can in turn generate a competitive advantage (Burt, 2000). Burt (2000) stated,

"Structural holes are thus, an opportunity to broker the flow of information between people and control the projects that bring together people from opposite sides of the hole" (Burt, 2000, p. 35).

Additionally, this theory denotes that minimising redundancy amongst colleagues and maximising structural holes spanned is critical in terms of building a resourceful, rich information network reserve (Burt, 1992). In order to further our appreciation of this theory, the following Figure 3.5 illustrates the degree of connection between each of the various individuals.

Figure 3.5: Burt’s Theory of Structural Holes

In brief, it can be noted from Figure 3.5, both Robert and James have the same number of connections, one weak tie and six strong ties. Although, Robert had an advantage over James, as his network offers the potential for more connections i.e., group A, B & C, while James is limited within the connections of group B. In turn,
Robert is the broker of the network and without his role linking group C to groups A and B, would be impossible. These connections, ties, not only allow Robert to ‘span’ the structural holes connecting him to each of the groups, but also give him many advantages including the access to additional knowledge, decreasing the risk of redundant information, as well as being the bearer of new information. Alternatively, James’s connections are limited to group B, people he is already familiar with knowing equally the same information. Additionally, Roberts’s location allows him to introduce new contacts into the network. However, favouritism can be an issue in terms of who is allowed in, as well as their degree of control. (Burt, 2000)

In general, Burt’s concept of structural holes proves valuable for the purpose of this investigation in terms of determining those who are found to ‘plug’ the structural holes for those under critique. Further to this concept, the next section of literature examines the social network concept.

### 3.4 Explaining Social Networks

As many of the authors have highlighted, there has been an extensive amount of research carried out on the importance of social networks (Vivian & Sudweeks, 2003). Barnes (1954) indicated that individuals within a social network create ‘interpersonal bonds’ with each other. In spite of this Barnes (1954) suggested that such bonds are “in some unspecified way casually connected with the actions of these persons with the social institutions of their society” (p.5). Consequently, the formation of the number of different networks will depend on the community advancement within the various organisations at hand.

Authors such as Vertovec (2001) associate many benefits with social networks, as cited by Vivian & Sudweek (2003), they described how “interpersonal relations cut across boundaries such as neighbourhood, workplace, kinship or class and could be abstracted on an individual basis” (p.1431). In addition, Nohria & Eccles (1992) cited by Vivian & Sudweek (2003), suggested that ‘social ties’ are not a permanent link, as networks are continually changing and being reconstructed by their associates. Therefore, understanding networks proves challenging for many, however in Barabasi’s (2003) work on ‘how everyday things are connected to
everything else and what it means for business, science, and everyday life’, all networks can be explained and understood using the same concepts. For example, he believes knowledge, information and disease as well as everything else are circulated via a high-tech series of networks, containing interrelated hubs and are reproduced in every aspect of a person’s life,

“There is a path between any two neurons in our brain, between any two companies in the world, between any two chemicals in our body. Nothing is excluded from this highly interconnected web of life” (Barabasi, 2003, p.18)

It has been established that the internet has provided a platform for community creation. However, limited research has been conducted on why some communities remain alive and others die (Vivian & Sudweeks, 2003). In order to explain how exactly these networks are created and maintained, Vivian & Sudweeks, (2003) have constructed a framework which demonstrates the various different procedures within the networking process, as follows:
In order to fully understand the framework of Vivian & Sudweeks (2003) it is important to identify the main characteristics of social networks. Firstly, the above figure clearly portrays the importance of ‘social spaces’ in the process of examining how networks are created and maintained. Vivian & Sudweeks (2003) define a social space as locations “where individuals first meet and create their contacts” (p.1432), such areas can also be classified as environments “where people meet, communicate with others and assimilate” (p.2). In addition, it can be established that a social space can grant the first steps in shaping and sustaining the links between individuals, which in return can develop a relationship between those involved, as described in Figure 3.6 (Vivian & Sudweeks, 2003).

Secondly in order to explain the developments which follow from the social spaces, there is a need to examine the social movements which occur. These have been described by Tarrow (1998) as “collective changes, based on common purposes and
social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities” (p.4). Such movements greatly affect the overall social structure (Vivian & Sudweeks, 2003). In addition, the notion of ‘embeddedness’ firstly introduced by Granovetter (1985) helps illustrate that, “all social actions and outcomes are affected by actor’s relations and by the structure of the overall network of relationships” (p.493). Therefore as Vivian & Sudweeks (2003) outlined, both the social structures as well as social formation are responsible for the relationships between their members within their chosen environment, which is outlined in their framework along with the third major characteristic - social capital.

The reasoning behind studying social network analysis is to develop an understanding of the relationships or mappings that link node(s) or individual(s) to one another (Ethier, 2009), which is further used to estimate an individual’s social capital. In terms of clearly defining social capital many definitions are in circulation. A simplistic definition by Lin (1999) cited by Kadushin (2005) suggests that;

“Social capital refers to the network position of the object or node and consists of the ability to draw on the resources contained by members of the network” (Lin, 1999 cited by Kadushin, 2005, p.31).

Fundamentally, the above definition explains the social capital concept as a quantifying tool for identifying the number of mappings an individual has in their own social network (Ethier, 2009). The additional mappings of each individual and related individuals have in a social network, will increase the knowledge, power and influence of the original individuals control (Ethier, 2009). Therefore as Vivian & Sudweeks (2003) outlined, social capital is “key to control in a community, as the members of that community have the greatest control over social structures” (p.1433). In essence such actions, combined with further investigation aid in describing the reasoning behind some organisations / individual groups accelerating in performance as opposed to others (Vivian & Sudweeks, 2003). Further, examining the actual benefits of social capital is also important. The table overleaf is adapted from the work of Alder & Kwon (2002), and highlights the various different attributes associated with social capital and the author associated with each.
Table 3.1: The Benefits of Social Capital

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits/ Attributes of Social Capital</th>
<th>Source: Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creates a Richer Pool of Recruits for Firms</td>
<td>Fernandez et al. 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces Turnover Rates</td>
<td>Krackhardt &amp; Hanson, 1993.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduces Organisational Dissolution Rates</td>
<td>Pennings et al. 1998.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthens Regional Production Networks</td>
<td>Romo &amp; Schwartz, 1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthens Internal Firm Learning</td>
<td>Kraatz, 1998</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Adapted by Author from Alder and Kwon, 2002, p.17)

Previous research conducted by Vivian & Sudweeks (2003) investigated both transnational migration and virtual communities using this framework, however they question “does this framework work for other examples?” (p.1434). For example,
born global indigenous Irish animation companies? Thus as Vivian & Sudweeks (2003) suggest, further research is required regarding such a framework in relation to its feasibility.

The next section involves investigating the technological gatekeeper, and their input regarding the flow of external knowledge in the organisational context.

3.5 The Gatekeeper Phenomenon

Social systems must be able to accumulate and process information from various external sources in order to direct decisions (Thompson, 1967; March & Simon, 1958). However, processing is a time consuming and expensive game, states Arrow (1974). In order to deal with costs involved in processing, information can be processed by means of specialisation (Katz & Kahn, 1966; Thompson, 1967). Specialisation involves dealing with segments of the systems working environment. Further, actors develop local orientation in addition to coding systems in order to transmit information sourced (Tushman & Katz, 1980). Actors who share their coding schemes prove to be more efficient with respect to those who do not share, Tushman & Katz (1980). They have indicated that while local information is being processed, this obstructs the encoding of information from external sources. The difficulty presented at this stage, deals with the complexity of communicating across many boundaries (Tushman & Katz, 1980). Tushman & Katz (1980) propose gatekeepers as a means of bridging these problems.

3.5.1 The Concept of Gatekeepers

The notion of gatekeepers was first coined by Kurt Lewin (1947, 1951) states Barzilai-Nahon (2008). The popular theory of gatekeepers combined with the concept of channels was established, to aid in clarifying the central points in social change within different communities (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008). Individuals who are seen as acting as a ‘gate’, through which knowledge flows were termed gatekeepers, by authors such as Allen & Cohen (1969); and Katz & Tuchman (1981). Shoemaker (1991) further defined a ‘gate’ as an ‘in’ or ‘out’ decision point. Barzilai-Nahon (2008) identifies the gatekeeping vocabulary when using the concept. Firstly, the ‘gate’ which is referred to as the passing point, secondly, ‘gatekeeping’ is the
process, thirdly, the ‘gatekeeper’, is the individual who performs the task, fourthly, ‘the gated’ is those who the gatekeeping is carried out and lastly, ‘gatekeeping mechanisms’, refers to the means by which gatekeeping has been carried out (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008).

Tushman & Katz (1980) have described gatekeepers as “boundary spanning individuals” (p.1071), as they are seen as links, which are strongly connected to the organisation i.e. internal colleagues as well as its external environments. In other words, those that are deeply connected to both internal social groups and external knowledge sources, which have the ability to translate between both systems (Allen & Cohen, 1969; Allen, 1977 and Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). Shoemaker (1991) describes the gatekeeping procedure as;

“A process by which billions of messages that are available in the world get cut down and transformed into hundreds of messages that reach a given person on a given day” (Shoemaker, 1991, p.1).

Gatekeepers aid in the flow of external information into the communication system, by a process involving two-steps (Tushman & Katz, 1980). Firstly, the gatekeeper has the ability to collect and understand the relevant external information and secondly, they are skilful individuals who can decode sourced information into a meaningful format for those internal colleagues (Tushman & Katz, 1980), in other words a two-step flow method (Ettlie & Elsenbach, 2007). For example communication between the R&D laboratories and the external areas suggests Whitley & Frost (1971).

In order to characterise a gatekeeper, Allen (1977) adopted a criteria which each individual must fulfil. These are as follows, a person must be both an:

- Internal communication ‘star’, i.e. attribute twenty percent of internal communication;
- External communication ‘star’, i.e. attribute twenty percent of external communications (Allen, 1977).
Included in Allen’s research, he understands a gatekeeper as a “high technical performer” (p.163) and on average fifty percent of gatekeepers tends to be first line supervisors (Allen, 1977). In addition, technical management can usually guess who the gatekeepers are within the organisation (Allen, 1977).

The findings from many of Allen’s studies indicate that gatekeepers themselves retain close communications within their own ‘loop’, which in turn forms a gatekeeper network (Allen, 1977). For example, in the business environment, an organisation receives new knowledge through the gatekeeper, this knowledge can then be passed on to other gatekeepers within the gatekeeper network, which is then further shared from point to point with various other associates within the organisation. The diagram below illustrates the steps involved in the flow of technological knowledge.

Figure 3.7: The Multi-Step Flow of Technological Knowledge

Furthermore, Ettlie & Elsenbach (2007) summarised sixteen articles relating to gatekeepers and summarised their characteristics: a gatekeeper has the ability to direct the flow of information inside and outside of the organisation even though this
is not part of their role. This type of individual tends to be outgoing, regularly making contact with those within and outside of the organisation. In addition, they often emerge themselves in ‘deep’ literature, publish many papers, hold many patents, and attend conferences creating lasting relationships with experts in their field of interest, avoiding those who are in their direct working environment (Ettlie & Elsenbach, 2007).

Another way to understand a gatekeeper is to establish their role. To begin with gatekeepers have an active role in filtering or screening information explains Ettlie & Elsenbach (2007) and further interprets and encodes external information, they also impede the external communication for their social groups (Blau, 1963). Gatekeepers do this through training subunit members thus reducing the communication boundaries and as a result both the gatekeepers as well as the subunits can positively gather facts from external sources (Tushman & Katz, 1980). Gatekeepers are believed to assist in the performance of subunits working on neighbouring specific tasks through their connecting techniques (Tushman & Katz, 1980). Eittlie & Elsenbach (2007) further explain that because organisations are currently experiencing rapid changes in technology and reduced product life cycles, it is a necessity to be able to gather and process technical information from the external environment. Therefore, gatekeepers prove to be vital in terms of spanning across different technical boundaries to access such (Ettlie & Elsenbach, 2007). The notion of technological gatekeepers has been further introduced. Ettlie & Elsenbach (2007) described a technological gatekeeper as:

“Persons combining the attributes of internal discussion partners and sources of the best technical ideas who also have the greater technical information contacts outside the research and development laboratory have been defined as technological gatekeeper” (Ettlie & Elsenback, 2007, p.60).

Earlier studies as well as Allen & Cohen (1969) hypotheses that the technological gatekeeper engages in strategic parts of the communication network within laboratories. Others within the laboratory are seen to seek technical advice and consult with the technological gatekeeper as they are involved in additional contact outside the laboratory which has been further noted on as their role (Allen & Cohen,
1969). In 1977, Allen constructed a figure which summarises the role of the technological gatekeeper within a large organisation.

Figure 3.8: A Technological Gatekeepers Role

In addition, Whelan (2009) further investigated the actual role of the technological gatekeeper as he believed there was a gap in current literature. Whelan (2009) developed a process-orientated view of knowledge management to aid his investigation of a gatekeeper’s task in knowledge flows within R&D groups. The first step of the process involved the acquisition of external knowledge, followed by translating the external knowledge and finally dissemination of the knowledge sourced (Whelan, 2009).

However, as Barzilai-Nahon (2008) suggested that there is little agreement regarding the meaning and theoretical importance of the philosophy of gatekeepers. In addition, there is a limited literature to contribute to the information and networking perspective of gatekeeping states Barzilai-Nahon (2008). Therefore, as Ettlie & Elsenbach (2007) previously stated, the role of the R&D gatekeeper is changing. Barzilai-Nahon (2008) believes the theory is moving towards a theory of network
gatekeeping. This concept refers to gatekeepers as ‘stakeholders’ who modify their role within the organisation, in accordance with whom they are interacting with or which context they are operating within (Barzilai-Nahon, 2008). Therefore such new evolving theory requires more in-depth research.

3.6 Literature Critique, Challenge & Debate

As Zhou et al. (2007) suggested, researchers use social network theories to define the international performance indicators of SMEs and in particular, the networking and connector aspects that are applied throughout this thesis. Like in Coviello & Munro’s investigation in 1995, this research seeks to reveal a substantial list of connectors / intermediaries. However, as Coviello & Munro (1995) established, different types of networks exist and for the purpose of this investigation, it is understood that different types of connectors / intermediaries and so forth also exist. Coviello & Munro (1995) referred to two types of networks, namely, formal and informal. The formal network for example, related to “an Australian dealer with business contacts in Singapore” while the informal network was associated with for example “a New Zealand dealer with family in Malaysia” (p.52). The work of Persigner et al. (2007) clarify that networks “formal and informal, exist in all cultures and are a primary method of facilitating market transactions” (p.76). Therefore, this research seeks to derive a set of formal and informal connectors, involved in the internationalisation process.

Coviello & Munro (1995) have identified that introducing new theories to examine the internationalisation process of entrepreneurial firms can enrich our understanding of the firms. Therefore, by employing a network perspective to examine the internationalisation process of born globals, as warranted by Coviello & Munro (1995) will widen the avenue for further research on internationalising born globals.

Overall, our knowledge of a gatekeeper has increased since Lewin’s (1947, 1951) recognition of the term followed by Allen’s (1977) much published work. However the research fails to provide a measurable definition to characterise a gatekeeper’s presence (Allen, 1977). This research attempts to make a contribution empirically, by using social network theory to investigate how the born global network operates within, during the internationalisation process (i.e. how do born global firms manage
and operate their network intermediaries and forums to drive and facilitate their internationalisation process?). Lastly, the importance of social capital, network ties and connecters are critical in terms of plugging the structural holes between the born global firm and the global market, however, our understanding is lacking regarding the process, as the network represents a kind of a ‘black box’ in the globalisation process. The rationale for further research in this field, adopting a network perspective has been noted by various authors of SME internationalisation, (Coviello & Munro, 1995; Moen et al., 2002). Therefore, this thesis attempts to explore this knowledge gap, by building on the work of Andersson & Wictor (2003) and others alike to investigate the network concept of internationalisation within born globals, by utilising a ‘microscopic view’ into the network, opening the ‘black box’ and identifying the components that make up the network and in turn plug the structural holes.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has built on the literature discussed in chapter two, social network theory. Together with the theories examined in chapter two, this allows us to gain an in-depth understanding of the internationalisation of born globals, and attempts to open the so-called ‘black box’.

This chapter provides a detailed description of social network theory, Burt’s ‘structural hole’ concept as well as an evaluation of the gatekeeper phenomena. These together are part of the social network analysis theory.

To conclude, researchers have suggested that relationships and networking are critical for those internationalising, as it not only creates ties between resources but also creates a link between various different activities (Coviello & Munro, 1995; Andersson & Wictor, 2003). Researchers believe that ‘networks’ contribute to the success of such companies (Madsen & Servais, 1997; Chetty & Holm, 2000), as networks help firms discover new opportunities within the various markets. As well as this, networks are believed to build market knowledge (Madsen & Servais, 1997). Therefore, it can be established that social networking analysis plays a fundamental role in how these companies internationalise.
The focus of this study was on the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production companies. The following chapter provides an overview of the industry. Outlined are a historical overview of the industry and the key characteristics. In addition, a detailed founder and company profile are also presented, providing a descriptive analysis of the industry under review.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE RESEARCH CONTEXT,

THE ANIMATION SECTOR WITHIN, THE INDIGENOUS IRISH DIGITAL, FILM AND TV PRODUCTION INDUSTRY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry and in particular, focuses on its largest division – the animation sector. The animation industry represents a fine under-researched example of a born global firm, due to its context, as a small industry operating in a limited domestic market.

Understanding this high-end technology-based industry from a historical context is necessary in order to fully contextualise this research. Thus, this chapter is divided into two parts in an attempt to present a complete contextual review. The first section will provide an outline of the characteristics, developments and changes in the industry, from the early 1920’s to present day, while the second section provides an introduction for the companies under examination. A company and founder profile is also presented for those involved in this study, in order to contextualise the industry, as well as provide background information for the subsequent findings chapter.

4.2 An Industry Overview: The Animation Sector within, the Indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV Production Industry

4.2.1 The Development of Animation

Animation developed as a result of experimentation by J. Stuart Blackton, given his fascination with light and motion (Solomon, 1989). Throughout the years, animation has been seen to be similar to drawing cartoons (Solomon, 1989). Animation has been described as a ‘young art’ which evolved in the United States in the 1920’s (Clancy, 2005). At this time, New York was known as the hub for animation centres, according to Solomon (1989). Later, European countries such as those under communist rule e.g. Hungary and Czechoslovakia began to develop a political type of animation. This brought about a division in animation works. The productions from the US were heavily Disney dominated, whilst the European’s focused on work for ‘art-house viewing’ unlike ‘mainstream’ work in the case of Disney productions.
In order to fully understand this sector, a classification of animation and how productions are generated are outlined in the subsequent section.

4.2.2 Industry Categorises

The digital media industry contains many areas of activity including film and TV production/post-production, computer animation and graphics, online publishing and advertising and finally, computing, internet, wireless games and technology (Enterprise Ireland, 2010). As previously highlighted, the animation sector is the largest area of activity within the digital media industry and can be categorised into two main sections. Animation Ireland (2012) refers to the industry as the Audio Visual Industry, and classifies it into two sectors – the animation sector and the live action sector (films and TV dramas/documentaries). In theory, the industry is made up of two-dimensional and three-dimensional animation. Tschang & Goldstein (2004) noted that 2D productions were generally drawn by hand, however advancements in technology have enabled computer aided productions, thus increasing productivity by “six-fold or more” (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004, p. 4). Animation in 3D involves further advanced computer technology. This type of production translates computer graphics into character forms (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004). A further sub-division of the animation industry includes commercials which can either follow the route of a TV series, as in the case of cartoons and feature films or advertising.

Animation is differentiated from live action by two very distinctive characteristics, firstly, as Solomon (1989) describes, the image is recorded on film, frame by frame and secondly, rather than the impression of a motion being recorded, it is created (Solomon, 1989). However, as Solomon (1989) highlighted these defining characteristics are becoming blurred as a result of the various traditional techniques being replaced by the introduction of modern methods.

4.2.3 Animation Production

In relation to production, most of the modern animation is produced overseas. Furthermore, Tschang & Goldstein (2004) published that the US outsourced most of their animation to countries such as Japan, Korea, Philippines, India, Europe and
Canada. There are a number of smaller scale producers in Asia, however a great deal of the ‘high-end animation’ remains in the USA (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004).

Artists have an important role in the production of animation. Specialised technicians are required for the more advanced high-end productions, combined with technology that allows fresh illustrations known as computer generated imagery (CGI or CG) (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004). This type of animation allows experts to illustrate 3D images (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004). In the case of 2D animation, computers reduce production time, thus increasing productivity. The number of individuals involved in any production will depend on the length of the film, e.g., Pixar employed 180 crew members for the production of ‘A Bugs Life’ (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004). This movie runs for 95mins and includes numerous characters. In order to understand the animation process Tschang & Goldstein (2004) constructed a table in which they outline each of the production steps involved.

Table 4.1: The Production Process for General Animation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Stage 4</th>
<th>Next Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualisation</td>
<td>Pre-Production</td>
<td>Production</td>
<td>Post-Production</td>
<td>(Tech Intensive Firms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea for series or production (short concept and final script); planning</td>
<td>Storyboarding; concept art to flash out script; story reels; script changes</td>
<td>Animating: Very large investment of resources (animators, supporting technical staff); voice acting</td>
<td>Some editing of scenes, retakes</td>
<td>Development of software tools for next generation animated features</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004, p.6)

4.2.4 The development of the Irish Animation Industry

Clancy (2005) summarises how animation developed in Ireland stating that “animation in Ireland began through the work of individuals” (p.8), and she understands the “mentality and commitment of animators in Ireland is unique” (p.
9), outlining that the “industry either blossoms or wilts, but never dies” (p. 9) (Clancy, 2005).

4.2.4.1 The Foundation of the Animation Industry

Experimentation on animation began in Ireland in the early 1920’s. However, it wasn’t until the 1970’s that the industry began to develop, when numerous individuals sought full-time employment within the sector (Clancy, 2005). A former painter Aidan Hickey, produced one of the first animations, a series called ‘An Saol ág Dul Thart’ for RTÉ, Ireland’s primary state-funded broadcasting channel. Later, Jimmy Quin, a former RTÉ employee, produced material for the national broadcasters before establishing the first animation studio at his home in County Tipperary in the early 1970’s (Clancy, 2005).

In addition to Aidan Hickey and Jimmy Quin, Steve Woods also followed his interests in animation, developed at the National College of Art and Design and became an independent animator (Clancy, 2005). Clancy (2005) also identified Tim Booth as another popular name in the beginning, as he produced his own film ‘The Prisoner’ later in 1983 after becoming involved with Jim Murakami. Murakami was a successful American entrepreneur involved with the animation industry in California, before he moved to London and later Dublin in 1971. Murakami is credited by the industry in Ireland as one of the leading developers of animation (Clancy, 2005).

4.2.4.2 The Development of the Industry (1980-1990)

Following the success of these individuals, and in effort to boost the animation industry, in the early 1980’s, the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) introduced sizeable tax incentives in an effort to entice international animation studios to invest in Ireland (Monster, 2002; Clancy, 2005). Furthermore, the modest salaries paid to staff also offered an incentive to employers (Clancy, 2005). As a consequence, three American animation companies set up in Ireland. However, none of them remain in business in Ireland today (Monster, 2002). One of the companies was established by an American animator and independent studio owner - Don Bluth (Cawley, 2004). In 1985, Don set up Sullivan Bluth Studios in California as a co-partnership with
Morris Francis Sullivan, who was an Irish-American businessman at that time (Cawley, 2004). Later that year, Don moved to Dublin to a six-story, 42,000 square foot building fully equipped for animation production (Cawley, 2004). According to Cawley (2004) the Irish Government had provided the studio in Dublin with a significant grant as an investment incentive. At the time, this was acknowledged as one of the largest grants approved by the Irish government, who retained a five percent ownership in the company (Cawley, 2004). Despite the production operations taking place in Ireland, in order to maintain US connections, the company headquarters remained in California (Cawley, 2004).

Don Bluth was best known as a former Disney employee who saw the advantages of working independently, producing his second work in 1986. Don went on to break all box office records in animation later in 1986 with ‘An American Tale’ (Clancy, 2005). The move that Don Bluth made to Ireland was one that in Clancy’s words ‘established the industry’ as it encouraged other studios, e.g. Emerald City and Al Guest, all focusing on stories for TV, to follow suit. In the late 1980’s Cawley (2004) describes how Sullivan Bluth was seen as the ‘big fish’.

In 1989, Murakami films were known as Murakami Wolf Swenson as a result of their expansion and success of the memorable children’s TV series ‘Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles’ (Audiovisual Federation Review, 1998). During this time the industry itself was further supported by various lobbying groups such as Anamu, Galway Film Resource Centre which helped to support the industry and create awareness. In 1989 a group called ‘CARTOON’ was introduced by the European Media Programme to attract big animators from all over the EU by hosting three and four day conferences annually.

4.2.4.3 The Early Growth of the Industry (1990-2000)

Clancy (2005) cited figures taken from the Coopers & Lybrand Report (1992) noting that, by 1990, an animation industry had developed in Ireland, which comprised of three significant studios, employing 530 employees. As a result of the formation of a new industry, there was a need for a skilled labour force. In the early 1990’s, Don Bluth using his entrepreneurial and teaching skills, assisted with the development of an animation course, to educate amateur animators at the Ballyfermot Senior
College, which was attached to his current studio (Clancy 2005). “Sullivan Bluth is working towards an all Irish crew....at that moment, 75% of our staff of 350 is Irish and our team has never been better. The employee profit share plan, we have developed should encourage the young Irish to make the animation industry their own” states Don as cited by Cawley (2004, p.1). The grounds for the development of such a course, originated from his previous teaching practice at the Sherdian College in Canada. Don also employed his graduates from Canada to assist him in delivering a substantial training course on how the industry worked (Clancy, 2005). As a result, “Quality graduates” (p. 1) have been produced at Ballyfermot. Some graduates found jobs in excelling gaming companies, others are founding members of thriving Irish companies, as was the case of Brown Bag Films, Cartoon Saloon, Boulder Media to mention but a few (ISA, No Date). Such companies have received many awards on the global stage which clearly demonstrates their success.

The work of Bluth was so successful that an additional course was established at the Dun Laoghaire College of Art and Design, allowing students to solely focus on animation. Although two teaching institutions existed in Dublin, each concentrated on different types of animation development. Ballyfermot taught the “US-based classical technique” while Dun Laoghaire focused on ‘European experimental art house pieces’ (Clancy, 2005, p.3). With regard to both types of animation taught, each supported and depended on each another, and the contrast between the two gave rise to the production of sharp animation works. During this advancement, further studios were established that developed their own individual style.

Even though the industry was beginning to grow as a result of American influence, the early 1990’s witnessed a turbulent time for the ‘bigger players’ in the Irish market. For example, Sullivan Bluth Studios experienced financial difficulty and as a result ceased trading, as did Emerald City. This resulted in employees from these studios taking up employment at Fox Animation in the US (Clancy, 2005). Murakami Wolf Swenson changed ownership and traded in a much smaller studio. These closures almost marked the end for the Irish animation industry, as the industry experienced a complete ‘lull’ (Clancy, 2005). However, many small indigenous studios such as TerraGlpyh Animation and Monster Animation were established during this difficult time, having gained the necessary technical and
business experience as a result of previous employment at Sullivan Bluth (Clancy, 2005). As Clancy (2005) stated, the introduction of these businesses into the industry was the real beginning to the success for animation industry in Ireland. Not only was there now a skilled workforce in Ireland, but also animation courses had been established, which allowed the sector to develop even further after the American companies had ‘pulled out’.

During this time the independent Irish animators had established their credentials in the industry. Aidan Hickey had won the first Irish Film award at an international festival in 1987, for his production of ‘An Inside Job’ supported by RTÉ (Clancy, 2005). The first Irish animation festival was launched in 1994 attracting many international visitors (Monster, 2002). The festival highlighted the work of the animators to prospective employers and its success was measured in monetary terms, as they received €3000 for scriptwriting (Clancy, 2005). However, the organisers for the event had other commitments and were unable to continue with further festivals after the third year, although other schemes were initiated by Bord Scannán na hÉireann (The Irish Film Board), the Arts Council, RTÉ and the Northern Irish Film Council. These schemes were a welcomed improvement as they provided budgets of €27,000 for animations with unique, high quality productions (Clancy, 2005). Furthermore, these schemes provided existing animators with an opportunity to work with non-commercial animation. Those interviewed by Clancy (2005) agreed that such schemes raised the standards of animation in Ireland. However, they also stressed the importance of introducing a scheme on the ‘commercial’ side of the industry. A joint paper was presented in alliance with the IBEC Audio Federation entitled ‘Realising the Potential of the Animation’, stressing the importance of various issues raised by many within the industry (Clancy, 2005). As a result, Bord Scannán na hÉireann launched two new projects each providing grants for different areas within the sector.

The Irish Digital, Film and TV Production industry heavily depends on a ‘tax shelter’, known as Section 481, which commenced in 1997, as an industry aid to promote and encourage companies to invest in Irish-produced films. This fiscal incentive allows a tax relief for projects certified under the legislation. The amount of capital which is invested in an Irish produced film is determined by the total
amount spent by the production on Irish goods, services and facilities, which also includes other cost factors such as an EU cast as well as a crew working within the State. Therefore, investors can claim 100% tax relief on their investment projects. This incentive is an important ‘aid’ to the animation sector and was extended until 2012 (Audiovisual Federation Review, 2008) and further extended in 2011 in the Finance Act, until 2015 (Audiovisual Federation Review, 2011). The loss of such would be “detrimental” and the industry would be “non-exist” (Animation Ireland, 2012, p. 1).

4.2.4.4 The Maturing of the Industry (2000-2005)

November 2000 saw the 4th edition of the Irish Animation Festival organised by two former Dun Laoghaire graduates. The festival served as a ‘launch pad’ for a project by the Cartoon Saloon (a Kilkenny-based company) which produced flashcards for online clients (Clancy, 2005). The company also produced a feature length animation film – the ‘Secret of Kells’ with support from the FÁS Millennium Arts and Culture Fund. In their interview with Clancy (2005), the company stressed the difficulties in sourcing funds to support their animated films.

In addition to the training courses available to Irish animators, 2005 saw the launch of the first honours degree course in animation. The programme was introduced by the Irish School of Animation at Ballyfermot (ISA). Over 100 students from all parts of the world pursued animation studies at the ISA. During these years rapid growth was experienced in the Irish animation industry, which resulted in a significant increase in the number of jobs. The Audio Visual Federation Review (2006) summed up the industry stating that,

“The Irish animation industry has had an excellent year, with exciting growth both local output and strong coproduction partnerships in Europe. With more than an estimated 300 full-time and freelance animators currently working in the Irish animation sector, the industry is actually bigger than it was when the Sullivan Bluth US animation studio was based in Ireland...... However, now Irish animators are creating their own indigenous projects and raising their own finance from national and international broadcasters,

Even though the animation industry in Ireland suffered in the early stages because of American influence, Monster (2002) said that the industry wouldn’t have existed without the American presence. Monster (2002) believes that, not only has the studios within the industry succeeded, but also employment has been created as a result of the courses which have been implemented. Moreover, there has been an increase in the supporting industries such as digital and recording studios (Monster, 2002).

4.2.4.5 International Success (2005-2013)³

In general, the establishment of various animator groups has raised awareness, both in the home market, as well as internationally, through various festivals screening the work of Irish animators. In addition, the schemes and initiatives offer strong support to the sector (Clancy, 2005). However, with relation to budgetary funding, Mr Gaffney reported in the Audiovisual Federation Review (2009) that in recent years only two percent of the funding provided by the national broadcasters and funding agencies went towards animation production. Enterprise Ireland has also been very supportive in terms of promoting the Indigenous industry at home and on the international arena. Furthermore in 2010, Enterprise Ireland represented 11 Irish companies at the KidScreen Summit in New York. Collectively, the work of these companies has attained many prestigious awards including Oscars, Emmys, CARTOON Forum, ANNIE, Sundance, as well as Entrepreneur of the Year by Ernst & Young, to name but a few (Enterprise Ireland, 2010). Up until 2009, Ireland’s film industry had achieved 45 international awards (Audiovisual Federation Review, 2009). As Enterprise Ireland (2010) has stated, the Irish animation industry really hit a ‘high point’ in 2010. Enterprise Ireland attributes the high point of artistry, blended with technological advancements, combined with successful entrepreneurs to develop a “vibrant new animation industry” (Enterprise Ireland, 2010, p.1).

³ Elements of this section has been published in Smith et al. (2012)
In February 2010 the success of the Irish film industry competing in the international arena was clearly demonstrated. The film industry had five Irish films nominated for the Oscar awards, which included companies such as the Cartoon Saloon – a Kilkenny-based company and Brown Bag Films – a Dublin based company. Brown Bag Films is one of the largest Irish animation companies, which recorded a profit after tax of €764,830 in 2009 (Coyle, 2010) and was first nominated for an Oscar award in 2002 (Irish Times, 2010). An Oscar nomination has been described as “the best possible endorsement” (Perry, 2010, p. 1). This marked a very important achievement for Irish animation, as well as paying tribute to the School of Animation at Ballyfermot College of Further Education’s where 3 Oscar nominees were schooled (McGreevy & Parsons, 2010).

The success of the Irish animation industry continued and this was similarly reflected in both 2011 and 2012, when an Irish-produced series won two ‘prestigious’ awards at the British Academy Children’s Awards (McGreevy, 2011, Animation Ireland, 2013). The company which produced the series also won ‘Best Animated Television Production’ at the 39th Annual Annie Awards (Animation Ireland, 2013). In addition, they were also nominated at various award ceremonies, most recently at The Emmys, where they scooped a top award (Animation Ireland, 2013). Other companies have also been successful in the past two years by picking up various titles to include ‘Best Drama’ at the British Academy Children’s Awards in London (McGreevy, 2012) and many IFTA nominations were made to participating Irish animation companies (Animation Ireland, 2012). Associated with these many achievements are indirect benefits, such as new job creation. Kavaleer Animations, one of the most successful animation companies in Ireland, created a further 30 new animation jobs over the course of 2012 (Animation Ireland, 2012).

Mr Gaffney, the co-founder of Brown Bag Films, Dublin was interviewed by Duncan in 2010 and noted that the most of the Irish studios have matured and each now having a “strong presence” (p.1) internationally, which positively builds careers. However, in spite of all of the successes, difficulties still remain within the Irish animation industry because we lack a strong home market. As such, companies are now being driven to become more internationally focused, and in the case of Brown Bag Studios, 90% of their business is now abroad (Duncan, 2010; Coyle,
This has been corroborated by the Audiovisual Federation Review (2009) which indicated that the animation industry in Ireland is greatly export focused. Excluding the Section 481 funds, 80% of the animation industries income is generated from international sources (Audiovisual Federation Review, 2009). Duncan (2010) also interviewed the co-founder of Cartoon Saloon, Kilkenny, Mr. Young. Mr. Young believes that collaboration is key amongst Irish and international studios (Duncan, 2010). Despite these challenges, the international reputation of the sector continues to flourish and this is endorsed by the 2011 Children’s BAFTA awards received by Boulder Media. Boulder Media was commissioned by Disney in March 2012 to produce a new cartoon series, to be screened in 129 countries. These awards and commissions continue to recognise and endorse the quality of the work produced in the Irish digital animation sector (Boulder Media, 2012).

4.2.4.6 An Overview of the Indigenous Irish Animation Sector (2013)

In a Report by Enterprise Ireland (2010) it was recognised that there are “more than 50 Irish animation companies offering a broad range of products and services to the worldwide entertainment market” (p.1), including those involved in animation, TV/film producers, advertising, flash and mobile content development and post-production houses. As described by Minister Keller, and further cited by Enterprise Ireland (2010), the animation industry in Ireland employs the major share of permanent employees within the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry, with a total of 337 Irish jobs in 2008 (Audiovisual Federation Review, 2009). In 2011, this increased to 971, 584 Irish employment and the remaining 387 of non-Irish employment (Audiovisual Federation Review, 2011). It is known that 30 seconds of animation takes approximately one week of preparation and many other productions can take longer periods of time (1-3 years) (Duncan, 2010). In 2010, Duncan discussed this topic during an interview with Mr Moriarty, Chairman of the Audiovisual Federation. This is seen as an advantage from an employment aspect, as regular employment is being provided by the industry. As Tschang & Goldstein (2004) highlighted “the industry is known for being highly cyclical and the prospects

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4 Elements of this section has been published in Smith et al. (2012)
of partial work over the year or regular layoffs frustrates artists in both the US and other countries” (p.4).

In 2010, the total output for the audiovisual industry was €387.9m (Audiovisual Federation Review, 2011). Feature Films contributed €116.7m and the Independent TV and major TV drama production recorded €241.5m, while the Animation division recorded a total output of €29.7m 9m (Audiovisual Federation Review, 2011). Therefore, in 2010 the animation division represented 7.6% of the overall total output. Figure 4.1 illustrates data taken from the respective years of the Audiovisual Federation Review. The data exemplifies the change in revenue generated from the animation sector, year on year from 2001 – 2010.

Figure 4.1: – Revenue Generated from the Irish Animation Sector (2001 – 2010)

Figure 4.1 highlights, that between the years 2001 and 2007, increase in revenue was minimal. However, this revenue income has increased significantly between 2007 and 2009 as shown above. As described in the Audiovisual Federation Review (2011), animation was the single audiovisual division that predicted growth for 2009. The sector exceeded these predictions, whereby the total output amounted to €57.6 million in 2009 (Audiovisual Federation Review, 2011). In 2010, there was a significant reduction in the total output which was mainly due to the government’s amendments to the Section 481 tax incentive and cuts in other funding opportunities (Audiovisual Federation Review 2011). Overall, the Audiovisual Federation Review
(2011) believes that the sector is continuing to grow in Ireland, despite reductions being noted, which has been mainly due to the length of time each production takes and in some cases productions can take years.

In his interview with Duncan, Mr Moriarty referred to the animation industry as a prime model of a “smart economy” (Duncan, 2010, p. 1). Additionally, Mr Gaffney highlighted that these indigenous Irish companies continue to invest in the Irish animation sector, building the industry, in the hope of securing long-term employment opportunities (Duncan, 2010). This success has been supported by the Section 481 tax break as well as funding from supports such as the Irish Film Board and Enterprise Ireland (Courtney, 2013). The underpinning global competitiveness of the Irish animation industry is believed to be the Section 481 tax incentive (Animation Ireland, 2012).

Despite the disappearance of the Celtic Tiger, the animation industry is “the one place in the world of entertainment that doesn’t seem to have been hit by the recession” clarifies Courtney (2013, p.1). Whilst 2010, 2011 have been tough for the industry and possibly for coming years in terms of available public funding, the Irish Film Board remains positive regarding its goals for the future, as well as the strong job prospects for the young people joining the industry (Audiovisual Federation Review, 2009; 2011). Collins (2010) quotes that, “a tough environment and crisis can bring out the best. As a result of the current economic climate, Mr Hartnett quoted that ‘entrepreneurs have got hungrier, which is a good thing’” (Collins, 2010, p.1).

Mr Gaffney has stated that “the success of the Irish animation sector is bigger than the sum of its parts” (Duncan, 2010, p.1) which is as a result of “design, artistic, storytelling talent” together with the 481 taxation incentive concluded Mr Young (Duncan, 2010, p.1). Mr Rice, Chief Executive of JAM Media, added to this in his interview with Duncan (2010), by describing the support from the Irish Film Board, who provides €1 million for animation production every year. Rice also believes that the Irish firms are “punching above their weight” internationally, which is the driving force behind their success (Duncan, 2010, p.2). This success is also reflected through the increase of applications to third-level animation courses in Ireland, as well as the development of an annual Irish School of Animation Conference (ISA
Con) which has been created to help share information and network as part of the animation learning and development experience (Courtney, 2013).

Courtney (2013) questioned in his report, “will the ink run dry for animators in Ireland?” (p. 2) which is a major concern as the animation industry booms. While it has the potential to experience a downturn, the Irish animation industry is understood to be much more “robust” (p. 2) than in the days of Sullivan Bluth, given the quality animators, producing superior work (Courtney, 2013).

The animation industry has many supports including for example Pegbar. Pegbar is a devoted Irish ‘animation networking organisation’ and their aim is to facilitate networks through various means of networking events such as, organised talks from experienced animation artists, storytellers and film makers, as well as exhibiting animators work to aid in building networks and creating opportunities for the industry together with their own annual creative workshops. Their website (www.pegbar.ie) is used as a promotion tool to post the most recent animation news, animation resources and to create awareness of the flourishing Irish industry. However, their narrow focus - Ireland, restricts any international vision.

4.2.4.7 The International Animation Industry

The early years of animation in America have been referred to as the silent years (1914-1928) by Solomon (1989). However, when Mickey Mouse screeched ‘Steamboat Bill’ in 1928, the silent era was over. The subsequent years that followed were referred to as the ‘Golden Age of Animation’ or the ‘Disney Era’ (1928-1941), as Walt Disney had transformed the industry with his talent, vision and dedication, and was the leading world figure in animation in the 1930’s (Solomon, 1989). These were critical years for American animation. The studio cartoon had been developed in Hollywood and many such as Warner Brothers and MGM were adopting Disney’s ways to introduce a new style of humour, with great success in many cases (Solomon, 1989). During World War II, many of the Hollywood animators dedicated their time to the war effort and as Solomon (1989) stated, ‘Donald Duck even joined the army’. The military organisation FMPU, which consisted of many talented animators from the large companies used their animation freedom and began making many films (Solomon, 1989) for the army. During the war, the number of animations
that were produced far exceeded what any studio in Hollywood produced (Solomon, 1989), as the animators had been conscripted by the army to make propaganda movies.

During the 1950s, the animation work at Disney was far superior to other studios (Solomon, 1989). Although, the animation work by MGM and Warner Brothers, followed a close second and during Disney’s ‘silver age’, Walt began develop other work which included live-action filmmaking (Solomon, 1989). However, many of his classic Disney cartoons still remained in the public arena (Solomon, 1989). The introduction of computer-aided animation in the 70’s had a significant impact on commercials and during this time there was a great change in animation in America (Solomon, 1989). However, even Hollywood studios closed, but significant achievements were still achieved (Solomon, 1989).

The animation industry experienced stiff competition in the 1990’s when Disney had a runaway success with ‘Beauty and the Beast’ and the ‘Lion King’. The success of a film is the result of the “story and style” and not “technology” (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004, p. 5). The authors further explain how this lead to a “boom” within the industry, which quickly turned into a “bubble” in the early 2000’s, when the studios, suffered a downturn in the market (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004, p. 4). Furthermore, both Disney and Fox closed their 2D production studios as viewers showed a preference for 3D animation (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004). Although new 3D animation companies were emerging that specialised in unique computer graphics, the business was not seen as sustainable by some industry experts, even though 3D productions were much favoured and generated more revenue than their 2D counterparts (Tschang & Goldstein, 2004).

France and Spain have taken the lead in the European animation market as a direct result of government tax incentives (Digital Vector, 2012). However, their reputation and global attractiveness do not equal their American rivals (Digital Vector, 2012). This is primarily due to feature films proving more costly and the higher production failure rate. It has been suggested that marketing on an international scale may aid in the further development of the European animation studios (Digital Vector, 2012).
Overall, Animation Ireland (2012) highlight the figures reported by PWC, indicating that there is predicted growth for Global entertainment and media, indicating a significant rise from $1.4 trillion in 2010 to $1.9 trillion in 2015. Therefore, Irish studio’s have a high chance of increasing their segment of the global production spend (Animation Ireland, 2012).

Given the success of the animation industry, the subsequent sections will provide a profile of the entrepreneur and their companies, as two principal elements of this success story, which has been derived from interviews with the founders.

4.3 Two Principal Elements within the Indigenous Irish Animation Industry – The Founders Profile and the Company’s Profile

4.3.1 Profile of Founders/Entrepreneurs

As outlined in chapter five, this research is a ‘full population study’ of the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry, which will concentrate on the animation sector, which comprises of 16 companies inclusive of 20 founders. The following data has been generated from in-depth interviews (phase 3), conducted with the founder, whose company position was mainly the manager or the company director, at each of their firms location during late 2010 and early 2011. Provided is a descriptive analysis for the current operational founders/entrepreneurs and their associated companies. This section will provide an introduction to the data analysis and findings reported in chapter six, beginning with the founder’s general description, followed by a company overview. A company and founder profile is also included in Appendix 3, which provides the summarised credentials of those in this study.

4.3.1.1 Gender

Of the 20 entrepreneurs interviewed, 17 (85%) were male and 3 (15%) were female.
As Figure 4.2 demonstrates, the industry is heavily dominated by male directors. The researcher, sought reasons why this is. However, it is known that females are more involved in production roles rather than in directive roles (Founder, Firm B).

“There doesn’t tend to be a lot of female animators. It’s very male directed. Even in college, the majority were men. Maybe it’s a mindset or perhaps they grew up and we haven’t!!”

(Founder, Firm H).

Whilst the other interviewee stated,

“That’s a big issue and it’s a big issue internationally as well because there is not that many female directors...I can’t understand it.....it’s not an issue of talent anyway” (Founder, Firm B).

Why female directors are underrepresented in the animation industry is still uncertain. However, it is well known that females have equal talent to males in this area. Perhaps given the success of the industry, in future years we may see more females at the directorship level.

4.3.1.2 Origin

The origins of the founders have been established. Eighteen (80%) of the foundering members were Irish, while the remaining two founders were from Germany (10%)
and US (10%). These latter two founders identified Ireland an ideal location to set up their own ‘unique’ companies, given the tax incentives as well as the creative reputation within the industry.

4.3.1.3 International Experience

Having interviewed all founding members, it was established that most of the founders had ‘limited’ experience or as one founder put it ‘little bits and pieces’ (Founder, Firm E) of international experience prior to setting up their current enterprises. These figures include personnel who worked within the animation industry as well as others whom were found in other areas of employment including journalism and later moved into the Digital, Film and TV production industry. Such experience was considered to be invaluable, as described by Founder, Firm I,

“It gave us the experience of overseeing a team and seeing how other studios were set up, how they were run – so we were seeing it from both sides really. This gave us the strength in years to come”.

Entrepreneurs sought experience in many different countries, including the US – Hollywood, the hub of animation at Disney and Warner Brothers. France, Germany, Czech Republic and the UK were other locations were individuals sought work experience.

The remaining founders (15%) set up their own business soon after receiving their educational qualifications. While a small minority set up their own company after attaining a limited amount of experience in the domestic market.

Overall, the majority of founders (15) had experience working in the animation industry prior to setting up their own business. Entrepreneurs worked for many companies in the domestic market, such as Sullivan Bluth, Emerald City, Brown Bag, Cartoon Saloon and Murakami Wolf and in the international market. However, the remaining 5 were novice entrepreneurs, and they had no previous involvement in the animation industry, prior to setting up their business, ‘cold turkey’. Despite the lack of practical experience, some of these entrepreneurs are now key players in the animation industry.
4.3.1.4 Educational Background

Unsurprisingly 50% of founders were graduates of Ballyfermot Senior College. The pool of talent mainly arose “in 1994, 1995 and upward” (Founder, Firm I). The majority of entrepreneurs were ‘friends’, as a result of the closely knit Irish industry. Entrepreneurs also sought industry expertise from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin as well as Edinburgh College of Art and Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology. However, there were a number of respondents who had no previous experience in animation and therefore had varying educational backgrounds which included degrees in engineering, commerce and accountancy. Nonetheless, such diversity didn’t restrict their progression in this unique developing industry.

4.3.2 Company Profile

The following section presents a profile for the companies in the Irish animation sector, which are a part of this research. The data collected was sourced from both phase 1 and phase 2 of the multi-method research approach and then re-examined in phase 3 in order to triangulate findings. Firstly, an example of an animation firm’s company structure is presented in Figure 4.5.
4.3.2.1 Size of Firm

Employee numbers are one measure that can be used to gauge the size of a firm. The majority of the firms in this study could be classified as small (45%), typically employing less than 20 employees. Thirty percent of the total number of companies employ between 21 - 50, while a further 20% of companies employed between 51-80. The remaining 5% of companies employed 100 plus. Moreover, these employee figures can fluctuate and are determined by the project in hand at any given time. As a result numerous freelance animators are ‘floating’ and seeking work all of the time.

The second measure used to evaluate the size of the company is its turnover. Six of the companies interviewed (40%) were reluctant to disclose such figures, while the others openly discussed their firms turnover. Twenty percent of the companies had an annual average turnover of almost €1 million, which was the case for the ‘younger’ operating companies, while a further 20% of the companies had an average turnover of between €2 - €5 million. In addition, another 20% of the
companies had a turnover of €5 - €10 million, which represented the ‘older generation’ of firms. In general it was suggested that turnover was a ‘variable’ factor (Founder, Firm A) however, it has “increased year on year” (Founder, Firm H).

The third measure used to estimate a company’s size, relates to the number of offices a company operates in. However, the majority of the firms (75%) operated in one office, while the remaining 25% had two offices, each in separate locations around the world, including Los Angeles and Hollywood. Table 4.2 summarises these main findings by contextualising the firms according to their size.

Table 4.2: Size of Firms as a Percentage of the Total Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Employees</th>
<th>Turnover</th>
<th>No. of Offices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;20</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>Not Willing To Discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-50</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>&lt; 1 Million 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-80</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2 - 5 Million 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81-100</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5 - 10 Million 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100+</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1 75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2.2 Age of Firm

A firm’s age can be used as a profiling measure, which relates to the number of years a firm is registered. In general, the firms involved in this study were relatively young, which reflects the ‘newness’ of the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry. The mean age of firms in this study was 11 years, 45% of the firms were aged between 11 – 25 years old, while a further 45% of firms were between 6 – 10 years old. The remaining 5% of the firms are found in the 0-2 and 3-5 years old age
category. Table 4.3 presents an overview of the firm’s age as a percentage of the total population.

Table 4.3: Age of Firms as a Percentage of the Total Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Years Registered</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-2 Years</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 Years</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6- 10 Years</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-25 Years</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.2.3 International Performance Indicators

The majority (13) of the firms involved in this study were actively involved in internationalisation, less than 2 years from inception, which represents 80% of the total industry population. A further 10% were involved in international operations within 3-5years, while the remaining 10% became involved in internationalisation after 5years. These statistics symbolise the traits of a born global firm, as they follow a rapid mode of internationalisation.

All firms participating in this study were actively involved in international sales or ‘exporting’. This was one of the criteria used in the selection screening and is also, one of the defining characteristics of a born global firm. The intensity of international sales is measured in percentage terms which can be seen in Table 4.4. The bulk of respondents (55%) indicated that their international sales accounted for 51% - 90% of the firm’s total sales. While a further 20% of the companies were 100% export orientated. One interviewee stated,

“Our business is really all export directed. Really do you think a four year old kid cares where a programme is produced? We simply can’t do business in Ireland alone, there is no income to be generated here, believe me”

(Founder, D).
Such comments and others alike, indicate that these firms have little or no domestic market for their product/service, which drives their need for international expansion. In relation to internationalisation, the number of markets (market spread) that each firm is actively involved in is revealed. Table 4.4 outlines that the majority of firms (80%) are involved in 3-5 different international markets/ countries and a further 10% are involved with 1-2 foreign markets. Of the remaining firms interviewed (10%), these firms were found to be exporting their products to in total over 5 countries. Overall, the mean number of countries per firm was 4.

Table 4.4: Internationalising Performance Indicators of Firms as a Percentage of the Total Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International Performance Indicators - Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speed to Int. Markets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;2 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-5 Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5+ Years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the number of countries associated with this industry involvement has been discussed, the most popular locations are illustrated in Figure 4.4, namely UK, USA, Australia, Canada, France and Germany. Other countries which were also mentioned as areas involved in internationalisation include, those within the Asian continent, and other European countries such as Spain, Italy, Poland, Hungary and Denmark to name but a few. The following figure presents the number of firms that are involved in international activity, country by country.
4.3.2.4 Type of Founding’s/ Legal Ownership Structures

All of the firms that participated in this investigation were independent in nature. A large number of the firms were co-founded, which accounted for 70% of the total industry population. These companies were set up under a legal partnership structure. In the majority of cases, there were two founders, while in four of the companies there were three founders. Further examination revealed that each team member brought specific competencies and their own skill-set to the company. Moreover, among the founding teams, a small number of ‘Copreneurs’ emerged, (a team derived of partners or a husband and wife). Following this phenomenon, college graduates also teamed up to become involved in business, which was the main dominant type of founding, found amongst the companies interviewed. The remaining 30% of companies were set up independently, mainly as a ‘sole trader’, or a ‘private limited company’. However, there have been changes in relation to the number of ‘partnership’ structures in recent years, which can be seen in Figure 4.5;
Forty seven percent of companies that setup as a ‘partnership’ structure are now singly owned and run. This relatively high ‘drop-out’ rate is due to many different personal related issues including, ill-health and family commitments. Furthermore, for the majority of business partnerships they were developed at Ballyfermot Animation College, through a working and learning environment. Following this a few acquaintances were developed while working in various different organisations while on work experience, which further developed into a business plan resulting in co-founding a new business.

Regarding the reasoning behind setting up their own business or the idea generation timing, many of these entrepreneurs set up their own business directly after college, as one interviewee explains, “We grew slowly and organically from a tiny art student start-up” (Founder, Firm D). Whilst others decided “to come back and pool our talents and setup our own company” (Founder, Firm H) after working in the industry for a number of years acquiring knowledge and experience at different levels, as well as simply “seeing a niche in the market.....and the talent was there...so I just kind of went for it” (Founder, Firm E). Another less obvious reason for setting up a new business venture was as a result the industry being in its ‘prime’ in Ireland and the high levels of unemployment. Therefore “we had to fend for ourselves” explains the
Founder of Firm I and take the plunge. While others suggest, it was “simply for job creation and community development out here” (Founder, Firm O).

4.3.2.5 Type of Activities Performed Internationally

Findings have also uncovered the type of business activities performed internationally, which helps enhance the profile of each participating firm, establishing where their business activities have taken place and why they follow such routes. Although there were some conflicting responses with regards to co-productions and outsourcing of activities internationally, a significant number (80%) of those representing the Digital, Film and TV production industry in Ireland conducted co-productions with a large number of varying countries worldwide. While some of the respondents indicated outsourcing as a ‘no option’. The type of work or the part of the project conducted internationally is variable, and is “heavily dependent on the project at hand” (Founder, Firm L). As one respondent denotes it can be “anything from a small part of it, to all of it” (Founder, Firm H), or from “pre to post” (Founder, Firm J). The reason for this surprisingly high percentage of international input is simple – “it’s much cheaper, as labour costs are much cheaper in other countries” (Founder, Firm P). It is also down to the fact that “you can’t do any lab development......there is no lab in Ireland to do that kind of work” (Founder, Firm B). It also can be as a result of these companies wanting to outsource ‘heavy lifting’ and focus on the ‘lighter’ and more manageable work internally bearing in mind their restricted spacing and limited staffing.

In contrast to this 20% of interviewees now complete all project related activities in-house, for example one founder stated, “Here in Ireland is where all our work is performed. In the past we have outsourced some of the work, but then they take the credit” (Founder, Firm D). These types of founders prefer to be in control of their own projects and reap the rewards of their own work rather than sharing. They see working for others as a “no-thanks game” (Founder, Firm N) and prefer working from pre to post-production, with the only international input coming from a “sales/marketing development manager” (Founder, Firm G). Even though this is a very different strategy to the majority, such companies are as equally successful in terms of their international growth given their minimalistic organisational knowledge.
sharing approach. Present in this category is one of the industry’s largest players, which highlights the success attached to using such a method.

### 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the success, rapid growth rate and importance of the indigenous Irish, Digital, Film and TV Production industry and in particular its animation sector. As established, the reputation of the industry proves promising as it is described by Mr Gaffney cited in the Independent (2012, p.1) as “one of the best producers of television animation in the world”. The industry is believed to have evolved organically, as the majority of founders were graduates of Ballyfermot Animation College. Given the size and smallness of the industry, the success is quite significant. As detailed earlier, this investigation is inclusive of sixteen born global companies and their twenty founders, who are highly dependent on the Section 481 tax incentive, together with the support from many other state and industry supports, including those in the Irish audiovisual sector. Many have noted, that this industry certainly has all the ‘ingredients’ and the reasoning for this is, as in the words of Mr Gaffney, “team spirit among studios, tax breaks and learning from the business models of computer gaming firms can ensure a happy ending for the award-winning animation sector” (Independent, 2012, p.1). Therefore, the animation industry proves a viable sector within the Irish audiovisual industry, for potential entrepreneurs seeking to exploit and as Courtney (2013, p.1) outlines that while it takes “patience, skill and attention to detail”, “for anyone in Ireland embarking on a career in animation, it seems you really can live happily ever after”.

Overall, the discussion is intended to provide a context for the study at hand. This is followed by an outline of the methodological approaches carried out for this study, as well as providing an introductory avenue for the presentation of the data analysis and findings which are presented in chapter five.
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology employed in this thesis. The first section of this chapter identifies the research questions. Furthermore, an introduction to the existing differences in positivist and phenomenological approaches to research have been explored together with an evaluative discussion on the phenomenological underpinnings adopted by this investigation. In addition, the following section outlines the multi-phase research design, with a justification for its implementation in this study of the Irish Digital, Film and TV production firms. The unit of analysis is then determined and the rationale described for choosing the selected single case study. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief overview of the research design, assessing validity, reliability and generalisation, which provide a base for the presentation of the research findings in chapter six.

This research involved a single case study investigation of an industry, the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry, particularly within the animation sector. It’s a multi-firm embedded case with ancillary contributors such as enterprise agencies, trade bodies and professional agents. The case study encompassed 26 interviews – which were conducted, with 20 company founders and 6 institutional supports, demonstrative of the nature of the industry in Ireland.

The research approach employed is fundamentally qualitative, involving in-depth interviews. In addition, the methodology involved the development of a large number of ‘company information templates’ in order to select suitable companies. This comprised of a telephone call and/or email follow-up, to acquire information. This not only allowed the researcher to triangulate primary and secondary data, but aided at the sampling and selection stages of the research process.

5.2 Research Question

As previously identified, following a review of the literature in chapters two and three, a number of research issues appeared to be critical if the area of study was to generate a successful outcome. Therefore, this lead to the construction of ‘company
information templates’. These are discussed in greater depth in the subsequent sections. As such, these templates enabled the identification of the core research questions and recognised evolving sub questions. Thus, the primary research question was:

“How do born global firms manage and operate their network intermediaries and forums to drive and facilitate their internationalisation process?”

Saunders et al. (2003) indicated that a research process develops as a result of one research question which follows a number of other associated questions. Saunders et al. (2003) identified that more often than not, a research question would originate from the research issues or objectives. Therefore, following the development of the primary research question a number of secondary questions were generated, which attempt to:

I. Gain an understanding of the background of the entrepreneur/ founder, particularly,
   - Their global mindset,
   - The extent of their international experience and market knowledge,
   - The degree of networking capability.

II. Identify the drivers that allow the firm to follow a rapid internationalising path.

The previous outlined questions are together examined throughout this thesis, all inclusive of the research process. Saunders et al. (2003) described a research process as a development which travels through various stages in order to purify ideas. This thesis clearly demonstrates this process, by drawing comparisons on each company and establishing their unique position. However, it is essential to firstly introduce and discuss the different theoretical foundations, as a choice of methodology, available to the researcher in this study.
5.3 Research Philosophies

Over recent years there has been much debate and discussion regarding research philosophies. Saunders et al. (2003) understand that philosophies play an important part in the research process, affecting the way we think about the development of knowledge and the way that research is performed. A quote by Enstein later, cited by Remenyi et al. (1998) highlights such,

“The most beautiful experience we can have is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion, which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. Whoever does not know it and can no longer wonder, no longer marvel, is as good as dead and his eyes are dimmed” (Remenyi et al., 1998, p.28).

This would suggest that in most instances it is likely that inspiration and imagination are both responsible for quality research, rather than the normal associated reasoning linked to the subject of interest. According to Saunders et al. (2007) there are three main views that dominate the discussion on philosophies, namely, positivism, realism and interpretivism.

5.3.1 Positivism and Phenomenology Paradigms

For the purpose of this investigation the philosophies named, positivism, realism and interpretivism, have been divided into two parts, positivism and phenomenology. Both paradigms, “a pattern or framework that forms our thinking before we even begin our research” (Quinton & Smallbone, 2006, p.6), are prevalent in this area of research (Gill & Johnston (2002). Research methodologies defined by qualitative and quantitative analysis form an essential role in both phenomenological and positive concepts, respectively. Choosing a suitable paradigm is fully dependant on the study at hand, therefore each approach has numerous associated features, which are outlined in Table 5.1.
Table 5.1: The Key Features of Positivist and Phenomenological Paradigms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Beliefs:</th>
<th>Positivist Paradigm</th>
<th>Phenomenology Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The world is external and objective</td>
<td>The world is socially constructed and subjective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observer is independent</td>
<td>Observer is part of what is observed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science is value free</td>
<td>Science is driven by human interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Researcher Should: | | |
| Focus on facts | Focus on meanings |
| Look for causality and fundamental laws | Try to understand what is happening |
| Reduce phenomena to simplest elements | Look at the totality of each situation |
| Formulate hypotheses and then test them | Develop new ideas through the induction from data |

| Preferred Methods Include: | Operationalising concepts so that they can be measured | Using multiple methods to establish different views of the phenomena |
| Taking large samples | Small samples investigated in-depth or over time |

Source: (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991, pg.27)

Based on the Table 5.1 constructed by Easterby-Smith et al. (1991), positivism or “the standard view” as referred to by Lee & Lings (2008, p.31), has been described as the dominant form of research in both business and management disciplines (Myers, 2009). Drawing on previous theoretical foundations, positivism has been described by Wardlow (1989) as a basic hypothesis, where common laws that
manage these so-called, social events can be further revealed. Using such a methodology, the researcher can foresee, interrogate and manage social phenomena.

In general, positivist studies are normally employed in an effort to test theory, enhancing the “predictive understanding of a phenomena” (Myers, 2009, p.37), and in some cases the subject(s) can be referred to as “objects” or “entities” (Myers, 2009, p.37). The positivist paradigm is identifiable through its distinctive features, as outlined by Easterby-Smith et al. (1991) and can be characterised by objectivity. This suggests that the researcher stays distant from the object of the study (Firestone, 1987), so they are neutral and impartial, with no influence being drawn from their opinions and/or experiences (Myers, 2009). Additionally, Wardlow (1989) also noted the ‘objective’ trait is inclusive of a number of other fundamental characteristics:

- “The physical world and social events are analogous, whereby researchers can study social phenomena as they do physical phenomena;
- Theory is universal and sets of principals and inferences can describe human behaviour and phenomena across individuals and settings;
- There is no need to formalise knowledge using theories and variables that are operationally distinct from each other and defined accordingly;
- Hypotheses about principals of theories are tested by quantification and observation and the use of the statistical analysis” (Wardlow, 1989, p.3).

The positivist paradigm described by Quinton & Smallbone (2006), as a data collection method, relies on the deductive analysis approach (theory testing). Quantitative research methods can also be employed, focusing on numbers (Myers, 2009). Examples of this are surveys, laboratory experiments, simulations, mathematical modelling, structural equation modelling, statistical analysis and econometrics (Myers, 2009). Critics have noted drawbacks and this approach has been the subject of much criticism and debate (Bradley, 2002). While the quantitative approach is most suited for statistical analysis, due to the size of selected samples and the vastness of the data collected, it is believed that some information may be ignored or forgotten using this methodology (Easterby-Smith et al. 1991). Another disadvantage emphasised by Crossan (2003) outlined that this approach can
have limited data, focusing only on a small part of the issue, resulting in distant findings. Undoubtedly, as Easterby-Smith et al. (1991) emphasise, this approach has the ability to collect large quantities of data, quickly and economically.

In contrast, the phenomenology paradigm refers to the “study of human experiences and of the structures within which humans experience the world” (Lee & Lings, 2008, p.59). This interpretive (knowledge acquiring) approach to research is never ‘final’ and has been summarised by Lee & Ling (2008) as a research approach that aspires to recognise the social world rather than explain or forecast such. This method also acknowledges that humans or reality is not an object, but a “social construction” formed with the mind of humans networking together (Lee & Ling, 2008, p.61). The knowledge acquired using this approach is rich, in-depth and descriptive, reflecting the experiences within each environment (Lee & Ling, 2008). Supporting Lee & Ling’s (2008) discovery, Hussey & Hussey (1997) previously clarified and identified many of the same qualities of the phenomenological research. Hussey & Hussey (1997) highlighted that the rich data generated is subjective by nature, results in the gathering process being subjective, given the level of involvement of the researcher. Hussey & Hussey (1997) believed that the reliability of this approach is relatively low, while the validity is high and in the majority of cases the location is natural.

The phenomenological is an inductive analysis approach (theory building) to research (Quinton & Smallbone, 2006). Qualitative research methods focus on text, examples of which include action research, case study research, ethnography, grounded theory, semiotics, discourse analysis, hermeneutics, narrative and metaphor (Myers, 2009). Similar to the positivist paradigm, the qualitative approach also has its associated weaknesses, for example Easterby-Smith et al. (1991) have raised issues regarding the extra time involved in utilising this method. They have also questioned issues surrounding its validity and reliability, which stems from bias findings, from the researcher (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991).

In essence, the positivism paradigm relates to experimental and descriptive research techniques, while the phenomenological paradigm approach relates to qualitative and observation research practice. As Quinton & Smallbone (2006) have suggested, there
is not such a penetrating split between these two research practices in reality, as demonstrated by theory. The authors also noted, as have many other academic researchers that a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative research methods can be employed in any given study, which can be inductive as well as reflecting a deductive view (Quinton & Smallbone, 2006). Following comparison and contrasting of both paradigms methodologies, this section describes the research methodology applied for these investigations.

5.4 Research Design: A Case Study Approach

Following the review and analysis of the relevant literature, namely the area of international entrepreneurship, combining the born global phenomena and social network theory, this study adopted an inductive/qualitative research approach. As such, the research methodology involved a single case study investigation of an indigenous Irish industry. As part of a multi-phase research design this multi-firm embedded case study comprises of 16 companies and 7 ancillary contributors. This research approach has been supported by many authors of born global internationalising research, as it is understood to provide more rigorous information more suited when exploring the early internationalising firms (Rialp et al., 2005).

Using this approach has allowed the researcher to challenge existing theories, as well as providing new sources of information through a grounded paradigm (Saunders et al., 2007). Myers (2009, p.73) clearly outlines the main rationale of case study research, by identifying that, “in business and management it is to use empirical evidence, from real people, in real organisations, to make an original contribution to knowledge”. In its simplest form, “a case” is the narrative surrounding a particular case or the position developed to draw further conclusions around that phenomenon (Myers, 2009, p.74). Yin (2003) defines a case study by dividing it into two parts. Firstly,

- “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when, the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p.13).
Secondly,

- “The case study inquiry, which copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest that data points, and as one result, relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in that triangulation fashion, and as another result benefits from prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin, 2003. p.14).

Furthermore, the case study approach, demonstrating a survey and strategy oriented approach has the ability to generate not only a rich understanding of data, but answers to questions such as “why?, what?, who? and how?” (Saunders et al., 2007, p.139). Therefore, the concept chosen has been used to develop the key research question already highlighted “How do born global firms manage and operate their network intermediaries and forums to drive and facilitate their internationalisation process?”

While Yin’s work on case study research is most useful, together with his many developed definitions and reasoning’s, Myers (2009) puts forward a more clear, decisive explanation of case study research, which is as follows:

“Case study research in business uses empirical evidence from one or more organisations where an attempt is made to study the subject matter in context. Multiple sources of evidence are used, although most of the evidence comes from interview and documents” (Myers, 2009, p. 76).

The above definition clearly captures the research approach adopted by this study and associated with this are the advantages of the chosen method. Eisenhardt (1989) highlighted, using empirical evidence, that previous literature and the knowledge of an experienced researcher, can only build stronger theories, which are in turn suitable for further testing. Myers (2009) identified a number of strengths in case study methodology by noting that the approach enables the researcher to explore or test existing hypothesis within the real-life situation more effectively, by getting “close to the action” (Myers, 2009, p.80). In addition, case study methodology is the
most popular qualitative research approach because of its “face validity”, which has been described as one that represents a real story that most researchers can identify with (Myers, 2009, p.80). Finally, given the nature of this approach, it tends to have less researcher bias, as it “unfreeze’s” their philosophies (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.546). Despite the many benefits of this approach, drawbacks have also been noted. However, the majority of these can be reflected as issues which relate to many other research approaches. One issue that has been identified is gaining access to a company or a particular group of companies. Lack of control is also considered to be another issue, for example a company changing ownership during the research process can have a very negative impact on the results. The duration of time from gaining access to companies, obtaining data, through to analysis and write up has also been noted as another potential source of misinterpretation (Myers, 2009). Eisenhardt (1989, p.547) adds to the critics of this approach, outlining that intensive use of empirical observation, producing theory, can become too intense and as a result, findings are “narrow and idiosyncratic”. In addition, while Ruzzier et al. (2006) have requested the need for a longitudinal research design in capturing the born global process, Coviello & Munro (1995) clarify that case study and/ or causal mapping would be useful in supporting such. Therefore, given the timing constraints associated with longitudinal studies, a case study approach has proven more viable, fulfilling the research approach gap.

The data collection techniques employed in case study research is numerous and can include observation and documentary analysis. The main data collection technique used in this investigation was in-depth interviews. Interviewing has been identified as the most commonly used technique for gathering qualitative research, given its flexibility, in terms of time and content, which can be tailored to suit any research topic (Lee & Lings, 2008). Knight (2000) understands that detailed data is best gathered through in-depth interviews, as it allows the researcher to build a comprehensive case. Given its success in previous studies, in addition to its suitability to explore research objectives, in-depth interviews were carried out. Table 5.2 denoted the various types of topics and respondents.
Table 5.2: Suitability of Interviewing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviews Ideally Suited to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Explore the world of the individual in-depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do case studies with repeated interviews over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Test an instrument or questionnaire</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Detailed individual experiences, choices or personal biography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Issues of sensitivity which may provoke anxiety, embarrassment etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Difficult to recruit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Elite of high status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Business people (usually)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Children under 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Adapted by Author from Lee & Lings, 2008, pg. 223)

The research suggests there are two main types of interviews, namely, semi-structured and unstructured (Saunders et al., 2003). Given their explanatory terms, as ‘unstructured’ suggests, the interviewer will, at best only promote the general topics for discussion. In contrast, a semi-structured interview is more detailed and contains specific questions and can be guided by topic (Lee & Lings, 2008). Given the clear theoretical understanding acquired from the literature review, semi-structured interviews were deemed most suitable in this instance (Lee & Lings, 2008). As described by Lee & Lings (2008), this approach enables the researcher to structure a topic, guide the questions and ensure all interviews are performed in a comparable manner.

Yin (2003) identified four case study approaches, which encompass a single case study, a multiple case study, a holistic case study and an embedded case study.
approach. No yardstick exists regarding the number of cases that each approach should include. Therefore, in the case of this investigation a single case study approach was adopted, which represents a “unique case” (Saunders et al., 2007 p.140), granting the researcher the “opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon that few have considered before” (Saunders et al., 2007, p.140), whereby the level of analysis is the ‘sector’ i.e. the indigenous Irish, digital, film and TV production industry. Yin (1994) noted that prior to the selection of the actual case, recognising the unit of analysis is important, and as addressed by Saunders et al. (2007), “an important aspect of using a single case is defining the actual case” (p.140).

Finally, the industry under investigation in this study was not an emerging sector but one which was under-represented from a research perspective. The case study outlined encompasses a full representation of the selected industry, a born global set of companies, whereby the companies are ‘founder driven’. The rationale in selecting a complete set of companies within the same industry allows the researcher to conduct cross-case comparisons as well as pattern-searching techniques.

5.5 Sample Selection

Given the methodological approach conducted in this study, various sampling techniques were employed. This research approach involved collecting data from two sources. Firstly, the multi-firm embedded case was selected, comprising of 16 companies, and as it was of manageable size it was possible to collect data from an entire population. This factor has previously been highlighted by Saunders et al. (2007) in some of their investigations. After a multi-phase selection process, the selection criterion was established. A business must be:

1. Indigenous to Ireland;
2. A Small to Medium Enterprise (SME);
3. Involved in Animation Development, within the Digital, Film and TV production area of activity;
4. Involved in International Operations, within the Digital, Film and TV production area of activity.
Having applied the criteria described above, 16 companies formed a case for investigation. Given the size of the Irish animation industry, this enabled an entire ‘census’ representing a regional study (Saunders et al., 2007). The second angle of investigations involved selecting additional industry contacts, referred to as institutional supports, for example, industry and state supports. The sampling technique used at this stage was non-probability sampling and as it was difficult to identify important contacts of the desired population, ‘snowball sampling’, as used by many academic researchers, for example, Harrison & Mason (1992) and Moen et al. (2008), was the most suitable type of subsequent technique to apply (Saunders et al., 2007), whereby at the end of the interview, each interviewee was asked to suggest who they deemed to be ‘important’ personnel in terms of furthering research.

5.6 Case Study Selection

The researcher endeavoured to identify a suitable sample of companies as part of a single case study of an industry - the Digital, Film and TV production industry. Firstly, a database was generated, containing potential companies of interest. The second phase involved the development of a ‘company information template’ for each respective company, using secondary information sources. Phase 3 comprised of telephone communications with each company, in an attempt to satisfy the information gaps in the company information template. This contact was also used as an introductory tool, which was further developed in phase 3 of the research approach. Finally, phase 4 involved conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews, with the suitable sample of company contacts. Figure 5.1 outlines the research processes adopted during this research analysis:
5.7 Pilot Interviews and Amendments to the Interview Schedule

Prior to conducting the multi-phase research approach sought after by the researcher, it was firstly necessary to conduct pilot interviews. The rationale for applying the research approach was determined by the responses received following the first two pilot interviews with entrepreneurs from the industry. The results from the pilot studies acknowledged the suitability of the approach. Furthermore, the information gleaned during the pilot interviews generated, rich, informative data which was critical to conclude in the research findings. In addition, a few minor adjustments were made to the semi-structured in-depth interview schedule in relation to the sequence of questions, to enable additional information to be obtained.
5.8 Methodological Phases

- **Phase 1 – Development of a Company Database**

The first phase of the research involved constructing a qualitative database of Irish Digital, Film and TV production companies, using secondary sources. After contacting many of those directly and indirectly involved in the industry in Ireland, it was recognised that there were many varying quantitative references made with regards to the exact number of Digital, Film and TV production companies within the industry. Therefore, a strategic approach as undertaken in order to derive a list of all suitable animation companies which was further interrogated using the research methodologies described. Yin (1984) and Rowley (2002) believe that six principal approaches to data collection exist as follows: physical artefacts, participant observation, direct observation, interviews, archival records, and documentation. The following sections demonstrate the principal approaches used in the data collection and analysis stages of the study.

As a result of an in-depth analysis and the assessment of several publically available business listings, a database of 59 indigenous Irish companies involved in Digital, Film and TV production was compiled (Appendix 4 – Compiled database of companies involved in animation in Ireland). This database was constructed as a result of the amalgamation of many information sources, including listings published by state support bodies, such as Enterprise Ireland’s animation subdivision - Animation Ireland (www.animationireland.com). Additional industry supports also provided additional information, such as The Irish Film and Television Network (www.iftn.ie), and Creative Ireland’s (www.creative-ireland.com) member’s directory. ScreenBase (www.screenbase.screendaily.com) also provided a European Film Index of all related companies internationally including Ireland. Screen Directors Guild of Ireland (www.sdgi.ie) and Screen Producers Ireland (www.screenproducersireland.com) as well as the Digital Hub (www.thedigitalhub.com) also supplied company listings to aid in the development of a comprehensive database. In addition to these many resources, access was obtained through one of the MIPCOM’s event guide books, which contained a comprehensive listing of Irish companies who were represented at the international
festival. Such information corroborated previously accessed company contacts and enabled cross referencing (See Appendix 5 for an example of exhibiting companies at MIPCOM).

The secondary data generated during this phase, was used to compile a database containing a broad list of the companies involved within the Digital, Film and TV production industry in Ireland. It was also used to establish their identity, location and contact details. In some cases it was possible to establish if the company was involved in internationalisation. However, the researcher was unable to make contact with 15 of the companies listed, even after much persistence, and this was either due to business failure or an unproductive business following initial contact. As a result, pending further examination, 44 companies were retained for analysis which was then subjected to the second phase of research involving the development of a ‘company information template’. The secondary information gathered guided the interview protocol and accurately identify appropriate interviewees.

- **Phase 2 – Development of a ‘Company Information Template’**

In order to select the most suitable companies, that not only fulfilled the selection criteria but also would provide rich in-depth findings, a further in-depth analysis was performed on the remaining 44 companies. This phase involved developing an informative ‘company information template’ for each company sourced in the first phase of the research process (Appendix 6 – Company Information Template).

A template was developed that aided the gathering of, secondary data for each company. Such data sources included internal company contacts, company profile, active international markets, major clients, company awards and size of organisation measured by a number of employees. Additional sources of information included promotion organisations for example Film Ireland, which is Ireland’s film magazine solely dedicated to contain information and facts on Ireland’s animation companies. The Irish Times, The Independent and many other newspapers regularly produce articles which profile Irish animation companies, drawing particular attention to their history and success. Websites such as www.siliconrepublic.com, www.bizstartup.ie, www.digital21.ie and www.businessandleadership.com to name but a few have
occasionally featured the Irish animator’s success stories. RTÉ’s podcasts have also proved to be a useful means of sourcing secondary data on these companies under examination. Media reports were another useful source of data. Social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn have been used in this research as invaluable methods of collecting secondary data, information on the company-founder as well as regular up-dates of the company and its industry. The companies own websites and the websites of their clients also served as invaluable informative points to assist with the completion of many of the fields in the pre-structured company information template.

The approach adopted during this phase of the research process yielded a significant amount of data on the firms which had been selected. This exemplifies the volume of secondary data available from the on-line sources already identified. While the reliability of published information could be a potential source of error, extensive cross-comparison was necessary to validate results. In many cases, even after phase two information gaps still remained calling for the next phase (phase 3) of the research. This involved telephone contact with each individual company.

Given that the focus of the study was to evaluate rapid internationalising indigenous Irish born globals, the information required from secondary sources to satisfy the ‘Company Information Template’ included:

- Company name and logo;
- Contact details;
- Company demographics (Size, age, number of employees, additional offices, etc);
- Company profile and areas of activity (Business to business/ business to consumer);
- Year of inception and history;
- Company structure;
- Funding structure;
- Background of founder(s);
- Social network involvement;
- International involvement (Markets, % of international sales, number of years in an international arena);
- Major clients / TV series/ target market;
- Awards and nominations;
- Any other information of relevance.

Overall, the second phase of this research focused on appropriate and suitable interviewees, from whom suitable in-depth information could be drawn, fulfilling the research criteria.

- **Phase 3 – Follow up Telephone Contact and Selection Procedure**

The third phase of the research involved contacting each of the 44 companies by telephone, in order to fill the gaps within the company information template (Appendix 6 – Company Information Template). This was the next stage in the company selection process. A member of the company’s founding team, and in most cases, the primary founder was contacted. At this point, the researcher explained the research project in addition to the research objectives. In all cases, any additional information was freely supplied by the entrepreneur/founder. It was important to establish that the method of contact used as an introduction with the entrepreneur could be used later on in the process. This proved to be a very successful approach as all of the interviewees were very positive agreeing to future contact. The next step involved the selection of the most suitable companies, as a basis to conduct further in-depth analysis. The selection criteria applied in the selection process has been previously highlighted in the ‘sample selection’ section of this chapter.

After completion of all the 44 company information templates, it was established that a further 14 companies did not fit the research criteria as they weren’t involved in international sales. In addition, 11 companies did not develop their own animation, but instead outsourced 100% of their work. These companies were viewed as service providers rather than an animation studio. Furthermore, 3 of the companies named were not part of the selected industry under review. These companies developed animations for the medical, commercial or the property market, rather than Film and Television production. At the end of the process, 16
companies fulfilled this research selection criterion. The final stage of the interview process involved the further examination of these companies in order to establish research objectives.

Finally, in order to triangulate findings, a number of individuals/associates believed to be involved in networking within the animation industry in Ireland were also identified using the methodology discussed in phases 1 and 2 of the research process. State bodies such as Enterprise Ireland, Industry Supports such as MEDIA and Agents or Distributors were included in this listing. This ‘snowballing’ type of selection, previously credited by Saunders et al. (2007, p.228) and carried out in many other studies, for example, Harrison & Mason, 1992; Moen et al. (2008) proved an invaluable tool in highlighting key external company associates.

- Phase 4 – Semi-Structured In-depth Interviews

Following a preliminary screening of the animation company representatives, during the various phases of the research design, 16 companies were identified as potential targets for the semi-structured in-depth interviews. These companies fulfilled the research selection criteria, having demonstrated accelerated internalisation, in addition to displaying the defining characteristics of a born global firm. A full analysis of the selected companies, to determine the mode of internationalisation they adopted when internationalising was then conducted.

An in-depth interview schedule was developed (see Appendix 7 and 8 for Cover Letter and In-depth Interview Schedule) to provide a broad flexible framework for a semi-structured interview. This ensured that all key issues would be addressed whilst allowing time to ask specific questions with greater detail, if appropriate. Using the information obtained in the previous phases of the research approach, the interview protocol/schedule used was adapted from the work of Andersson & Wictor (2003) and by modulating their framework to develop interview questions under the following headings: Individual/founder profile and information, industry/company profile and information, globalisation, networking and subsequent company decision. Furthermore, the interview schedule was ‘animator friendly’, inviting the interviewee to provide a pictorial representation of his/her interpretation of their
company’s ‘network’ towards internationalisation. As the interviewees in this investigation were creative animators, much of the feedback provided was artistic and creative. This type of feedback, enabled the interviewees to ‘think outside the box’, and they highlighted the connectors in the process as well as the strength of the connections they provided. Such analysis allowed the researcher to conduct a cross-comparison study, and with both genre of feedback obtained from the interviewees. This information was further analysed and is presented in the findings of this study.

The next step in the research approach involved contacting each founder/entrepreneur, to seek their permission to arrange in-depth interviews. The interviews were conducted with founder(s) from each company, as the Irish animation companies are founder-driven and whilst these individuals are creative animators, they are also the driving forces behind their company’s internationalisation and success paths.

As the researcher had previously been in contact with interviewees in phase 3 of the research design, further access to ask for additional information was not an issue. The contacts were firstly emailed, allowing the researcher to define the research objectives and interview protocol. At this stage in the research process, only 1 respondent replied to the email, agreeing to take part. After a short time, the researcher carried out follow-up telephone calls, and following this an additional 13 company representatives responded, all keen to be involved with the study. The 2 remaining companies proved very difficult in terms of gaining access. However after much persistence and many cancellations they agreed to participate. A response rate of 100% was attained. As illustrated in Table 5.3, 16 companies were under review during the course of this research. In total, 20 face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted during a four-month period (October 2010 – February 2011) with company founders. The main focus of these interviews was to aid the researcher in understanding how indigenous Irish born global Digital, Film and TV production firm’s network operate to facilitate their internationalisation. Therefore, this research investigates two mechanisms a) the born global firm and b) the individual entrepreneur, which helps to distinguish the role of each, in the internationalisation process of born global firms (Andersson & Wictor, 2003).
Table 5.3: Details of Interviewees and Respective Firms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Company Representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A Man and Ink</td>
<td>27/10/10</td>
<td>Jeremy Purcell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Loraine Lordan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Barley Films</td>
<td>3/11/10</td>
<td>Barry O’ Donoghue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Boulder Media</td>
<td>13/12/10</td>
<td>Robert Cullen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Brown Bag Films</td>
<td>23/11/10</td>
<td>Cathal Gaffney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Darragh O’Connell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Caboom</td>
<td>15/11/10</td>
<td>Damian Farrell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cartoon Saloon</td>
<td>8/12/10</td>
<td>Paul Young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tomm Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Igloo Animations</td>
<td>5/11/10</td>
<td>Trevor Courtney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Jam Media</td>
<td>18/01/11</td>
<td>Mark Cumberton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Alan Shannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kavaleer Productions</td>
<td>01/02/11</td>
<td>Gary Timpson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Keg Kartoonz</td>
<td>13/12/10</td>
<td>Noel Kelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Magma</td>
<td>24/11/10</td>
<td>Ralph Christians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Magpie 6 Media</td>
<td>18/01/11</td>
<td>Cliff Parrot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Paper Plane Creations</td>
<td>24/1/11</td>
<td>Jane Lee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Monster Animation</td>
<td>23/11/10</td>
<td>Gerard O’ Rourke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Telegael</td>
<td>2/11/10</td>
<td>Paul Cummins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Dancing Girl Promotions</td>
<td>1/02/11</td>
<td>Maeve McAdam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total No of Companies = 16
Total No of Interviewees = 20

Prior to conducting each interview the researcher used the secondary information sourced in the company information template to gain an understanding of the company, as well as acquire additional information during the course of the interview. Each interview was voice recorded and later transcribed, amalgamating the secondary information sourced in phase 2 with the information generated in phase 3, during follow-up telephone contact. The interviewees were very enthusiastic about the research, its aims and objectives, “I am delighted that someone has taken the time to conduct something valuable and more importantly, I hope it will be an
aid to the industry” (Founder, Firm B). Others welcomed the researcher, and offered on-site tours of the animation studios. Given the structure of the research design, it was important to highlight the significant volume, depth and richness of data generated throughout the multi-method research process. Throughout each interview process, not only was data gathered, but reliable company contacts forged with the same names re-occurred on many occasions, this was very reassuring to the researcher, which formed an important part of the cross-checking procedure. Table 5.4 summaries how the 16 companies represent the total animation companies in Ireland.

Table 5.4: Company Selection Representation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of Companies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Companies Sourced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invalid Companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total No of Suitable Companies</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 outlines the total number of animation companies that exist in Ireland. However, of the 59 companies that operate in Ireland, only 16 fulfilled the research criterion. Whilst the researcher has been successful in accessing all 16 companies, which represents the full population study, these 16 companies represent only 37% of the total number of animation companies that are involved in the Irish industry. Overall, the 16 companies proved to be a representative sample of the total number of animation companies in Ireland, given that they are indigenous to Ireland, are small to medium enterprise, and involved in animation development as well as being involved in international operations within the Digital, Film and TV production area of activity.

In addition to these dominant industry players, the interviewees also suggested further individuals which were referred to as ‘connectors’ within the industry. These connectors were followed up and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with these individuals and organisations were conducted as they were seen to play a major role
in the born global Irish Digital, Film and TV production industries ‘story’. This process involved adapting the in-depth interview schedule and viewing the industry from an external associate perspective. Table 5.5 details external company associates.

Table 5.5: Institutional Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Company Representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MEDIA Antenna - CARTOON</td>
<td>16/02/12</td>
<td>Eibhlin Ní Mhunghaile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>SDGI</td>
<td>16/02/12</td>
<td>Doriane Chevenet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MIPCOM</td>
<td>17/02/12</td>
<td>MIPCOM Representative (Unnamed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Monster Animations</td>
<td>16/02/12</td>
<td>Andrew Fitzpatrick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Enterprise Ireland - Animation Ireland</td>
<td>29/02/12</td>
<td>Eileen Bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Irish Film Board</td>
<td>01/03/12</td>
<td>Emma Scott</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total No of Companies = 6  
Total No of Interviewees = 6

This approach was seen to triangulate findings as data was generated from both approaches. Initially, the researcher examined the single case study comprising of a set of 16 companies involved within the animation sector and later, the research was triangulated using additional contacts such as industry supports and state supports in addition to agents and distributors. Ultimately such a methodological approach fulfils the overarching research objective of this study. One important by-product of the study is a complete dataset generated from all 16 Digital, Film and TV production companies in Ireland, within the animation sector, that are ‘founder driven’.

5.9 Data Collection

Prior to presenting the evaluation results of the research, it is pertinent to discuss how the information was obtained from the 20 entrepreneurial interviewees. As
previously discussed these individuals participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. In an attempt to capture information on those considered as ‘connectors’ the respondents firstly were asked to rank a list of potential connectors on a scale of one to five (five being the highest and one being the lowest), as who they believed acted as a ‘link’ for their companies success internationally. This encouraged the interviewees to focus their attention on who they believed were the connectors and provide additional names. Following this exercise, the founders were then asked to actively ‘sketch’ their company’s network, indicating those seen as ‘weak connectors’ and similarly those viewed as ‘strong connectors’. This is shown in the following sketches by the interviewees.

Figure 5.2: Company A
Figure 5.3: Company B

Figure 5.4: Company C
Figure 5.5: Company D

Figure 5.6: Company E
Figure 5.7: Company F

Figure 5.8: Company G
Figure 5.9: Company H

Figure 5.10: Company I
Figure 5.11: Company J

Figure 5.12: Company K
Figure 5.13: Company L

Figure 5.14: Company M
Figure 5.15: Company N

Figure 5.16: Company O
Such artistic representations not only captured the unique individual understanding, but also re-iterated those previously noted in the raking section. Therefore, this triangulation method changes the emphasis from being on the founder, who had previously believed they did the networking in the first instance, towards those that were seen as the real undiscovered ‘connectors’ in the process.

5.10 Data Analysis

All interviews were carried out solely by researcher, with an average duration of 1 hour and 15 minutes. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed on separate written documents and then the information was combined with other sources. The data was organised in a case-by-case, methodical manner, whereby the data for each company was organised in its entirety before analysing the data of a subsequent company. As large amounts of material were generated and collected, data organisation was critical in terms of maximising its usefulness effectively (Quinton
& Smallbone (2006). The data organisation consisted of coding sections in accordance with the in-depth interview schedule, derived from Andersson & Wictor’s (2003) framework. A section by section approach was conducted and further sub-sections were then coded accordingly. Therefore, a document for each company existed, which held their specific information including all findings which was divided into coded reports or sections. For each of the sections created as well as the sub-sections, a new document was created consisting of each companies view/comment or suggestion, drawing both aspects together. Classification of the material gathered did not involve making a judgement, but rather arranging material in a way that would aid in the processing procedure (Quinton & Smallbone, 2006). This process allowed the researcher to conduct a cross-case comparison through analysis of the coded data. As described by Myers (2009, p.80) this allows the researcher to “identify similarities and differences’ as well as identify ‘emerging relationships’.

As Yin (1994) suggested, in order for research to be reliable, it is important to include as many steps as possible. A rigorous data collection and process of analysis was engaged throughout the duration of this study.

5.11 Evaluation of the Research Design

Quinton & Smallbone (2006, p.125) have identified that most critical issues faced by the researchers are meeting the criteria of the ‘troublesome triplets’ – reliability, validity and generalisation. Other authors such as Yin (1994) and Quinton & Smallbone (2006) have provided guidelines to help ensure that the research design and data generated is rigorous, reliable and has the ability to withstand scrutiny by external individuals, otherwise it is worthless, becoming fiction and losing its utility (Morse et al., 2002).

This research has focussed on born global companies within the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry; however a broader industry scope, including a geographical comparison could increase the application of the study to other genres of geographical areas. The parameters of this study could be easily replicated in another region or industry of similar size. Given the international involvement and nature of these companies it could be feasible for another
researcher to replicate this same study, in the same setting, to further test and/ or draw comparisons on the findings. Quinton & Smallbone (2006) understood that qualitative research is only generalised to theory and not an entire population. However, in contrast to this theory, these research findings can certainly be generalised to theory as well as the population.

Concerns do exist regarding the actuality of what the researcher is investigating and what is intended to be investigated (Galtung, 1967; Babbie, 1998), as well as challenging if the researcher has been able to gain access to all the knowledge and experiences from the interviewees (Remenyi et al., 1998). This in turn represents a ‘fit’ between theory and reality (Remenyi et al., 1998). In providing a concrete foundation for this study, the researcher has ensured that a meticulous investigation of the literature pertaining to born global companies had been conducted. This involved the assessment of the ‘connectors’ in the internationalisation process. Following Yin’s (2003) four tests or types of validity – internal, construct, external and reliability, this genre of research establishes transparent thinking with regard to the approaches sought after and conducted, thus fulfilling the research questions and objectives, whereby, the ‘what was found’ was a response to ‘the questions originally asked’ (Quinton & Smallbone, 2006). Additionally, as previously stated, this particular research account can be considered as having validity, the results of which could be applied to other contexts and subject areas (Quinton & Smallbone, 2006).

Easterby-Smith et al. (1991) describe reliability as a test, were researchers can make similar observations on different occasions. The main concern regarding reliability relates to how replicable the study really is (Quinton & Smallbone, 2006). In the case of this research, and in much of the qualitative research that was undertaken, the primary aim was to investigate a particular issue within its own setting. Therefore, replication of such research may present a challenge. Given that the data has been collected within a similar time frame, using the same researcher the reliability of this study has been strengthened by using the guidance published by Quinton & Smallbone’s (2006). Quinton & Smallbone (2006) suggested that using different data sources, data collection tools and applying established theory from one area to another could improve the rigor and effectiveness of a given study. Therefore, this
study incorporated this notion by drawing on different data sources, data collection tools and applied numerous established theories to the investigation. Reliability has also been improved by using a step by step data accumulation and analysis as suggested by Griggs (1987), together with the inclusion of word for word quotations in the final report as recommended by Rapley (2001).

Finally, the idea of triangulation in this research was critical in order to investigate the same topic and research questions from different approaches. This study sought to obtain a greater in-sight into a particular phenomenon by looking at the ‘fuller’ picture as exercised in Myers’s (2009) study. In general, triangulation relates to employing qualitative and quantitative research methods. This research adopts different research tools while using qualitative research. Using this multi-source approach to gather various types of data has complemented and extended the primary data gathered from interviewees. This study employed various research tools to answer the same research question, therefore, triangulation has been reinforced as a substantive methodology in the findings from this study, which was instructed in the work of Quinton & Smallbone (2006).

5.12 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach used to conduct this study. The chapter began with an introduction to the research questions, followed by an overview of the paradigms available to the researcher to conduct the research and the selected research approach. The selected single case study approach and a detailed description for each stage, including the sampling techniques employed have been discussed. An overview of the ‘troublesome triplets’ described by Quinton & Smallbone (2006) has also been discussed.

The following chapter provides a detailed account of the findings obtained through the outlined methodological approach, addressing the key research question and context questions.
CHAPTER SIX – CASE STUDY FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the research findings for a single case study investigation, of the industry, namely the Digital, Film and TV production industry. This multi-firm industry case study examines indigenous Irish animation developers and their ancillary contributors, i.e. industry, state and individual supports. The case study findings present the results from the industry investigation, of which 16 firms belong.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the data gathered from 26 semi-structured, in-depth interviews which are relevant, in addressing the main research question asked by this thesis, i.e., How do born global firms manage and operate their network intermediaries and forums to drive and facilitate their internationalisation process?

This chapter considers ‘globalisation’ and the factors the interviewees believe have influenced their decision for their company to internationalise. The chapter will further explore the ‘network’ where the researcher gained an in-depth insight into the network, whereby the ‘links’ in the network have been identified. The findings will focus on the ‘connectors’ or ‘networkers’ in the born global internationalisation network and the born globals’ path towards international markets. In addition, a ‘suite of connectors’ for the Digital, Film and TV production animation firms have been identified, together with their importance i.e. the ‘strength’ of each connection, will also be further revealed. These ‘connectors’ are understood to facilitate and act as intermediaries for the internationalisation process within the global network.

Whilst the context of chapter four explored the ‘industry’ and the ‘entrepreneur’, which are two elements from Andersson & Wictor’s (2003) framework, this chapter concentrates on the remaining components of the framework, ‘globalisation’ and more importantly, the ‘network’.
6.2 Globalisation

While the ‘globalisation’ phenomenon is not the principal focus of this study, it is believed to influence the internationalisation path followed by the Digital, Film and TV production companies. Observation has revealed that a ‘global vision’ or ‘mindset’ is central to the entrepreneur’s business idea(s) during the initial inception of their respective companies. The motivation for this intense desire to have a global presence will be discussed in detail on pages 140 & 141, sections 6.2.1 & 6.2.2. The reason for globalisation is partly due to the restricted size of the Irish marketplace. Therefore, internationalisation is necessary for the sustainability of the business. Ireland’s unique location, allowing access to the European market and our relationship with the US market further augments the potential opportunities companies have to internationalise. These issues will be further described on Page 145, Section 6.2.3, with excerpts from interview transcripts.

6.2.1 Global Vision/ Mindset

Entrepreneurs with a global vision or mindset are those that plan to make their organisation global, becoming involved in international operations from the early years of their company start up. This applies particularly to entrepreneurs from born global companies. This research has shown that all the entrepreneurs described within this study had a global vision.

Entrepreneurs within this industry sector tend to share different global mindsets. However, within the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry, each of the founders had a similar global vision – internationalisation from inception. The Co-Founder B of Firm H stated clearly that “We never setup for an Irish market at all. We knew straight away that it would have to have an International appeal”, or as another clarifies “It was a given that it was an international business, we weren’t making content for Ireland ever... ” (Founder, Firm B).

This transparent foresight is a reflection of the founder’s previous knowledge of their domestic market, as they believed, “There are certain countries that have very strong animation industries and the smaller countries would depend on them to
come in on their projects’’ (Co-Founder A, Firm A) and while “Some companies do depend on the domestic animation market” (Founder, Firm B), this Founder stated that,

“We have always known that Ireland is such a small country that it can’t support all of the animation that is produces, so we did have to look abroad initially. Also the thing about the funding schemes means that you have to co-produce most of your projects. You have to co-produce with other countries to qualify for the European funding and you have to have a minimum of three countries, for example in our last project our three countries were Ireland, Sweden and Denmark and then they qualify for the European funding” (Co-Founder B, Firm A).

Overall, the entrepreneur’s global mindset and vision is reflected in the statement above. Clearly, the lack of support within their own domestic market provides them no option but to have a global mindset.

6.2.1.1 Implications for Global Vision/ Mindset

Entrepreneurs demonstrated an international vision from the very beginning of their business adventures. This was an important business opportunity adopted amongst all of the candidates that were interviewed. International expansion was paramount to their overall survival and success. The goals and objectives for becoming involved in international activity, was a key point throughout the development of their business. As such, when international opportunities presented themselves, the necessary conduits were already in place to ensure that the companies’ transition from a domestic to global player was conducted with the minimum disruption.

6.2.2 Reasons and Motives for Internationalisation

Internationalisation can result for different motivations and reasons. Findings reported within this thesis suggest that a number of these reasons, including the ‘smallness’ of the domestic market, the lack of funding and resources available, the high costs of Irish productions and market competitiveness are all factors that contribute to internationalisation.
Ireland’s small unsustainable economy gives rise to internationalisation as the Founder of Firm I explained the reason behind their international expansion was because there was “no real domestic market” (Founder, Firm N),

“I think it was inevitable. I think if you are going to grow, Ireland is such a small economy... especially in our industry. It was tiny at the time......If you want to stay employed and try and get some wage from it you have to look outside the country. Also I mean the projects - shorts are great, they keep you busy but you don’t make any money from them really. So we obviously have to have a parallel income and that’s where the international markets come in” (Founder, Firm N).

While another Founder identified finance as the major issue, “We knew it was actually all going to be international because like, TV animation, The National Broadcaster RTÉ had no money, they never really had money for animation. So 99% of our work has always been exported to the States or the UK” (Founder, Firm C). Further, the Founder of Firm E identified similar problems relating to the lack of resources and high costs of production, given its competitiveness. He said that,

“I think anybody that does the animation stuff has that in the back of their mind, particularly if you are doing commercial animation and I don’t know about TV commercials, like I mean not arttess short films you know. I think if you are thinking about having a studio of any size, be it 5-50 people and you want to make TV shows, you just can’t do that out of Ireland solely. Well I mean, that’s a lie... you can but, you know the scale and the ambition of the projects are usually international” (Founder, Firm E).

One Founder simply stated “Ireland can’t support animation, the population is too small” (Co-Founder A, Firm H), while another added, “animation is just too expensive to produce and there is just not enough money in Ireland to do that” (Founder, Firm E). However, most founders knew the only way to make any money in their business was to penetrate the global market, “it’s the only way to make money” (Founder, Firm J), for some “It was probably more of a pipe dream at the time of inception, than actually a strategy about how we were going to do it, even we
“Long term goal to make feature films and as feature films cost a large amount in animation, the Irish market was never going to satisfy. For example, the top box office films from Pixar, ‘The Incredible’s’ would have been 2.7 million at the box office over there. To make over there would have been 25 million or 30, 40, 50 million. If you were trying to make a version of that in Ireland it would cost 150 million to make. The box office can sustain certain types of films but you’d need to be making them for a few hundred thousand euro’s, not millions of euro’s if you were just focusing on Ireland” (Founder, Firm B).

With regards to the actual speed of internationalisation or the timing of when internationalisation occurred to the founder, the Founder of Firm G explains, “I didn’t know before I set up, that I would be going international, but when I set up and after a year or two, then that’s when it occurred to me, I needed to”.

In direct contradiction to the notion of internationalisation from initiation, a small minority of the founders had a ‘blurred’ global vision and “thought local only”, believing they were going to operate “within the home market only” (Founder, Firm O). Likewise the Co-Founder A of Firm D had “no notion of internationalising”, as at the time they “knew there was a niche market in Ireland, but we didn’t know we were going international and we had no plan to either”. Surprising, today these companies are two of the most successful in the Irish animation industry. Moreover, these two companies have also penetrated further into the international market than any of the others.

Overall, many Founders remarked that the success of the Irish animation industry, was attributed to global internationalisation. The Co-Founder B of Firm A concludes, “The Irish animation industry has a pretty good social capital reputation abroad and the standard is fairly well recognised. Irish studios would have quite a close working relationship with a lot of English speaking countries. Therefore
internationalisation is relatively easy once we have made connections” (Co-Founder B, Firm A).

6.2.2.1 Implications for the Reasons and Motives for Internationalisation

Within this aspect of globalisation, several reasons emerged for a company’s pursuit of internationalisation and it is noteworthy that most of respondents shared similar views. Firstly, the ‘smallness’ of the domestic market meant that they were unable to sustain the creative industry. Secondly, the limited number of people that lived in Ireland meant that there was also a reduced audience available to appreciate the creative work. This realisation of Ireland’s smallness pushed companies to seek international markets, through various means, for example by attending international tradeshows and other annual international events as well as completing co-productions with international companies. This international collaborative work helped build the profile of these companies as well as their presence on the international stage.

The lack of funding and resources available to the Irish animators severely restricted their growth. Given the lack of state and industry financial support, companies had to get involved with exporting their own products to various others countries in order to ensure that they remained viable. In addition, the high costs incurred by Irish productions meant companies that wanted to expand, were restricted as they could not support the labour costs as the output and the amounts of time required for production were too expensive.

A level playing field or competiveness was ‘flagged’ by some of the participants as a key driving force to motivate their potential international participation, after only a few years in business. In some cases internationalisation happened even earlier. Overall, the entrepreneur’s desire to internationalise was significantly influenced by their motivation and work ethic, as each of the ‘founder-driven’ firms were heavily involved in internationalisation in order to keep their position in Ireland alive and remain competitive internationally. This allowed them to retain key employees who represented the creative talent within the company.
6.2.3 Key Drivers of Internationalisation

There are many drivers responsible for the internationalisation of the Irish Digital, Film and TV production firms within the animation sector. These drivers relate to ‘pull’ factors which have encouraged firms to enter a particular market place. In the case of this study, the findings would suggest that there are a number of drivers which are more prominent than others. The success of Irish animators is measured by their numerous influential awards that they have obtained, together with the success of attending international tradeshows and festivals. These have all contributed to the international drive of the industry.

As previously discussed, the success of the Irish animation industry is responsible for its rapid international progression and as the Founder of Firm E remarks, “If you look at the Oscars, I mean we’re punching well above our weight, when it comes to the international stuff and awards”. Our success has been measured by the number of prestigious awards we have won, which in turn “keeps Ireland on the map” (Founder, Firm K), which promotes our industry capabilities, as well as boosting the status of individual companies.

“We’ve won quite a few and that’s a big deal, certainly for a small company maybe it’s less of a big deal for the bigger companies. It makes a big difference because it raises your profile here certainly for somebody like the Irish Film Board who’s gone to the trouble of funding the film with us and for that film to succeed and do well overseas is a huge deal for them as well as us. Winning the award raises the profile of the short to be shown at more festivals again. It’s usually not a monetary thing. The satisfaction of the director of winning an award is also massive, especially an audience award. You are really walking on air” (Founder, Firm B).

Another contributing factor which has lead to companies internationalising, is their attendance at International Festivals and Tradeshows. The majority of these Founders shared similar views stating that, “Markets and festivals are absolutely huge for driving internationalisation. They both selling our work and also they are brilliant for finding new talent, crew or partners” (Founder, Firm B). This comes
about as a result of “meeting people, saying who you are and hopefully you can pull something together from that” (Founder, Firm L). Agreeing with these comments, Co-Founder B of Firm A, highlights “One of our animations won the FIPRESCI Award. It’s the critics’ choice award at the Annecy Film Festival. It is the biggest animation festival in Europe and the most important on the European animation calendar, so that was a big deal for us. To win there as an animator is very personal, in a way, winning other awards is great as well, but there is something about that one”.

Further, the idea of ‘making it big’ also drives internationalisation, together with the “products ability to travel so easily” (Founder, Firm N)

“The big thing is ambition, to be doing stuff that isn’t just for Ireland. You want to be doing stuff on a global scale, on screens around the world. Everybody wants the biggest thing, to be Sponge Bob or Bob the Builder or even a slice of Sponge Bob and it is going to happen that somebody later on is going to come up with something as big as one of those things you know, it’s literally just a matter of time, because there’s great produce going around and you know it’s great produce at the right time with the right people looking for the right stuff and the right broadcaster, it’s a billion things that have to fall into place for that to happen it’s not just a great project, but it’s absolutely going to happen at some point, for some of us” (Founder, Firm B).

Another possible international driving factor relates to the firms unique selling point (USP), which was described by the following founder,

“Possibly it’s down to the USP’s that we have. Really, we kind of stand out from the crowd and I think that’s what has driven us internationally. We always have the unique look and concept. They don’t tend to fail. We tend to be our own path and that makes us really stand out from the crowd. That’s what gives us the edge and uniqueness to stand out from the crowd” (Co-Founder B, Firm H).
Finally, many driving factors have been suggested as reasons for internationalisation. However, one Founder believes this industry has no option but to seek global markets stating that, “We were forced to go international, given the size of the home market” (Founder, Firm O). Therefore, it is not so surprising that this industry demonstrates rapid internationalisation because of the many factors which have influenced its domestic growth.

6.2.3.1 Implications for the Key Drivers of Internationalisation

As these findings have suggested, there are many drivers responsible for the internationalisation of the Irish Digital, Film and TV production firms in the animation sector. The first theme and probably the most prominent of all is the attendance of these companies at annual international markets and festivals. Another reason for the success of the Irish animation sector is the number of prestigious international awards that have been won, which has created international awareness. Irish animators have added a ‘twist’ to their productions, which others are finding it difficult to replicate, as such, these animators have a ‘secret recipe’ for their success.

Adopting these drivers has allowed companies to explore international markets and attend international festivals. As a result, this has ‘pulled’ these globally minded individuals into various markets, ‘kick starting’ new businesses. Furthermore, networking has become an important vehicle driving the entrepreneur globally. This will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

6.2.4 Summary

The following table summarises the main factors of globalisation, which were exercised in this study.
Table 6.1: Summarising Factors of Globalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global Vision/ Mindset</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Reasons and Motivations</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Key Drivers</th>
<th>Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear universal objective of international-isation from inception</td>
<td>Setting goals and aiming to be a global player in the industry, as domestic market was unsustainable</td>
<td>‘Smallness’ of domestic market</td>
<td>Sought co-productions internationally through attendance at annual event, i.e. international tradeshows</td>
<td>Irish Animation Success Story</td>
<td>Gains recognition, increased sales and co-productions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of funding and resources in home market</td>
<td>Involvement in exporting internationally</td>
<td>International festivals and tradeshows</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognises the network, builds connections and promotes companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High production costs in domestic market</td>
<td>Required international co-production to share labour, skills, experience and resources</td>
<td>Ease of transport of product</td>
<td></td>
<td>Duplication in other international markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competitive industry/market: unique product</td>
<td>Sought international expertise</td>
<td>Profitability</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business growth and success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unique Selling Point of product</td>
<td></td>
<td>Differentiated product, driving sales internationally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is commonly understood that many elements of globalisation, as described in Table 6.1, have influenced the internationalisation path followed by highly successful innovative companies. Perhaps the most interesting finding attached to globalisation, relates to the entrepreneurs clear objective - internationalisation from inception (rapid internationalisation), in order to maintain their presence in the Irish market place. In addition, the importance of attending international tradeshows and festivals cannot be underestimated, as this is where most of the networking opportunities arise.

Networking is understood to be a key player with regards to international progression. The following section presents the animation sectors ‘Network’ and those deemed to be connectors / links in this process.

6.3 The ‘Network’

This section within the findings chapter concentrates on ‘connectors’ or ‘intermediaries’ within a single network. Each of the connectors that have been identified, represent a ‘link’ within the network. The ‘strength’ of the connections has also been established from a rating scale survey conducted with each of the participants, which has implications for both new and experienced founders within the industry. Using the information sourced from the data collection stages, a ‘suite of connectors’ has been identified. Firms ‘pool’ from this ‘suite of connectors’ in order to access buyers or producers in the international markets. Connectors act as facilitators in the internationalisation process for animation firms in the Digital, Film and TV production industry. Each of the connectors identified within this study have been acknowledged and ‘sketched’ by the respondents. Therefore, each ‘link’ in the network has been described and presented.

The findings have discovered and described a single network, within which the born global Digital, Film and TV production companies operate, in order to access global buyers or producers. This network has been divided into two main parts, namely, ‘intermediaries/ connectors’ and ‘forums’. The beginning of the network identifies two types of ‘intermediaries/ connectors’. The first type is known as ‘Institutional Intermediaries (Connectors)’ which consist of a substantial number of ‘formal’ state
and industry-supported organisations which act as facilitators in the internationalisation process for born global companies and secondly, ‘informal’, ‘Personal Intermediaries (Connectors)’. This group consists of ‘agents’ where connections have already been established through the ‘founders’ previous links’. These agents collect information and are known as ‘incubators for network interaction’. The ‘founder’s previous links’ refer to connections that the entrepreneurs have previously made, for example, through previous work experience. All of these are important stimulators for the creation of inter-network relationships and will be examined in greater detail throughout the following sections (6.3.1-3).

The next part of the network has been labelled ‘Fora’ or ‘Forums’. These have been recognised as important venues for networking and are divided into two types, physical and virtual. Physical venues include international tradeshows and festivals as well as state and industry supported networking events. ‘Virtual Venues’ consist of social networking sites, which serve as a forum where the networking occurs.

6.3.1 Institutional Intermediaries (Connectors)

The first identified group of connectors have been referred to as ‘Institutional Intermediaries (Connectors)’. Included within this group are a substantial number of ancillary contributors such as enterprise agencies and trade bodies, which are deemed to play an important part in internationalisation. This is the largest group, which includes the most ‘connectors’. Connectors within this set of contacts are easily recognised as they play an official role i.e., they are found within the industry and they act as institutional connectors, for the internationalisation of animating producing companies. The intermediaries considered in this group believe that they support each of these companies. Driving internationalisation is an important part of their organisations directive as well as this it is included in their mission statement. However, this statement has been challenged and it is now thought that they merely connect firms internationally. ‘Forums’ play a significant role in the majority of these ‘Links’. The following sections present the findings for each named Institutional Intermediaries and illustrate the connectors through the use of ‘Link Maps’. This not only captures each ‘link’ within the network, but also highlights the
path followed by each connector. As well as this it establishes the strength of each of the connections, i.e. strong or weak.

(A) Enterprise Ireland

Enterprise Ireland is a government agency set up to facilitate Irish entrepreneurs and their companies internationalise or develop international sales. As well as this they liaison closely with the industry. Enterprise Ireland supports Irish companies from their initial beginning (dealt with through the incubated Start-Up unit), through to their involvement in global markets. To facilitate this process, Enterprise Ireland employs 36 overseas offices.

In general there was mixed feeling about the assistance provided by Enterprise Ireland. Although several of the respondents recognised Enterprise Ireland as a ‘strong’ connector, others thought that they were ‘weak’ connectors. Respondents who viewed Enterprise Ireland as ‘weak’ stated, “I could survive without them. If they weren’t there in the morning, I wouldn’t miss them” (Founder, Firm O). Similarly, the Co-Founder B of Firm H said “they would help us internally by funding, but they wouldn’t connect us to businesses”. Whilst another interviewee stated,

“Well Enterprise Ireland used to be a strong connector, because the guy that used to work in the LA office of Enterprise Ireland is the Irish Film Board guy, however he is gone now. Enterprise Ireland work more as a facilitator. They aren’t really establishing bonds” (Co-Founder A, Firm F).

This comment shows the importance of key individuals particularly within the support organisations and the benefits of acquired ‘human capital’. Despite the above founder featuring Enterprise Ireland’s facilitation role, the implications for key personnel leaving an organisation is noted as a weakness on Enterprise Ireland’s part. However, the individual mentioned still remains within the animation industries social loop, which is critical from the animation companies’ perspective regardless of the drawbacks for Enterprise Ireland and the challenges associated with replacing
such key individuals. The attributes of key players in the industry were also described by the Founder of Firm E as he understands,

“Pat O’ Riordan was an Enterprise Ireland guy that I met in Singapore. I found him great, like he was very strategic during the day at different events and then at night he would say ‘this is how it’s really done’. He shows you how to leverage the Enterprise Ireland relationship, rather than a hand shake and a phone call”.

Regardless of the numerous benefits associated with Enterprise Ireland, there was disagreement amongst the respondents and one stated that “they have never connected us internationally” (Founder, Firm K). Even more disparaging for Enterprise Ireland was the following negative comment:

“I found Enterprise Ireland a nightmare. The problem with Enterprise Ireland is that they have very set ideas about what they think they do, and they really don’t understand our business. A few do understand our business, but generally they are very unhelpful. Their remit is export and because we aren’t exporting something tangible, in a way they can’t quantify it as they find it quite difficult to understand” (Co-Founder B, Firm A).

Another very frustrated entrepreneur bemoaned the agency’s bureaucracy and lack of understanding of ‘creative’s’:

“Enterprise Ireland gave me no money, no grant...nothing...never mind connecting me internationally. Like I had interviews with them twice, and they called me back in again, basically.......just annoy me. I don’t know what their deal is......But they have called me in to do work for them. To do short versions for them, but at the same time they wouldn’t give me any money. There is a lot of people sitting around filling out grant forms and jumping through all the hoops that Enterprise Ireland want to see written down in the forms and they are the people that seem to get grants, but their ideas are terrible, but they do all the jumping through the hoops so.... I don’t know how to do all the jumps through the hoops and if I was to take time out to do it, I
would probably lose business, just with focusing on that. I prefer to be out making money and to be... you know....doing the best I can with what I have got, you can’t rely on going in and being bullied in a office by people were they use power over you for their own self bucket worth or whatever, I don’t know” (Founder, Firm G).

The principal inadequacy that was associated with Enterprise Ireland and its potential role in the international expansion of animation companies, related to its lack of the industry understanding, which was referred to in the previous statement by the Founder of Firm G. Despite this, it was felt that Enterprise Ireland had a beneficial role to play as a connector for some companies:

“Enterprise Ireland is all hand in hand. I wouldn’t say no, they are not a connector for us, but personally I don’t get too involved with them, but they certainly do connect or help if you are travelling somewhere. For example, you could be at Annency Film Festival or something and they may have a stand there and you may get involved in stuff. So they would be useful alright in terms of connecting, not on a daily bases though” (Founder, Firm J).

While another commented,

“For example, last year at Kidscreen they organised a networking event. There were drinks and chats and that’s all. In theory it’s great, but it doesn’t turn into an Irish drinking sessions, as we were restricted to a few hours. That’s where you think, ‘Ok what did I get out of that compared to what money was spent’. It’s not that Enterprise Ireland aren’t doing anything, it’s just they might not be doing the right things. You look at what they have done and think ‘the money you have spent here would have been so much better spent at X, Y, Z”. Overall, I think Enterprise Ireland are a big connector. I think they’re still missing the boat a little bit in some stuff and I still think they’re...you know...they’re...it’s a government body they’re still going to have red tape and things like that...you know...that you’re never going to get around. But would we be better off without them? - No there definitely is an
advantage that they bring. Is there more they could do? Absolutely” (Founder, Firm E).

On the other hand, other firms were “not affiliated with them” (Founder, Firm B). In spite of the many divided opinions, Enterprise Ireland’s development advisor Ms Eileen Bell works closely with the animation industry. Moreover, together with the CEO’s from the Irish Animation companies, Enterprise Ireland has established an animation support body – Animation Ireland.

- Animation Ireland

Animation Ireland is an umbrella forum, under which Ireland’s leading animation enterprises operate and wherein the member firms work together to promote the animation industry. Enterprise Ireland supports Animation Ireland, being a co-founder of the forum and they give life to the animation Ireland brand. The purpose of this forum is to provide associated firms with the opportunity to network as well as help “sell the Animation Ireland brand at international markets and events or even at events here in Ireland. We try to get the brand ‘out there’. With the growth of the animation sector in the last number of years, that brand is getting very important internationally” (Institutional Support, 5). One of Animation Ireland’s representatives outlined the benefits of this grouping of Irish companies and explained that:

“Individuals that are starting out, start to work with some of the Irish companies, kind of through Animation Ireland and get linked into Europe and international markets. There is quite a lot of co-production between the animation guys, they are quite collaborative in Ireland. Very often within industries, they are very competitive, but not animation. They kind of work on different projects together and this is a way to start getting connected internationally” (Institutional Support, 2).

Animation Ireland’s key person, Ms Eileen Bell, has an intimate knowledge of the animation companies and strenuously strives on behalf of Animation Ireland to promote international success stories. One company founder stated that Animation
Ireland “will set up meetings which kick-start new connections” (Co-Founder B of Firm A). He also stated that Animation Ireland,

“Promote our press releases and awards. So that’s good. Financially they haven’t supported, but in terms of encouragement, for example you should talk to this person, meet that person etc, they have been excellent” (Co-Founder B of Firm A).

Such comments and others alike encourage and support Animation Ireland’s role in the international progression of these companies and their capacity as a potential connector, highlighting their networking involvement within the animation industry. Unlocking these interviewee’s experiences with Animation Ireland as a connector or non-connector proved challenging given the divided opinions. However, most of the interviewees shared similar positive opinions with regard to Ms Eileen Bell, who is well regarded within her field. Eileen is the ‘face’ of the Animation Ireland forum and many founders have remarked that her zeal and enthusiasm is unsurpassable. Further comments have stated that, Eileen Bell is a valuable asset to the company and her departure from Enterprise Ireland would have serious implications for all involved in the animation industry. The Founder of Firm E in particular explains, “She just has a kind of passion for the animation sector and the guys in the sector like no one else”. With regards to her actual networking involvement and ‘connector role’, a representative from the Screen Directors’ Guild of Ireland remarked, “Eileen Bell is brilliant at connecting companies internationally” (Institutional Support, 2). Further to this, the Co-Founder of Firm A stated that,

“Eileen Bell is the one that runs Animation Ireland. We were looking about going to Canada for a conference in January. After contacting her, she set up the meetings with the companies we needed to talk to, as they have a representative over there. This representative is the guy who organises the event and can help put companies in touch”.

Further investigations noted that, “Eileen Bell is a facilitator” (Founder, Firm E). This was further supported by a very experienced Founder that has been “going to the international markets since 1996” and viewed Animation Ireland’s role from
different angles. “At different festivals they host different events and maybe sponsor a speaker. They try and facilitate with the help of Eileen Bell - between ourselves, the industry in Ireland and overseas” (Founder, Firm P). It is known that in many cases, Eileen is the person that eases the ‘process’ by planning and guiding the Founder in advance of such meetings with their potential customers, ensuring that their objectives are being met effectively. This is seen as the primary role of the facilitator i.e. one which ‘lays the foundations’ so that the Founder can build upon.

In general, a cohort of founders considered Animation Ireland as a ‘strong’ connector, while a small number of the Founders view them as a ‘weak’ connector. A typical response was,

“Well if you look at the analytics on the company’s website, they are quite high for the first point of contact. Brown Bag Films and Caboom are the highest in the last statistics that I looked at. So they are a connector...a connector absolutely - be it weak or strong” (Founder, Firm E).

The above number of comments may be slightly bias supporting Animation Ireland, as the comments were from the previous Chairman of Animation Ireland. He stated that they are a connector simply because “a lot of emails from people contacting Animation Ireland about their various different company listings” (Founder, Firm E).

The numerous messages of support received by Animation Ireland would suggest that they are a connector. However, there are those who disagree with these comments. Founder H in particular felt a deficiency in their connecting role stating “That’s basically us talking to each other, so that doesn’t really help us connect”. Then again Founder H represented one of the longest established companies in the Irish animation industry. Therefore, the benefits of such an agency may not be as apparent in comparison to other companies which have been established only recently. However, another disappointed Founder said that “They have never connected us internationally, but then again I never looked for their help” (Founder, Firm K). Similar statements would suggest that “They’re not really a connector, that friendship kind of came after I was already connected with people...” (Co-Founder
B, Firm F). While others stated, they were “not affiliated with them” (Founder, Firm B). The general consequence for newly established companies was that they were not yet familiar with the ‘offerings’ from Animation Ireland and therefore couldn’t comment.

Lastly, as Animation Ireland’s representative highlighted “we work very closely with our colleagues in overseas markets to try and help companies make these overseas connections. We would have customised business supports for different areas of growth, research and development, market research and key personal employed for employing personal talent. We are really investing in these businesses. So we are not just mediators, or someone having a stand at a trade fair, it’s a much higher level of engagement” (Institutional Support, 5).

In conclusion, Enterprise Ireland is one of the first intermediaries identified in the internationalisation process by entrepreneurs, together with their animation support body - Animation Ireland. While they may not have been identified as a strong connector in all of the cases, opinions varied greatly in relation to their usefulness. However, they are seen to play a potential role in the whole process and thus represent a ‘link’ in the network. As stated, Enterprise Ireland/Animation Ireland do not directly connect companies to international markets. However, using indirect methods and via forums, they can connect with buyers or producers. For example, Animation Ireland’s key personnel recommend annual events such as tradeshows or festivals to entrepreneurs, as well as highlighting individuals whom contact could prove lucrative. These connections allow companies to connect with personnel in the international market place. Key personnel within these organisations e.g. Enterprise Ireland and Animation Ireland play an active role in this network, having acquired the necessary skill and contacts from working within the industry. Forums also play a key role, given the large numbers of attendees present at such events. Attendees hold key information and expertise. They also have the ability to directly connect companies internationally, for example in the form of: buyers, producers or institutional personnel. However, this networking ability is only possible in an incubated environment, i.e. the networking venue, where connections are developed and ‘hatched’.
In order to fully appreciate this connection, the following figure represents the ‘link’ for the various different pathways followed by Enterprise Ireland / Animation Ireland to initiate connections. Using the Key presented in Figure 6.1, each of the links in the network are presented. Illustrated also, is the strength/weakness of each connection.

Figure 6.1: Key

Figure 6.2: Institutional ‘Link’ No: 1

The Enterprise Ireland – Animation Ireland’s LINK
The above link establishes that a company contacts buyers or producers through an intermediary - Enterprise Ireland / Animation Ireland. This can be through many varied connection pathways. Overall, the link demonstrates a strong connection, where physical venues play an important part in strengthening the complete link.

This section provides a synopsis of the support and help delivered by Enterprise Ireland and their animation support body, Animation Ireland. This aid extends beyond normal boundaries and includes working closely with the Irish Film Board (IFB) to promote the animation sector, through various events and much more.

(B) Bord Scannán na hÉireann /The Irish Film Board (IFB)

The Irish Film Board was also identified as an organisation that could aid connections internationally for the Irish Digital, Film and TV production companies. The IFB is a state funded national organisation which has been developed to promote and support the talent, creativity and enterprise within the Irish animation Industry, of which digital animation is a key area. The Irish Film Board is involved in the creative process of Irish films from script to screen, whilst also providing investment for the development, production and release of Irish films, television, animation, documentaries and short films. As a result of the guidelines which have been established by the IFB for many of the animation productions, international productions in Ireland are proving very attractive. In previous years, the support and funding from the IFB has gained international recognition in the form of many awards for various Irish Film Board projects. This is supported by the following comment,

“They are funding our films. They are not necessarily handing us phone numbers or giving us an introduction. But they are giving us the money to make a film. If you make a good enough film, it opens doors for you, for example, through awards etc” (Founder, Firm B).

In an interview with a representative from Animation Ireland, it was highlighted that the IFB, Animation Ireland and MEDIA Antenna to name but a few, are working behind the scenes to help the Irish Digital, Film and TV production companies establish connections internationally. It was also noted, in most cases key personnel
within the support organisations are involved in referrals and networking. Furthermore, Emma Scott – the Animation Production Executive for the IFB, has been named by many respondents as the one who aids in internationalisation;

“Enterprise Ireland works closely with the IFB around sponsoring different events. For example I work very closely with Emma Scott at the IFB. In June there is an event at Annency, in France and this year they are doing a spotlight on Ireland. The IFB and Enterprise Ireland are working together on a joint in-marketing network for the market” (Institutional Support, 5).

Most interviewees identified the IFB as a connector. However, these findings relate only to the actual ‘funding’ aspect of which the IFB provides, rather than the connections it imparts. For example when one of the respondents was asked – has the IFB been a connector? Their reply highlighted that the IFB heavily support as a ‘funder’ rather than the connector aspect,

“We go to them and say we want money for an international project, that’s all really” (Founder, Firm K).

While another similar comment stated that, “they help fund, so they are a connector.....” (Co-Founder A, Firm H). It could be argued that access to funding in turn helps facilitate market connections. However, this research focused on identifying the connectors in the internationalisation process rather than recognising financial support mechanisms. Nevertheless, it should be noted that additional funding could facilitate international success.

In addition, was an ‘above average’ numbers of respondents that shared similar views with regard to the IFB being a connector, which supports the belief of the Irish Film Boards representative,

“The IFB’s role in assisting the Irish producers seeking worldwide connections stems mainly from our presence at international markets and festivals. As the state agency, we arrange to meet a huge variety of co-
producers, sales agents, distributors and broadcasters from other countries, as well as meeting other national funders” (Institutional Support, 6).

Further findings demonstrate the role of the IFB in connecting companies internationally, rather than exclusively as a funder. The Co-Founder A of Firm A stated that, “We have been really happy with our dealings with the IFB. They recommended what festivals to go to and who to talk to. Over the years we have had lots of dealings with them”. Further to this the second Co-Founder added, “They know more people than we do, and they pick out people you should meet so that you don’t waste time meeting people that aren’t going to do anything for you” (Co-Founder B of Firm A). Various other comments were in agreement, for example the Founder of a recently established firm stated that,

“They organise various events, for example at the Cork Film Festival they host various events. Which gives me direction, these events bring loads of writers together, which provide a source of writing. They also host events that encourage networking and also they actually market our films for us.... so they are helping us get the films out there and draw interest” (Founder, Firm B).

This highlights the role of the IFB in the initial stages of business, as the IFB are seen to act as an enabler in the connection process. In general, greater emphasis is placed on the importance of the IFB as they are seen as “extremely important” (Co-Founder B, Firm F). Additionally, one respondent praised their efforts.

“We deal with them an awful lot and they have been hugely important, without the Irish Film Board there would be no Irish animation industry. It’s easy to say, you know they’re just giving out money but, you know The Secret of Kells would not have been made here if the Irish Film Board hadn’t been involved. Most of the TV series that are made here would not have been made if the Irish Film Board hadn’t put a chunk of money into them. Not all the money but, they’ve become stakeholders in many films. They tend not to be as involved in international marketing of the films but, because they
promote them through sales agents at festivals they do raise the profile of Irish Films overseas dramatically” (Founder, Firm B).

The IFB, have funded two of the companies projects and without their help the projects would not have been realistic.

In general, there are divided opinions on the actual strength of the IFB connections. Some of the founders believed that the IFB are a ‘strong’ connector. For example the Founder of Firm M stated “The Irish Film Board would be a big one for me, I’d rate them as a four”. This particular Founder had previously been involved in setting up networking events for the IFB and had also established many new connections within the industry as a result. However, others recognised them as a ‘weak’ connector as or of lesser importance than the remaining bodies. This belief is demonstrated in the following quote, “Well not in this project, previously yes, so pretty ok at connecting” (Founder, Firm J). However, this could be because of timing, as the IFB had previously helped fund this Founder’s project. However, he has recently been unsuccessful in receiving funding from the IFB.

Finally, another example of a Founder suggesting that the IFB was a ‘weak’ connector is demonstrated by the following statement, “Well I suppose they help fund, so they are a connector.....but only about a three” (Co-Founder A, Firm H). A further statement from one of the youngest companies in the Irish animation industry stated that,

“Yes, I have talked to Emma Scott several times, she is very keen in talking to us about a feature we have in development. They definitely or hopefully, will lead us to an international co-production” (Founder, Firm L).

Another attribute of the IFB is described in the following comment, as the Founder explained,

“The idea of the IFB being involved in a project helps us to sell to a customer. It gives us creditability that our National Film Agency is behind the film – this is a huge card to put on the table when you are meeting other
broadcasters. They then know it’s real... ‘Oh the IFB, well then Yes’! So that does open doors. If you want to get into Hollywood, the IFB have a guy in Hollywood – Johnathan Loughran, I think he used to work for Enterprise Ireland. His job is to sell work. He sells Ireland’s work to the American studios. When we go there, or when any Irish companies go there, he facilitates meeting with whomever....studios, agents or whatever people we need. He would be a strong connector to get into Hollywood, from the point of view of selling content into Hollywood. Just not for us yet though. He exists for this reason and he is designed for selling and he was that for the Secret of Kells guys, because he spent a week setting up meetings for these guys to help them. The IFB in a roundabout way, are very strong connectors, but for us our focus is now features. So I would expect them to be a strong connector for others” (Founder, Firm B).

On the other hand, such positive statements are not universal for all in this study population. As one disappointed founder reported, “They have not connected us internationally” (Founder, Firm K). However, this founder didn’t believe in crediting any other connector found in the ‘suite of connectors’ other than MEDIA’s funded forum – CARTOON, as he had personal links with this forum. Further to this, the founder of Firm P remarked, “I have introduced them to more than they have introduced me”.

In conclusion, the IFB is a recognised intermediary in the internationalisation process for Irish animating producers. The IFB works closely with Enterprise Ireland who sponsor events, as well as, strive to establish an Irish network market for the sector. Like in Enterprise Ireland, the interviewees experienced differences in the ‘connection role’ of the IFB, which would question the strength the IFB’s connection ability and talent to directly connect firms internationally.

While this state funded body has been recognised as an important facilitator for the industries success, minimal appreciation reflects their buyer or producer connection ability. As previously described, the IFB is heavily involved in the funding of the animation sector and entrepreneurs have long recognised the benefits of this funding, which has increased connections. It is believed that this funding indirectly facilitates
connections which in turn promote international success. However, capturing the IFB’s connection role proved difficult despite these indirect connection methods adopted. Another example of the indirect methods embraced by the IFB was the use of forums. Key personnel’s were working behind the scenes, hosting events, recommending festivals and key individuals for contact. As a result of these referrals and networking opportunities at international tradeshows and festivals and the IFB’s co-ordinated networking events, many connections have been established. The IFB supports companies through the initial stages of their business, offering financial support in the latter stages of the business and increasing international recognition. However, this does not directly connect Irish animators globally. Therefore, as in case of the many intermediaries found in the ‘suite of connectors’, the IFB use different means to indirectly connect firms internationally, which is illustrated in the subsequent figure.

Figure 6.3: Institutional ‘Link’ No: 2

The Irish Film Board’s LINK
As illustrated in Figure 6.3, accessing the international market through the IFB can follow many different paths, none of which directly connect the IFB to the producers or the buyers. In relation to the strength of the connector, the IFB proved to be a strong connector in the network link. The IFB link follows a similar path to that of Enterprise Ireland, in that the link depends heavily on forums to initiate the connections. Again, this shows the importance of attendees present at these physical venues as well as their connection ability. Following this similar mode of connection, is MEDIA Antenna. MEDIA Antenna is another institutional intermediary that has been identified as a connector in the internationalisation process, which will be discussed in the following section.

(C) MEDIA Antenna

MEDIA Antenna is an information reserve and technical support office of the European support programme for the European audiovisual industry. Their remit includes providing information on programmes available for the audiovisual sector, networking, facilitating European co-productions, whilst assisting applicants for MEDIA support. Its key personnel share industrial knowledge with each animation company to help create international sales. Orla Clancy - Project Manager at MEDIA, 2013, provides assistance and advice to industrial clients on MEDIA applications and funding, together with her associate Siobhan O’ Donoghue – the Chief Executive Officer of MEDIA Ireland, 2013. MEDIA has been praised for their help and support and as the Founder of Firm B stated,

“Someone who is also good, that I should have mentioned is MEDIA – Orla Clancy in Dublin and Siobhan O’ Donoghue. Orla at Media was very helpful, going over the stuff with us and fine tuning the project for submission. She was able to give us an international sort of insight as to how you would do this and that, and how others would look on our projects”.

In addition, the Co-Founder B of Firm H also appreciated the benefits received from MEDIA’s financial support and in terms of building international networks, “They are very good, at connecting, I mean they help get projects of the ground were funding is required, that wouldn’t have happened for us otherwise” (Co-Founder A,
Firm H). This Founder stated that if they hadn’t received the funding from MEDIA, it wouldn’t have been financially viable for them to access international markets or promote their projects to potential customers in the global arena.

MEDIA provides the Irish Digital, Film and TV production companies with many benefits at the initiation stage of internationalisation. This has been confirmed by both the company founders and an Institutional Support:

“I do connect in other areas, but not in animation. The animation community is a very particular community and they are quite well connected. I feel that they are a community in themselves, but what I do though is provide them with information. So someone, that isn’t familiar with this industry would get our newsletters, or come to talk to me or whatever, when they are at an early stage, to help them progress” (Institutional Support, 1).

- CARTOON

MEDIA’s work is further extended to the organisation CARTOON - which they support. CARTOON is the inspiration of European animation. Its headquarters are in Brussels with various offices throughout the EU countries. CARTOON supports the European animation industry through various activities. Firstly, CARTOON offers a training programme (Cartoon Masters) for industry professionals in the area of finance, digital and feature. Secondly, the Cartoon Forum, which is the European forum for co-productions of animated television series were over 700 professionals including potential investors, producers, journalists and public funding bodies attend. Thirdly, Cartoon Movie which is a forum supporting European animation films, attract similar numbers to that of the Cartoon Forum and finally Cartoon Connection. Cartoon Connection is a programme aimed at creating cooperation between EU and non EU animation professionals. CARTOON endeavours to aid connections internationally “through meeting at these international events or even doing smaller training programmes with them. Really, it’s all about building up relations and finding out what the broadcasters wants and finding out were your projects fit into the marketplace” explains Institutional Support, 1.
In addition to this, the same Institutional Support outlined,

“If you are new and starting off, I would say the first one to go to would be the CARTOON MASTERS because of the training and it’s a place to meet buyers and broadcasters that are on these channels. It’s a place to meet them in a kind of nurturing environment, rather than for example, markets are quite commercial. Whereas if you are on a training programme the buyers and broadcasters are obliged to give you time and nurture you. For someone starting, the CARTOON MASTERS is probably the best place to start. Then go to the FORUM as an observer rather than a participant. You would have needed to have spent about 100K before you can go to the CARTOON FORUM and produce a pilot. So, to get pitching at the CARTOON FORUM, first of all you have to be selected, so you have to go through a selection process. You already need to have invested quite a lot in order to make it worthwhile. That’s why it’s best to go as an observer first, see what others are doing, and how they are doing it. CARTOON FORUM gives you an actual opportunity to pitch your project and show a pilot/trailer of your project to buyers, suppliers, financers and producers. So, I mean if someone likes your project there will be meetings afterwards to buy it and so on. So that is kind of a direct way of pitching your product to the marketplace” (Institutional Support, 1).

To support this argument, another Founder highlighted the significance of CARTOON’s annually hosted events, where companies have the opportunity to promote their projects to potential buyers through various different networking events and meetings. “If you go into cartoon-media.ie, they run the Cartoon forum every year in September, where you go and pitch all your projects to all the buyers from Europe. It’s held in a different country every year and it’s very much an important event. They are the organisation that runs the master classes”, (Founder, Firm N). Such optimism from these Founders suggested that CARTOON plays a key role in the connection process. However, this is only supported by a minority of the interviewees, as the other Founder(s) haven’t had any dealings with CARTOON and in some cases, were totally unaware of their functionality.
In terms of examining the strength of the connector, CARTOON, founders who were familiar with CARTOON and their associated work, shared views that they were a ‘strong’ connector for linking their company with international markets and sales. One Founder further stated,

“I believe the strongest connector actually would be the organisation CARTOON.... I think in Europe they have made the biggest and the best connections for people. When you go to their events, everyone launches their ideas. They are expensive to go to, but I would say they are the best connector of the lot”. (Co-Founder B, Firm F).

Founder of Firm K, also endorsed these comments and stated that “CARTOON, funded by the Media Group here in Galway, does sometimes, some networking, and were you can meet others. They are the only one that helps connections internationally”. However, this Founder viewed CARTOON as a ‘weak’ connector and further stated that they weren’t the only connector for his company.

In general, there is a collective agreement between founders who wholly support the merits of CARTOON and their help for international progression and as one Institutional Support stated, “Most of the Irish animation companies would attend the CARTOON Forum. There are usually about three or four of the Irish projects at the forum every year” (Institutional Support, 1). In addition an external organisational representative believes that “CARTOON is one of the biggest things that help Irish animators get into Europe” (Institutional Support, 2).

To conclude, MEDIA Antenna is another identified connector for the globalisation route pursued by companies within the Irish animation industry. As described previously, key personnel within MEDIA Antenna are believed to have the expertise to directly connect firms to global players – buyers and producers. Together with their support organisation, CARTOON, has the ability to directly connect companies to international markets, through four specialised areas of expertise (Cartoon Masters, Cartoon Forum, Cartoon Movie and Cartoon Connection). MEDIA Antenna, are understood to play an important role in the connection process and thus represent a strong ‘link’ in the network.
However, as in the case of the IFB, MEDIA Antenna has provided funding to numerous animation companies and the findings would suggest that the funding aspect would accredit ‘votes’ from the respondents, with regard to MEDIA Antenna being a connector, rather than their actual connection skill. On the other hand, their support organisation, CARTOON, directly connects Irish animators to the international markets through its various fields of expertise (Cartoon Masters, Cartoon Forum, Cartoon Movie and Cartoon Connection), as well as numerous organised events in which they are heavily involved. These events promote company education and forge international relationships, placing the seller and the buyer in the same environment. This educational form of connection may not be as widely recognised or have the same impact as, Enterprise Ireland and others of similar status. However, the respondents described within this study understand that CARTOON was identified as an intermediary, as they have the ability to directly connect firms with buyers and producers, as well as connect individual companies with attendees at physical venues i.e. organised networking events. These paths of connections are described in the following ‘link’.
Figure 6.4: Institutional ‘Link’ No: 3

Figure 6.4 demonstrates various paths an Irish Animation company can follow, to access international markets through MEDIA Antenna, as a named institutional connector. The link highlights the many processes involved, which are similar to other connectors identified in this study. MEDIA Antenna’s connections are strong and their key employees have the skill to directly connect, as well as refer, entrepreneurs to key players within the network. Furthermore, CARTOON’s involvement with MEDIA Antenna’s organised events is known to produce stronger connections internationally. The Screen Directors Guild of Ireland is the next identified intermediary, offering a similar connection methodology. However the number of paths involved within this link is significantly reduced.
(D) Screen Directors Guild of Ireland (SDGI)

The Screen Directors Guild of Ireland has also been recognised as a connector for the Irish Digital, Film and TV production companies to promote internationalisation. SDGI is funded by the IFB and Arts Council of Ireland. The role of the SDGI is to represent all types of Directors involved within the Irish and international audiovisual industries. They also promote Directors at a national and international level, whilst improving their working environment and in turn boosting productivity within the industry.

In general, the following statements would suggest that SDGI is a connector, although very few of the respondents made any direct reference to SDGI.

“They are a ‘strong’ connector. I am a member. It’s a director’s guild, they host various evenings with directors, within the directing community, and it’s a good evening. They actually selected one of our shorts for an award. They also organise events were they bring in a sales agent/distributor or someone very senior to give talks, which is also worthwhile” (Founder, Firm B).

As this Founder stated, being a member of the SDGI has many benefits, including being in the social loop or being part of an event where an important director may be taking part. This has the potential to create industrial networks and links with international markets. Many of the remaining Founders never acknowledged SDGI, as they were not members of the guild. Moreover, many of the founders were unaware of the indirect assistance offered by the SDGI. One of the Institutional Supports said that, “Yes, we are a connector, because we run a Founders distribution day and we here at SDGI have a Directors Finders Series, which is a very important initiative that helps directors get into the US distribution deal. The Secret of Kells did that here with us and I think that’s one of the reasons they were so successful and went on and got the Oscars. It had to get a kick start from us to get into the US” (Institutional Support, 2).

In conclusion, these findings have identified a further connector within the globalisation process, namely, the Screen Directors Guild of Ireland. Given the lack
of reference from respondents associated with the guild, their connection role in the process is questionable. Moreover, although the SDGI are involved in hosting numerous networking events, their level of involvement tends to be limited, in comparison to other named associates e.g. Animation Ireland. Furthermore, the commitment of the SDGI to this industry and their lack of participation was commented by some of the respondents. However, the lack of awareness from the responders with respect to the potential of the SDGI to provide connectivity does not lessen their importance, as this maybe the result of under exploring this organisation by some of the participating entrepreneurs. All in all, SDGI are referred to as a ‘weak connector’ in the network.

SDGI cannot directly connect firms internally, but rather they use their own organised networking events solely, as venues for networking and to promote international expansion. However, the total number of connections that the SDGI have previously forged is minimal. The SDGI’s sole channel of connection is outlined in Figure 6.5.
As shown in the above link, SDGI are responsible for one mode of connection, through their organised networking events, towards international markets. While this route is deemed to be a weak in strength, the connection is believed to be an important direction for only a small number of founders. Similarly, FÁS Screen Training Ireland is another identified intermediary and has a similar link in the network and their role is outlined in the following section.

(E) FÁS Screen Training Ireland

FÁS Screen Training Ireland is an Irish screen training industry support organisation, which works with ‘industry experts’ both in Ireland and internationally. FÁS have been described in the data collection phase, as a connector, given their position in the Irish screen industry. The primary role of FÁS is to ensure that Irish professionals have the required training to further develop opportunities and respond to the needs of the industry. FÁS offer training programmes to both key specialists
and companies alike to improve their skill set in film, TV, animation and digital media.

Given the role of FÁS Screen Training Ireland, it is not surprising that their name would appear in the findings as an organisation, which nourishes connections internationally. In one instance, FÁS provided access to industry insiders, but this was not deliberate as it developed through attendance at one of their networking events. Buyers and producers were present at this event and as a result of their attendance, an international connection was established.

In fact, only one interviewee noted FÁS Screen Training as a connector, but nonetheless they regarded it as a ‘strong connector’.

“Someone else that I would also add into that is FÁS, their film division is called Screen Training Ireland and they are pretty important from a training aspect. But because of that, you might have a day with sales agents or you might have a day with distributors. You are going on a course for them to tell you how they act as a sales agent or a distributor. In effect it’s a networking event because they might have five different distributors talking at the event. So in turn, they would have helped your company network - It’s a huge benefit”, (Founder, Firm B).

As a result of attending FÁS’s organised training sessions, companies are introduced to key contacts within the industry. Therefore, these training sessions could also promote personal networking and the opportunity to acquire new potential customers. However, only one respondent made any reference to FÁS Screen Training Ireland being a connector. None of the other respondents had encountered any help/linkages with them, suggesting that this is a weak connector or one that is underutilised.

In conclusion, FÁS Screen Training Ireland has been identified as another channel, through which international seeking companies gain connections internationally. This provides the founder with another option for networking. FÁS Screen Training Ireland adopts a similar connection methodology to that of SDGI, where connections
depend on organised events i.e. training programmes. These programmes or events act as 'physical venues' for networking. These courses are the only means of networking recorded for FÁS, given the limited reference accorded to them. As such, FÁS is noted as a weak connector in the born globals network, which is shown in Figure 6.6 below.

Figure 6.6: Institutional ‘Link’ No: 5

FÁS Screen Training Ireland’s single path of international connection has been outlined in Figure 6.6 and has also been described as a weak link in network. Nevertheless, this link has been responsible for connecting a small number of the entrepreneurs within this study, through their networking forums. Another identified institutional intermediary - Screen Producers Ireland, demonstrates a slightly different route towards internationalisation, which is discussed in the following section.
Screen Producers Ireland (SPI) is an organisation which represents over 140 private Irish film, television and animation production companies. These companies receive industrial support from RTÉ and TG4. The role of SPI is to encourage business interests and aid the development of the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry, economy and culture. SPI’s focus is Ireland and this could be considered inhibitory in terms of linking Irish animation companies with the international market. Supporting this, the Founder of Firm F believes that SPI can help us “network in Ireland, but not really outside it”, while another founder noted “they don’t really function at international events” (Founder, Firm P). Therefore, it is not surprising that a very small minority of interviewees noted SPI as a weak form of a connector.

Of those that did believe SPI was a connector, they were deemed as a ‘weak’ one. In one case SPI was referred to as a “lobby organisation” (Founder, Firm N), which would suggest that they play an introductory role for animation companies. However, this may be overestimated as this Founder was part of the SPI’s Board of Directors. In general, an attitude of negativity was associated with the SPI. Many of the animation companies have asked SPI for help however, none has been forthcoming. As one founder put it, they are “no massive help” (Founder, Firm E). While another founder stressed the need for organisational change within the SPI or an ‘update’ to meet the demands of the animation companies:

“There is a bit of a problem in there, there is a bit of an old boy slope, everyone that is in the there has been in the industry for ages, they all know each other, they all meet up and pat each other on the back and say ‘isn’t it great that we done this?’. They are fine, they know all the people they need to know, there business is successful, so they don’t need to do much, because of the fact that they are very secure” (Co-Founder B, Firm A).

In conclusion, as in the case of FÁS and the Screen Directors Guild of Ireland, the interviewees have given little thought to this intermediary, which would reflect SPI’s overall contribution to internationalisation. However, SPI is identified as an
institutional intermediary that are believed to offer a direct connection for firms seeking international expansion, without the assistance of any other member within the link. This single mode of connection is highlighted by the following figure.

Figure 6.7: Institutional ‘Link’ No: 6

Screen Producers Ireland’s LINK

Accessing the international market directly through SPI is viable. However, only one method of connection is adopted by SPI. This direct connection is questionable given the strength of the connection, as it has been noted as a weak connection link in the network.

6.3.1.1 Implications for Institutional Intermediaries (Connectors).

The findings indicate that many of these formal / institutional intermediaries are strong connectors. Of particular interest are the key personnel present in Enterprise Ireland – Animation Ireland, the IFB and MEDIA Antenna who play a unique role in internationalisation for the animation companies. SPI proved to be one of the least
important of the institutional intermediaries, as a result of their need for ‘fresh ideas’. Furthermore, RTÉ and IBEC lacked creditability in terms of their connection role in the Irish Digital, Film and TV production companies seeking international markets, with matching results for Pegbar. Pegbar focuses solely on Ireland, therefore this restricts their international vision and as a result they don’t play a strategic role in the internationalisation process for those under examination.

6.3.1.2 Summary

Table 6.2: Summary of ‘Institutional Intermediaries / Connectors’– Influences of Government Bodies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Intermediaries / Connectors</th>
<th>Respondents View on Government Bodies Influences</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong Connector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Ireland - Animation Ireland</td>
<td>8 Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bord Scannán na hÉireann/ Irish Film Board</td>
<td>6 Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIA Antenna – CARTOON</td>
<td>4 Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Producers Ireland</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screen Directors Guild of Ireland</td>
<td>1 Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FÁS</td>
<td>1 Respondents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2 presents the industry and state supports which represent the first group of intermediaries in the network, namely, the ‘Institutional Intermediaries / Connectors’. Collectively, this table details the comments noted from each of the respondents who gave their opinion on whether institutional organisations represented a weak or strong link in the network. This has been generated from a rating scale survey integrated in the semi-structure in-depth interviews, conducted with each respondent. The data details the respondents view on how these...
government bodies influence the networking process as well as highlighting their importance as a link in the network.

Overall, there is significant networking potential, which is highlighted through the array of ‘links’ that represent intermediaries within the network. Most of these links follow similar paths of connection through networking venues – forums. As a result, companies are becoming more connected to buyers and producers. This demonstrates the importance of such venues in the internationalisation process for the born globals. These will be discussed further in following sections.

Many strong connectors have been highlighted in the network and the more popular agencies include Enterprise Ireland, Animation Ireland and the Irish Film Board which appear in the ‘stronger’ connector’s category. The following section presents the next type of intermediary - Personal Intermediaries / Connectors.

6.3.2 Personal Intermediaries (Connectors)

This second group of identified connectors have been referred to as ‘Personal Intermediaries (Connectors)’. Included within this group are individuals, namely agents, who are believed to play an important role in the network, as well as connections, established through a ‘Founders’ Previous Links’. Both of these personal intermediaries represent ‘links’ in the network to promote internationalisation. Connectors found within this set of contacts are usually informal and aren’t as easily recognised as those revealed in the institutional intermediary group. These are normally encountered through animation production experience i.e. an indirect route of contact, as opposed to the official role that institutional associates play. The findings reported in the thesis suggest that forums play an active part in networking.

The following sections present the findings for each named personal intermediary, by illustrating their role through ‘link maps’. The link maps not only illustrate their position in the network but also, it highlights the path companies follow whilst networking. The importance of Personal Intermediaries/ Connectors is also explained, with reference to the strength of their connection.
**Agents**

Agents or ‘representatives’ play a very important role in connecting Irish digital animation companies with customers internationally and as such, they form the second group of connectors in the process. Agents are classified as individuals who obtain the necessary information from others in a particular network and further use this information to influence a network. This type of ‘facilitator’ collects information that is essential for interactions in and between networks and as a facilitator, makes the progression towards international markets easier. Such individuals act as consultants for the company and also sell projects to buyers and/or producers, at a commission. In most cases, agents operate in international offices, promoting Irish production, for example the Co-Founder of Firm D explained,

“*We opened another office in LA, Hollywood in July of 2010. It’s really a sales base and helps to get the name out there. **** is the name of the guy that we have out there and he’s a great guy at networking and selling our productions to those markets*” (Co-Founder A, Firm D).

While some of the agents worked on behalf of the Irish animation industry, others were hired by the firms as consultants. These agents were found through existing networks i.e. connections gained through attendance at international festivals, tradeshows and other organised networking events. It is understood that these agents were recruited for short periods of time to explore new markets. The success of these agents was commented on by the Founder of Firm E, as he “*hired a consultant for 3 months in 2007, just to explore the market in LA*” and to find out if there was “something there”. Following this the Founder opened a sales office in LA and continues to “*go over and back, set up meetings, and do presentations with the agent. It’s tough but it’s well worth it and she’s a great connector for us*” (Founder, Firm E).

The majority of the interviewees referred to the agents as ‘strong connectors’, for the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry and in particular, they are very important during the initial stages of internationalisation. The companies mentioned within this study used their agents to ‘open doors’ for access to buyers and
producers. However, companies were generally unable to continue supporting their agents for long periods of time, given their financial constraints. Therefore, agents were only employed at initial stages of internationalisation, which is also supported by the following comment,

“It would have been an agent. We have since got rid of him because of costs. But, he was the first initial guy that would have got us in there........”
(Founder, Firm C).

In the latter stages of internationalisation, agents were also of lesser importance, simply because the business has the necessary experience to reach their buyers and/or producers. Therefore, their usefulness is questionable at this stage in the business lifecycle,

“Never get an agent all they do is take 10% of your money for nothing. He was there at the very start. He kind of got us introduced to all the big players in Hollywood LA, Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, and Disney. Once you’re in there, that’s his job nearly done. He still takes 10% of nearly everything, which we couldn’t afford. So he was the one that helped us get our foot in the door and establish a connection” (Founder, Firm C).

In conclusion, this link in the network relates to individuals better known as agents or consultants who play an active role in internationalisation for born global Irish animation companies. In the case of the animation sector, findings suggest that agents play an important role, however, only during the initial stages of internationalisation. Agents are a valued asset for the company during the initial stages of internationalisation, as they can meet specific needs and objectives, they have the potential to open doors, and allow companies to explore new markets and potentially generate more connections.

Above all, these agents have been identified as strong connectors by directly connecting companies to international buyers and/or producers. Furthermore, these successful connections are also generated by referring entrepreneurs to targeted festivals and tradeshows, whereby key contacts are present, thus increasing the
likelihood of further connections. Forums are also believed to play an important role in this link, acting as a venue for networking. The following figure illustrates this link, showing the value of an agent and their role in internationalisation for born global Irish animation producers. The strength of the connection provided by agents is also shown.

Figure 6.8: Personal ‘Link’ No: 1

Figure 6.8 describes the path an entrepreneur can explore, through his/her agent, to access the international markets. An agent is a unique link in this network, and they have the skill to directly connect companies, seeking rapid international expansion. This directness takes less time than any other intermediaries highlighted in the ‘suite’, except for the case of SPI. However, unlike SPI, the agent has the support of numerous interviewees. Another benefit of the agent as a connector is the strength of the connection they offer. As highlighted in Figure 6.8, the agent is a strong connector in the network link. Demonstrating this similar approach to
internationalisation is the ‘Founders’ Previous Links’ link, which is the second type of personal intermediary / connector.

(B) *Founders’ Previous Links*

Labelled as another personal intermediary are founders’ previous links. This link consists of three main contributors, previous employers, client referrals and educational links which together contribute to ‘positive social capital’, which are known to be responsible for creating international connections.

- **Previous Employers**

Some of the interviewees identified ‘previous employers’ as important connectors. Approximately half of the founders carried out international work experience within the animation sector prior to establishing their current enterprises. A variety of countries were involved in acquiring international experience including France, Germany, Czech Republic and the UK, with the greatest representation from the USA. This was to be expected given that Hollywood is the global hub where animation via renowned producers such as Disney and Warner Brothers are located. One Founder stated that,

“*My main connectors are my connections with the States and that has been established from working there for three years and as Warner Brothers closed its doors to animation everybody I know there went to other studios over there so all of a sudden you know a bunch of people at Pixar, Dreamworks and Sony. I go back there every year and I meet with them. I would usually go back every year with whatever short we’d made, or whatever I had in production to get their feedback on it. It would be a kind of mentoring thing for me. We would stay up to date and keep the network alive and through that, meet new people. Each time I would try and meet a different artist or try and find another aspect of the industry on the international side*” (Founder, Firm B).

However, the following founder didn’t have any belief in the attributes of previous work experience stating that,
“It wasn’t anything to do with previous work experience or anything like that. It was all word of mouth, I can’t stress the importance of word of mouth. You must be willing to get yourself and your product out there and make yourself known to those that are in the game” (Founder, Firm O).

Therefore, social capital was acquired through working for previous companies, which in turn helped gain them international access.

- **Client Referrals**

As for any industry, positive social capital is critical and within the Irish animation sector, this is no different. Positive social capital gives rise to a collective number of new connections through recommendations. Such recommendations promote legitimacy and credibility for the company. One Founder stated “once you do one job it links to another and so on. Previous work brought us more work than anyone can imagine”, (Co-Founder A, Firm A). Another simply added “you have to build trust with others, and you only can do this by doing work for them and as a result one job will lead to another” (Co-Founder B, Firm D). Likewise, another interviewee stated,

“I think experience is the main thing, it’s like once you have done one thing you will then get another. We have tended to grow steadily, in that we have done a small project, and then we have done one slightly bigger and then another a little bit bigger again. There is a definite progression. So like when we go to the next one, they can see, ‘Ok they have managed this one perfectly well, they have a good project, brought it in on budget, on schedule’.... you know. So that is a proven track record that you need to build. It’s the next step in the ladder kind of thing” (Co-Founder B, Firm A).

The same Founder further explained,

“.....we are doing a job with Wish Films in London in the next month or so and we got that through the guy who done the storyboards on our last job, we started working with them, then he came to us and said do you want to do the
animation for this. Like we worked with him on one project and he knows that we will produce good work, it’s kind of like word of mouth from one job to the next” (Co-Founder B, Firm A).

In addition to this, an Institutional Support commented on the benefits of being previously involved with other companies:

“When you have experience working with other companies, Irish companies can be approached by either a service company for major studios, such as Disney, or a co-production partner on multi-national vehicle. In both these cases a certain degree of international purchase has already been established. Certainly in the case of bigger studios, the amount of research and development which would have taken place prior to a series being commissioned would have ensured inbuilt worldwide distribution, if not guaranteed success, of the series. Irish companies are often approached to work on pilots for these series which is another way of testing a project’s universal appeal. In terms of co-productions, generally speaking each of the territories involved will have their own national broadcaster attached which will ensure at the least a broadcast for the series in each of the co-production partners’ territory” (Institutional Support, 6).

Given the success of the projects developed by the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry, which have resulted in various Oscar nominations, the outcome can only be positive resulting in greater social capital, as highlighted by the Founder of Firm E, “the Oscar nominations has benefited everybody you know...even though we haven’t had any, it puts Ireland on the map and portrays this is a place of good quality”. Additionally, the same interviewee commented on the so-called ‘magic ingredient’,

“Ireland has had so many Oscar nominations, particularly this year and in previous years. Internationally they believe there is something creative about what is in the water in Ireland that no amount of money can buy in Singapore. I’m not quite sure if we know what the magic ingredient is, but we know there is something about it. Maybe it’s culturally going back to years of
very good story telling. People are already seeing that Ireland is good with ideas, they’re good with creativity, they’re good with understanding and all that stuff. So...I think that’s the real key thing for us to identify...and try and find out what exactly it is and how to market it, because studios are quite small. The biggest studio in Ireland has 50-60 people whereas in Singapore there are 100/200 people” (Founder, Firm E).

- Education Links

Social capital has also been acquired from educational acquaintances. Unsurprisingly, over half of the respondents were graduates from Ballyfermot Senior College, which is the hub for educating Irish animators. As Co-Founder A of Firm A suggested,

“I think the friends that we would have made in college would have helped us connect internationally. We have often had job referrals from our classmates in Ballyfermot.....We used to work in Cartoon Saloon and they were in our class. Some of the other studios in Dublin would have been a few years ahead of us in college and one or two of them would have been our teachers. That is why everyone knows each other because the industry is so small” (Co-Founder A, Firm A).

Another Founder explained, “Damian Farrell at Caboom has helped us a lot by helping us connect in Ireland and abroad. After all, we were all colleagues at college” (Founder, Firm L).

In conclusion, this group of intermediaries consist of ‘indirect’ links or associates that have been responsible for direct networking as a result of the founders’ previous links. These include, work experience carried out with ‘previous employers’, ‘client referrals’ as a result of work previously conducted, and lastly, ‘educational links’ acquired through training.

This type of connector was a popular networking intermediary which is sought after by all of the respondents. The three main sources (previous employers, client referrals and educational links) for this link have been summarised and labelled
‘positive social capital’. The following figure displays the entire link, outlining the routes taken by entrepreneurs.

Figure 6.9: Personal ‘Link’ No: 2

Figure 6.9 outlines the approaches to international networking through founders’ previous links. Each of the three sources is equally responsible for contributing to the entrepreneur’s positive social capital, which in turn has been noted as a means of connecting entrepreneurs internationally. Positive social capital in all its forms has been regarded as a strong connector and the entrepreneurs depend heavily on this channel of connection.

6.3.2.1 Implications for Personal Intermediaries (Connectors)

As these findings suggest, most of the respondents shared strong feelings with regard to the importance of agents in terms of the company’s international progression. Therefore, agents represent an important link in the network, acting as a strong
connector. Companies tend to use these agents only at the initial stages of the internationalisation process, and founders highlighted, agent’s open doors in the initiation stages of the international business, but swiftly become uneconomical and less necessary. Agents have the potential, through previous experience and contacts, to establish international connections on behalf of their client, with many customers in some of the most sought after hubs in the US, i.e. Hollywood.

The importance of agents has been attributed to their unique methodology and the fact that they operate solely in the interest of the company that has them hired. Agents have the ability to focus on the specific needs of the company, whilst also being able to directly link with producers and/or buyers that government bodies fail to do.

These findings suggest that ‘social capital’ in all its forms is deemed by the majority of respondents as a ‘strong’ connector towards international progression. Thus, ‘positive social capital’ is one of the most important and effective connectors in the ‘suite of connectors’. While ‘previous employers’ for some respondents are seen to help in connecting a company internationally, these employers never contributed to any of these companies international success. Lastly, social capital has also been acquired through ‘educational links’, however, the strength of this connection is also questionable. Overall, social capital has proved a popular method for international recognition and this is similarity reflected in the results of the networking venues – forums, which are discussed in the next section.

6.3.3 Forums – Networking Venues

Forums have been identified as venues were networking occurs and they are believed to play a very active role in the Digital, Film and TV production industry’s internationalisation network. Previous findings have shown that these forums are involved in most of the ‘links’. Two types of venues have been identified in this study. Firstly, ‘physical venues’, which include international tradeshows, festivals and institutional networking events and secondly, ‘virtual venues’, which include various social networking sites that are involved in ‘incubating’ connections. These
venues are less important than the physical venues; however, this may change, given the rapid development of the virtual world, and the success of social networking.

While forums have been recognised as venues for networking, it is those present at the forums that ‘kindle’ or make the connections. In general, large numbers of attendees are present at such international events, increasing the potential of companies to establish additional international connections. Attendees are those present at such events, which could be entrepreneurs, buyers, producers, institutional and personal intermediaries. Attendees at this workshop, have the ‘resources’ at hand and the ability to directly connect companies internationally, through various channels, for example, company trade stands. The following sections will discuss in greater depth both types of forums and the venues of importance from a born global networking perspective, as well as highlighting the connectors in the process.

(A) Physical Venues

Festivals, tradeshows and other organised networking events serve as a FORA (a networking venue) where animators, screenwriters, directors and producers can network at meetings, guest talks and at company trade stands. These are ‘physical venues’. Numerous similar events are held globally, in locations such as Cannes, Berlin, Toronto, Venice and Sundance. Some of the more popular events include MIPCOM, KidScreen Summit, The International Film Festival / Cannes Film Festival and the Annecy International Animation Film Festival. For over 50 years these events have been very successful and are profiled overleaf.
Table 6.3: Profile of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIPWorld (<a href="http://www.mipworld.com">www.mipworld.com</a>)</td>
<td>The world’s leading entertainment content forum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsible for six yearly forums: miptv, mipdoc, mipformats, mipcube, mipcom and mipjunior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusive of 12,400 participants, 4,200 buyers, 1,700 exhibitors from 100 countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KidScreen Summit (<a href="http://www.summit.kidscreen.com">www.summit.kidscreen.com</a>)</td>
<td>A yearly forum for those involved in the kid’s entertainment industry. Comprehending nearly 1,500 delegates. Representing 800 companies, from 43 countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Cannes Film Festival (<a href="http://www.festival-cannes.fr">www.festival-cannes.fr</a>)</td>
<td>An international yearly film festival.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Including 1,201 Authors, 4,499 Distributors, 4,479 Producers, from 117 Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annecy International Animation Film Festival (<a href="http://www.annecy.org">www.annecy.org</a>)</td>
<td>The World’s top reference for animation films.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusive of approx, 7,000 professionals from 70 different countries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following section described the prevalence of the international festival and tradeshow attendance amongst interviewees. These meetings were seen as a necessary and important event to enable and sustain success, and where harvesting of vital industrial networks can be developed. As shown in the above table, a large number of attendees are present at such events. For example, see Appendix 5 for a List of Exhibitors, by Country at MIPTV 2011.
Attendees at International Festivals, Tradeshows & Organised Networking Events

Attendees are connectors at the networking venues, whom enable companies to reach buyers or producers. As the Founder of Firm B outlined, “this is where I go to meet people that I need to........it is the only connecting venue that is getting the company out there”. While others stated, “It’s all about attending festivals and markets and meeting the right people” (Co-Founder B, Firm H) and “attendance at these festivals and markets - that’s a big thing” (Founder, Firm L). “If you have a good idea, you bring it to the market and hopefully somebody buys it and you take it from there” (Founder, Firm I). An Institutional Support explains the benefits of attending forums, “These help companies in a great deal in terms of connecting. Like, this is where we get to speak to the buyers which can be for example, JAM Media. Jam Media sells their products in over 120 territories as does Cartoon Saloon. So it’s not just Hollywood, its worldwide. It’s very important to go to those markets. So for example from a business point of view, if someone from Disney is going to buy a new product, where are they going to do that, only at these large events? The attendees are not only Irish at these events, but they are from all countries. At international events like Kidscreen, MIPCOM etc, while these events are very important, it’s not the only way to get connected. It’s very important the product offering that the company has. You have to direct your product towards a market that suits e.g. Kidscreen is for kids movies. However, if your product was animation adverts, it wouldn’t be saleable at the likes of Kidscreen” (Institutional Support, 5).

All respondents referred to physical venues as strong forums for connection in the internationalisation process and as an Institutional Support remarked about MIPCOM, “it shapes and makes deals, makes new connections and unlocks new business opportunities” (Institutional Support, 3) which is the main aim and objective for international expansion. The motives for attending such events are described in the following interview excerpt,
“Our mission is to talk to people that will either buy, or commission feature length projects, so that means TV stations or Theatrical distributors in different locations. We just go to meet them, because we know this is where we will find them” (Founder, Firm B).

While another respondent similarly added, “the biggest one would be the international markets and film festivals that we visit, Cannes, MIPCOM, these are where you build up your networks, were you go and have 40 meetings, many prearranged” (Co-Founder B, Firm H).

Many of the founders stressed the importance of their attendance at these festivals, including the Founder of Firm P,

“Markets are vital and then there are events at markets, which are superb. At MIPCOM and MIPTV there are always drinks nights at the Irish stand and that attracts huge amount of people. Market attendance is critical. Like in years were we had no company turnover, we were spending in excess of €15,000 going to markets. This portrays the value of these events”.

The Founder of Firm J explained,

“....there is a big social element there too. You meet someone through someone... like in any walk of life really, and then in 20 odd years........ you hook up with people and you see them again and you check your old address book and their name is there from a previous encounter”.

Understanding the ‘process’ is very straightforward, explains the Co-Founder A of Firm F, “you present your card......then give them your show reel and quickly your name will get passed around, and soon you will be connected with a buyer or producer”. The Founder from Firm B believes, connections can be established through, for example, “The Cartoon Saloon guys might also be at Annency, and might make reference to someone that they believe would be important for you to talk with”, therefore this could initiate another connection. These comments and others describe the ‘closeness’ which, exists within this industry, as each company is
helping out the other, despite competing in the same market. Similar comments were made with regard to Enterprise Ireland and other institutional intermediaries that where responsible for establishing connections at these international festivals.

The Founder of an established company spoke at length about his experience seeking access to the international arena,

“It was definitely being in attendance at the markets, under the umbrella stand of Enterprise Ireland and taking part at networking events at those markets that made it for us. Enterprise Ireland would have umbrella stands for all the Irish companies or hosted stands and if anybody wants to make an enquiry they’ll try to match up enquiries with participating companies which works reasonably well, although there’s some garbage, you’ve got to filter through, and there would be an Irish drinks evening on the stands. So you know..... a couple of bottles of Baileys. Then invite all the buyers. People come to the stand at the market and then its ‘Hi, this is *****’. So through those events...I’d say I’ve done most of my business, even with Irish broadcasters! You have a far better chance of being at the South of France pitching them ideas than trying to go out to Montrose to do it. I’ve attended those markets for many years and you could come home from them very distraught, thinking I’ve walked 100 km at this market, I’ve spent five days and I’ve been out every night and nothing has happened, but there’s always something, there’s somebody that you’ve met that will lead to an international sale. We have done very large budget shows as a result of pizza and beer!!” (Founder, Firm N).

International tradeshows and festivals bring about the strongest connections for these Irish Born Global Digital, Film and TV production companies as “markets are very important in terms of networking, together with site visits at various different companies” (Founder, Firm O).

As highlighted previously, there are many attendees and delegates present at such forums, were each have their own unique connection method. Monster Entertainments is an international distribution company involved in financing and
distributing television series worldwide and have been noted for making international connections at such forums. The company has been involved in selling a variety of productions to over 200 countries. In addition, an Institutional Support explained how connections are established at forums:

“Connections are made by individual producers or by distributors such as ourselves, usually at the latter stage of the process for feature films at markets like Cannes Film Festival, American Film Market and events like Cartoon Movie. So when a company attends such events and we get talking to them, we start the ball rolling when they have their production at the ready” (Institutional Support, 4).

Furthermore, the respondent commented on the importance of attending such events from a connector’s perspective, “Tradeshows and markets etc are the main ways in which connections are made. We would meet something in the region of 200 buyers, at our stand, during MIPCOM, for example. Meetings are pre-arranged and used to introduce programming we present to them” (Institutional Support, 4). The Institutional Support of Firm 3 shared similar feelings, stating that “There are meetings at these events, which is face-to-face contact with all involved in the process. It’s all about working with the people and how the people connect together is part of the project. So networking happens at these events”.

However, as with all businesses, a timeframe applies for attending such events and as the following interviewee explained, animation experience is essential prior to attending many of these well established events.

“I do think they are connecting us, I don’t think they are the place for those that are just starting out to go. MIP and MIPCOM are the general TV markets, but defiantly the animation buyers are there. So for the professional producers they would go to the CARTOON FORUM and they would also go to MIPCOM and MIPTV to have meetings with broadcasters. But for people starting, MIPCOM is a huge huge market and animation is only a small, small part of it, so it’s not a dedicated market, but defiantly all the animation producers go to it, because the animation buyers and broadcasters are there.
But it is for the more established companies. Another important market that I didn’t mention is KIDSCREEN. We don’t go to it, but all the Irish seem to go to it as well” (Institutional Support, 1).

In conclusion, international festivals, tradeshows and organised networking events have been identified as locations where the strongest connections are made. Attendees are responsible for making the majority of connections in the drafted ‘suite of connectors’ for born global internationalising firms. All respondents have noted that these are strong connectors in the network link, directly connecting entrepreneurs to those in the international marketplace. Attendees are noted as the leading connectors, networking within these venues, which serve as forums for connections. At such events entrepreneurs (attendees) gain the recognition and earn credit for their work and establish networks. For example, Enterprise Ireland could provide the entrepreneur with ‘leads’ prior to attending such an event, giving them a significant advantage.

This type of connection offers a fast route to internationalisation. Given the financial costs associated with attendance, this approach is believed to work best with experienced entrepreneurs who are familiar with their industry and the project they are selling, noted the Founder of Firm B. This one direct path towards international markets is summarised in the following figure, together with the strength of its connection.
Outlined above is the path sought by the Irish entrepreneurs within the animation sector of the industry. This path depends on being in the ‘right place’ at the ‘right time’ with the ‘right person(s)’ and the ‘right project’. This type of connection directly connects companies with their international markets and offers a strong connection. Attendees at international festivals and tradeshows and other events provide a strong networking connection in the link, from the entrepreneur through to the buyers and/or producers. The next section, presents the connection established through ‘virtual venue’ membership.

(B) Virtual Venues

Social networking sites serve as a forum where members can network; therefore these have been labelled as ‘virtual venues’. There are many social networking sites. However, generally the same few were mentioned throughout this study, namely,
LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. Unlike the physical venues, this venue, as a connection tool, is not as popular amongst respondents. The merits for virtual venues for the Irish animation industry are still underdeveloped.

– Members of Social Networking Sites

Most of respondents and their respective companies are members of various social networking sites. Social networking sites have been viewed as a tool for maintaining existing relationships, or ‘follow-up’ contact after initial induction rather than serving as a venue for the connection in the internationalising path for the Irish animation companies.

“Yea, we have a Facebook and Twitter account, solely to reap the advertising benefits and also to inform our customers of our progress and what we are up to” (Founder, Firm E).

However, another Founder understood that LinkedIn was a very ‘strong’ networking venue for his company and said that,

“It was definitely me, being a member and using LinkedIn that made us the connections internationally” (Founder, Firm L).

Being a member of a social networking site did prove to be rewarding for this founder. However, none of the other founders reported this similar experience.

In conclusion, social networking sites are the second type of venue understood to play a role in networking. While social networking sites have been identified as a venue for connection, little evidence has been provided to fully sustain this argument. Being a member of such is believed to maintain networks rather than create new links in the network. The following link outlines, the one respondent’s view, as he considered social network sites as a venue for connection. The interviewee believed social networking sites pursue one direct path to international markets.
While members of the social networking sites adopt an identical channel of internationalisation to that of the attendees at international festivals and markets, support from interviewees was limited, questioning whether this was a reliable globalisation route. However, with regard to the strength of this connection which they are capable of achieving, a strong connection method was noted, although, only by one interviewee. It was noted that by being a member of a social networking site, had the ability to directly connect an entrepreneur from the domestic market to an international market, without the help of any other element in the ‘link’.

6.3.3.1 Implications for Forums

As these findings suggest, attendees at international festivals and tradeshows hold the potential to be the strongest connectors for firms in the Irish animation sector. Such events act as a forum where companies can met, exchange information and become connected which creates a new link in the network. These events are critical
in terms of internationalisation for these so-called, Born Globals. All of the respondents noted ‘attendees at international festivals and tradeshows’ as a strong networking connector, and this conveys a powerful message with regard to the importance of attendance and networking at such physical networking venues. For some respondents, this was referred to as the ‘only link’ that paid off in their internationalisation process. Socialising at such events has been highlighted on many occasions, and as a result of ‘pizza and beer’ many success stories have been reported. In addition, being a member of the social networking sites has also been noted as a strong connector by some of the respondents. Moreover, they generally agreed that such sites are for research purposes or follow up rather than venues for networking.

6.4 Summary of Findings

The analysis for the globalisation factors influencing internationalisation for 16 born global firms and ancillary bodies operating in the Digital, Film and TV production industry are presented. The results include analysis for 6 institutional supports. As the preceding sections have shown, there is a substantial list for those deemed to be ‘connectors’. The connectors are institutional and personal intermediaries, agents and attendees at international festivals, tradeshows and organised networking events, members of social networking sites, and those that have been built from prior international working experience and from positive social capital from previous clients. As stated a ‘suite of connectors’ has been developed for the industry and the born global company can choose from a ‘menu’ of connectors.

6.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings suggest that venues such as international festivals, tradeshows and organised networking events are the strongest forums for firms seeking international expansion. In contrast, Enterprise Ireland has been ranked as a weak connector because of the varying opinions regarding their usefulness. The findings also suggest that key personnel from institutional supports, serve as strong connectors aiding founders in their attempt to break into international markets. There are also those seen as being ‘of lesser importance’, mainly SPI. Many of the
respondents viewed SPI as an organisation, which would be of little help to their business given that its organisational structure and much of their networking was within Ireland, rather than focusing on an international market. Finally, the extent of the help and connections available to the firms involved within this study has also been discussed, and there has been considerable variation reported in the findings. These suggest that various models/links are required to capture the network as the one model doesn’t fit all. This will be discussed further in the subsequent chapter.

The following chapter provides a discussion for the born globals internationalisation pathway, by addressing the research questions in light of the theory and the findings presented in this chapter, while also considering the theoretical implications of same.
CHAPTER SEVEN – DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to combine the findings presented in chapter six with current literature on born globals and the subsequent networking issues they experience. The discussion will attempt to identify the key findings and contributions of this study. This chapter will also address the primary research objective of the research, which was to explore the key paths, intermediaries and ‘keepers’ within the network of a born global internationalising firm, as well as examine how the network ‘plays out’ in practice, as firms pin point potential customers in the global marketplace. In doing so, the study addresses the issues that are important in ‘plugging the structural holes’ (Burt, 1992) between the born global firm and their customers in the international marketplace - strong and/or weak intermediaries, gatekeepers, actors, nodes and links.

The discussion highlights important elements that have been described within this study; the use of intermediary institutions, personnel and the role of networking venues in the networking process. These constitute as the nodes and links within the network. A ‘microscopic view’ within the network has identified the specific nodes and links. As such, a detailed description of the born global network has been developed, including the components which make up the network. The next section introduces the discussion and highlights the novel aspects of the study’s network perspective by exploring the born globals internationalising route.

7.2 Contribution of the Thesis

The born global phenomenon has provided a plethora of ‘avenues’ for firms, allowing them adopt similar opportunities when trying to break into international markets. While our understanding of the born global phenomenon has increased over the past decade, it is as yet nonetheless limited, in comparison with our knowledge of the internationalisation of traditional MNE’s, which has received extensive research attention (Knight et al., 2003). Therefore, this study supports the research call of authors such as Chetty & Campbell-Hunt (2003) and draws on “multiple theories such as the Uppsala Model, the born global approach, entrepreneurship
theory and the network approach” (p.77), to gain an understanding of the born global internationalisation research process.

Whilst this research examines multiple theories, the study also builds upon Andersson & Wictor’s globalisation process model. This research augments the published works of Andersson & Wictor (2003) and Weerawardena et al. (2007), by building on their frameworks and in particular, it has examined the ‘network’ concept that should be explored for the internationalisation process for born globals. What is unique about this study is that it builds on the work of Granovetter introducing the notion of ‘connectors’ and the strength of the connectors, with born global theory. This helps to describe the born global network, and increase our understanding of the strategies employed by these firms. For example, born global firms lack numerous resources, such as creditability and access to finance, in comparison to their larger international competitors. Therefore, the importance of social capital and network ties in addressing their liabilities of “smallness, newness and foreignness” (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012, p.8), have not received the attention they deserve (Coviello & Munro, 1995; 1997; Sharma & Blomstermo, 2003). Moreover, how these network ties actually operate and the nuances within these networks are as yet, not fully understood.

While previous researchers have looked ‘across’ this network, this research takes a ‘microscopic view’ into the network, allowing the viewer to see the network ‘black box’ and identify each of the components that makes up the network. Therefore, this thesis attempts to ‘plug’ the existing knowledge gap, by opening the so-called ‘black box’ of social networks and intermediaries, which born globals draw upon in their efforts to internationalise. This issue is not only managerial, hindering and restricting growth, but also an information gap that exists in the literature. Therefore, these research findings could act as a route map for firms involved in early future internationalisation, within this industry.

Given the fact that born globals can be referred to as “new, technology-based firms” (Moen et al., 2008, p. 537), and several authors have published within this area, this research has focused mainly on the ‘purest’ software industry. In general, previous research has focused on the difficulties of born global firms accessing the Silicon Valley region i.e. the ‘hub’ of high-tech firms and the home of the world’s largest
technology corporations. However, this study explores a ‘novel’ industry - the Digital, Film and TV production in Ireland, and adopts similar proven research approaches and techniques demonstrated by various other researchers and includes Eisenhardt (1989); Yin, (2003); Saunders et al., (2007) and Myers (2009). This study focuses on the Irish animation industry’s international path to Hollywood as well as other ‘centres’ of production excellence. Both the software and the animation industry have small domestic markets that cannot support their needs. As such, there is a need for these firms to seek global expansion. Therefore, the animation industry supports the criteria for a born global company, as an industry that lacks a strong domestic market and one that follows a rapid mode of internationalisation. This viewpoint is supported by Andersson & Wictor (2003) who suggested that countries with small home markets have a greater chance of producing born global firms than countries with larger home markets.

To date, the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry’s international network has not been addressed. In Ireland, the Digital, Film and TV production industry has a reputation of a “dynamic, growing and highly internationalised sector that is making a significant impact on the global animation scene” (Animation Ireland, 2012, p.3). The research within this thesis provides a modern and fresh perspective of the industry, particularly as it is “the only place in the world of entertainment that doesn’t seem to have been hit by the recession” (Courtney, 2013, p.1). Furthermore, the research also provides a ‘break down’ of the population involved within the Irish animation sector.

In addition, this study contributes to existing literature, by increasing our understanding of the entrepreneurs / founder(s) of the born global firms, by providing an ‘impression’ of the entrepreneurs involved in this industry as well as providing an insight into their international experience and global mindset. This information will help fill the knowledge gap identified by Andersson & Wictor (2003), by focusing on the entrepreneur’s history (Andersson & Wictor, 2003), and describing the activities undertaken by the entrepreneur prior to setting up their own firms (Weerawardena et al., 2007), which will help explain a part of the ‘born global tale’.
Having outlined the broader contribution and originality of this thesis, the next section addresses the research issues posed.

7.3 Addressing the Research Questions and Theoretical Implications

Chapter one presented the specific research questions for this investigation. This study addressed each research question, beginning with the primary research question, *how do born global firms manage and operate their network intermediaries and forums to drive and facilitate their internationalisation process?*, followed by a number of secondary questions which attempt to deepen our understanding of both the entrepreneur and the drivers of born global internationalisation.

The primary research question will be addressed in the following section. Further, a descriptive analysis of the network utilised by born globals to internationalise, including the elements, intermediaries, nodes, links and ties, which make up a network, will also be described.

7.3.1 Primary Research Question

The primary research question, *how do born global firms manage and operate their network intermediaries and forums to drive and facilitate their internationalisation process?* is addressed in the following section. This provides a microscopic view of the network which unveils the ‘black box’ surrounding the born global network.

This journey of discovery began with an investigation of the born global within the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry and particularly its largest division - the animation production sector. Building on Andersson & Wictor’s (2003) born global internationalising model, the research pays particular attention to the ‘network’ element, identified in their model, as these networks are found to be an important part of the born globals internationalisation pathway (Gray, 1997), or as Chou (2009) stated “a network is one of the most important assets of BGs, if not the most important one” (p.1).
While authors such as Partanen & Servais (2012) have identified that born globals use different types of ‘inter-firm networks’ to overcome their resource deficiency or somewhat liability of smallness, others such as, Coviello & Munro (1995; 1997) have highlighted the importance of a network for a born global to internationalise. However, what exactly occurs within the network is still somewhat of a mystery i.e. a ‘black box’.

While Coviello & Munro (1995; 1997) and others such as Sharma & Blomstermo (2003) have conducted research into networks, the findings surrounding the internationalisation network of new firms is still rather limited. This research attempts to fill this knowledge gap through an in-depth investigation into the role of intermediaries within the born globals’ network, with the support of Granovetter’s (1973, 1983) work. Therefore, the findings of the research present a ‘network’ highlighting the nodes and links in the internationalisation process of born global firms. A network has been described by Ethier (2009) as a “set of objectives (people or groups of people), or nodes, and a mapping (directional or bi-directional) or a description of the relationship between objects” (p.1). As in the conceptual model (of a network society) constructed by Dijk (2003), the born global network has the ability to link individuals, groups, organisations and societies together, enabling rapid international success.
Figure 7.1 presents Dijk’s (2003) conceptual model of a network society. Dijk’s model consists of various elements including, intermediaries/ links, nodes, actors, as well as differentiated relationships between each of the connected nodes. This model has been used, to help describe and construct the following born global network, for firms involved in internationalisation in the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry.
Figure 7.2: The Complete Network

- **Intermediary (Connectors)**
  - Institutional
  - Personal
  - Virtual Venues - Members

- **Forums – Networking Venues**
  - Physical Venues - Attendees
    - Int. Tradeshows & Festivals
    - Organised Events
  - Virtual Venues - Members
    - SNS

**Key**
- Strong Connector
- Weak Connector
- Connector
- Venue
Throughout the process of the data collection and after analysing the interview transcripts it was revealed, that while the animation sector is a community within itself, there are a number of different types of intermediaries and ‘venues’ responsible for promoting the internationalisation of born globals. The findings have identified two broad ‘classes’ of connectors / intermediaries, namely, ‘institutional’ and ‘personal’. These form a ‘suite of connectors’, which are categorised by their level / area of connection. Furthermore, the networking venues / forums are either physical or virtual venues where animators can connect, thus establishing fundamental connections.

- **Elements of the ‘Network’**

As previously described, a network links individuals, groups, organisations and societies together (Dijk, 2003) and as the literature confirms, social networks can be found anywhere, from small groups of individuals to complete global nations (Ethier, 2009). Therefore, this section will describe the elements found within the born global Digital, Film and TV production firm’s network, as well as highlighting the roles that each of the elements play.
Academic scholars have introduced the notion of network models to help explain the internationalisation route and motives followed by born globals. For example, the business network model developed by Johanson & Vahlne (2003) builds on the internationalisation process by adding a network focus. In particular, their latest model developed in 2009 examines the business network structure for the foreign market. Some of its components have been recognised in this study and further supported by Johanson & Vahlne (2003) who believes, that a lot of time and resources are required to develop relationships.

“When we set out in the beginning, we didn’t really know anyone internationally, but after spending a lot of time, energy and resources we gradually built our network, it doesn’t happen overnight. It takes a lot of patience and money to build links” (Founder, Firm O).

As described earlier, previous studies have highlighted the role of networks in the SME’s internationalisation process (Lindquist, 1988, McDougall et al., 1994; Bell, 1995). As such, this research has incorporated social network theory, as an “approach and set of techniques used to study the exchange of resources (information) among actors (i.e. individuals, groups, or organisations)” (Haythornthwaite, 1996, p. 323). The data has suggested that the Irish, born global, Digital, Film and TV production industry’s network is comparable with the existing theories on social network analysis, as there exists “regular patterns of information exchange, revealing themselves as social networks, with actors as nodes in the network and information exchange relationships as connectors between nodes” (Haythornthwaite, 1996, p. 323). Moreover, in support of existing theories, these findings suggest that there are numerous actors in the network, who are responsible for the exchange of resources, as previously identified by Haythornthwaite (1996); these are usually organisations or institutions, which is also a prominent finding in this study. For example, the Irish Film Board and Animation Ireland are prime examples of ‘actors’ in the born global Irish animation industry network.

The following sections will consider various elements of the ‘network’ and will attempt to describe the connectors/intermediaries or networkers, the networking venues/forums, the use and role of nodes, links and ties within and between such elements, as well as the relationship and strength of each of the ties, while reflecting
on the use of the gatekeepers in the born global internationalising route. Throughout the process of data collection, numerous key organisational individuals, for example Ms Eileen Bell at Animation Ireland, can be referred to as a ‘facilitators’. Facilitators have been described as those that can contribute to international business (Cavusgil et al., 2013, p.50). The findings described within this study identify with this type of individual or firm, as one that assists with “internationalisation and foreign operations” by using “special expertise” and include “banks, international trade lawyers, freight forwarders, customs brokers, and consultants” (Cavusgil et al., 2013, p. 42; 50). However, for the purpose of this investigation the facilitators in the born global network were described as connectors/intermediaries.

This research has identified the actual intermediary/networker, directly/formally and indirectly/informally involved within the internationalisation process for the Irish, Digital, Film and TV production area. Using the information sourced from in-depth interviews (phase 3), a ‘suite of connectors’ for the Digital, Film and TV production firms that facilitate the internationalisation process within the networks for born globals has been identified. It has also been established that contacts initiate from personal and institutional sources in this study. As Coviello & Munro (1995) established, there are different types of networks – formal and informal. Therefore, this study adopted a similar understanding to that of Coviello & Munro’s understanding of networks and that formal intermediaries were generally associated with business connections (Coviello & Munro, 1995) and labelled ‘institutional intermediaries’ in this study, while informal intermediaries referred to ‘family’ connections (Coviello & Munro, 1995). Therefore, informal intermediaries for this study, are known as ‘personal intermediaries’. The research is also supported by Persigner et al. (2007), noting that both formal and informal intermediaries are found in this industry and are a means for “facilitating market transactions” (p.76).

As in Coviello & Munro’s investigation, this research has revealed a substantial list of institutional connectors/intermediaries, or a ‘suite of connectors’, which include Enterprise Ireland, under which Animation Ireland was established, the Irish Film Board, Media Antenna (CARTOON), Screen Producers Ireland, Screen Directors Guild of Ireland, and lastly FÁS. Furthermore, a list of important personal contacts was also developed, which consisted of a list of agents and persons that were
employed because of the founders’ previous links. Moreover, client referrals, education links and word-of-mouth networks were also established. The diversity of these networks of intermediaries identified, support Barnes’ (1954, p.43) theory claiming that “the whole of social life could be seen as ‘a set of points which are joined by lines’” to form a “total network” of relations, and therefore this could be implemented by the Digital, Film and TV production industry to aid in their internationalisation process. The work described by Haythornwaite (1996; p.334) included the term ‘intermediary’, and their role has been suggested as follows “information that needs to pass from Actor A to Actor B, this can go through one intermediary” or more than one intermediary, if necessary. For example, as previously highlighted, the identified key person in Animation Ireland and MEDIA Antenna, found in the institutional suite of connectors and can be seen as an “intermediary network actor” as described by O’Gorman & Evers (2011, p.340).

Previous researchers have referred to these type of network developing organisations as, intermediary organisations (O’Gorman & Evers, 2011), infrastructural networks (Hallen, 1992) and institutional networks (Hadjikhani & Hakansson, 1996). Therefore, for the purpose of this investigation, organisations involved in developing connections are referred to as ‘institutional intermediaries/supports’. The second group of individuals that are believed to be responsible of initiating international connections are referred to as ‘personal intermediaries’. Both of these ‘intermediaries’ groups are involved in bridging structural holes (Burt, 1992), in the born global internationalising network.

The numerous connectors described previously, both institutional and personal, agree with Gladwell’s description of what is meant by a connector. Gladwell (2000) believes that a connector is an individual with a unique ability to link us with the rest of the world and bring people together via a social loop. Unsurprisingly, the intermediaries which have been identified in this thesis, involved in the growth of internationalisation for the born global companies are those, which link the Irish firm with international markets and subsequently aid in developing their presence in numerous international markets. However, the importance of these key individuals within support originations is noted as critical in terms of being a intermediary. These persons have the acquired human capital and experience in this particular industry, allowing them to develop the connection process. Gladwell (2000) also
recognised that it is these types of people that the connectors know which makes them important. Johannisson & Nilsson (1989) labelled these persons as, ‘key individuals’. However, the findings from this research indicated that some of the ‘institutional intermediaries’ lacked this type of knowledge and this was evident by the lack of support the interviewees gave in support of their connection role.

According to Haythornthwaite (1996), relationships are found at the hub of a social network, as they “indicate a connection between two or more people or things” (p.326). Therefore, it was not surprising to find that both ‘direct’ and ‘indirect’ relationships existed in this study (Coviello & Munro, 1995). Research has suggested that more than one relationship may exist between each of the connected nodes (Kadushin, 2005). Furthermore, there are two types of relationships or mapping approaches used in networks to explain relationships. These are, directional mapping, or a one way relationship and bi-directional mapping, a two way relationship (Kadushin, 2005), which runs parallel to the findings presented in this study. Whilst there are many attributes of a relationship, this research focused on the actual strength of the relationships which emerged.

Granovetter’s work regarding the significance of ‘the strength of weak ties’, was evaluated and tested in this study. Granovetter’s (1995) theory suggests that the ‘weak ties’ or weak connectors are more beneficial in terms of development than ‘strong ties’. The theory forecasts that weak ties extend the network of the born global firm in avenues different to that of previous, which demonstrates ‘the strength of weak ties’ (Granovetter, 1973). The findings from this study support this reasoning and moreover, the results of the study by Granovetter (1983). Granovetter (1983) suggested that the majority of workers in his study found work through personal connections, which are identified as friendly, yet casual connections (Gladwell, 2000). For example, in this research entrepreneurs found work through acquaintances with those at Enterprise Ireland, Animation Ireland and so forth, and not via their close acquaintances i.e. strong ties. We operate in the same world as our close friends, sharing similar knowledge, whilst we operate in a very different world to that of our acquaintances (Gladwell, 2000). Although, some of the respondents noted that connections had been made through close friends which, Granovetter (1983) refers to as ‘strong ties’, i.e. agents and founders’ previous links, these were
seen as of lesser importance in terms of growing a firm’s international presence. The findings from this study revealed that the firms involved in this research can ‘pool’ from a substantial number of weak ties, to aid in their internationalisation process. These findings highlight the stronger position of the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry, as an industry with a large number of weak ties, in comparison with an industry with a large number of strong ties (Sharma & Blomstermo, 2003), because of the costs involved in maintaining ties (Hansen, 1999). The study also supports the work of Rogers (1980) that weak ties provide firms with fresh knowledge which strong ties fail to deliver. This demonstrates the importance of weak ties in the internationalisation process of born global firms (Sharma & Blomstermo, 2003).

Whilst the intermediaries identified in this study are referred to as connectors, some can also be denoted as gatekeepers (Lewin, 1947). Gatekeepers are those who act as a gate through which knowledge flows (Allen & Cohen, 1969; Katz & Tushman, 1981), or in the words of Tushman & Katz (1980, p.1071) “boundary spanning individuals”. Therefore, it was not surprising that this research uncovered numerous gatekeepers which act as links, filling the structural holes in the born global ‘black box’. Enterprise Ireland, Animation Ireland and the Irish Film Board, to name but a few, are seen as principal gatekeepers in the network for born global Digital, Film and TV production firms seeking international expansion. While these funding agencies are, in Granovetter’s language, weak ties, they also can be deemed as gatekeepers. Thus, this would support Granovetter’s (1973) understanding of the ‘strength of weak ties’.

A key contribution of this study is the recognition and importance of networking venues, which supports the work of Evers & Knight (2008), as they recognised the importance of tradeshows as networking venues for the Seafood industry. These findings have revealed an important link between firms attending networking venues / forums i.e. international markets and festivals, and internationalisation progression. This finding has uncovered an important ‘node’ in the network described as ‘physical venues’ and ‘virtual venues’. Forums have been recognised as venues where networking occurs. Also, it has been established that who are present at the forums that ‘kindle’ connections. In a study by Persinger et al. (2007), they
highlighted that “physical presence is important” (p. 80). In agreement with this, all of the respondents in this study noted forums as extremely important venues for networking and seeking international markets, through attendees and delegates present.

The research has established that firms can expand from their home market to international markets via active relationships and these contacts aid in the development of new associates and positions within new markets (Johanson & Mattsson, 1988). The results of this current study agree with Johanson & Mattsson (1988), as many of the personal contacts resulted in access to foreign markets.

Haythornthwaite’s study suggests that, “regular patterns of relationships reveal themselves as social networks, with actors as nodes in the network, and relationship between actors as connectors between nodes” (Haythornthwaite, 1996, p.323). However, the most important ‘node’ in this network are the networking venues, and in particular, the attendance at international tradeshows and festivals. These venues act as a medium, where information is exchanged, viewed and where ideas are introduced or where possibly, a sale could be made.

7.3.1.1 Implications for the Network

As Birley (1985) suggested, studying new firms through a network ‘lens’ proves effective. In general, the network revealed for the Irish born global Digital, Film and TV production industry has been a dynamic discovery, and a substantial extension to existing literature on the internationalisation of born globals from a networking perspective.

This study identified, that there are a ‘suite’ of connectors, both strong and weak, that are deemed as important for born global firms moving to international markets. This allows the born global firm to choose from a menu of intermediary options. Figure 7.3 presents an overview of the ‘born global network’, which are inclusive of its ‘intermediaries’, ‘gatekeepers’, ‘actors’ as well as, the ‘pathway’ followed by those in the Digital, Film and TV production industry seeking international markets and more importantly, this has been facilitated through the use of forums or networking venues.
Figure 7.3: An Overview of the Born Global Network

- **Buyers/Producers**
  - Intermediary (Connectors)
    - Forums – Networking Venues
      - Physical Venues - Attendees
        - Int. Tradeshows & Festivals
      - Organised Events
      - Virtual Venues - Members
        - SNS
  - Institutional
  - Personal

**Key**
- Strong Connector
- Weak Connector
- Connector
- Venue
The highlighted ‘intermediaries/ connectors’ can also be seen as ‘gatekeepers’ in the born global network, as these ‘nodes’ are strongly ‘linked’ or ‘connected’ to both the born global firm and global customers. The individuals or organisations, labelled as intermediaries, are those involved with assisting information flow between the born global firm, networking venues and the buyers or producers. Findings have established that a ‘gatekeeper’ operates as an ‘actor’, collecting information from relevant companies, processing and sharing such with their international market contacts.

This section concludes the main focus of this study, unveiling the born global internationalising network. The following sections discuss the secondary questions pertaining to this study.

7.3.2 Secondary Research Questions

This research makes a contribution to existing literature by increasing our understanding of the born global entrepreneur, by providing a historical background of the founder, highlighting their global mindset and prior international experience, which is part of the born global internationalising success story. These questions attempt to address current research calls, as well as increase our knowledge of the born global entrepreneur and the drivers of their international success.

The first secondary research question attempts,

I. To gain an understanding of the background of the entrepreneur/ founder, particularly, their global mindset, the extent of international experience / market knowledge and the degree of networking capability.

While authors such as Gartner (1989) and Carland & Carland (1991) have defined an entrepreneur and their personal traits and characteristics (Cromie & Johns, 1983), there is a limited knowledge available on the born global entrepreneur. In addition, as Weerawardena et al., (2007) highlighted many of the previously developed approaches and models of born global internationalisation fail to capture the activities undertaken by the born global entrepreneur prior to setting up their own company. Therefore, this study examined the born global entrepreneur’s, global
mindset, international experience and their degree of networking capability prior to becoming involved in international operations.

In agreement with the work of Andersson (2011) “there appears to be many different types of entrepreneurs that create born globals” (Andersson, 2011, p. 631). This finding is also reflected by this study, as it is impossible to classify an individual type of born global entrepreneur, involved within the Digital, Film and TV production industry, as many variations existed from one entrepreneur to the next. These included deviations in their international experience and educational background, as well as differences in their global thinking and outlook, which is similar to the findings of previous authors of such studies (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012).

In addition, this study attempted to establish the reasoning behind the emergence of large numbers of born global firms. Whilst previous authors have suggested that a contributing factor associated with the appearance of born global firms is the “entrepreneurial behaviour” of the founder (Leonidou & Samiee, 2012, p.26); incorporating elements such as, innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking (Leonidou & Samiee, 2012), which are fundamental for a firm’s international progression. Other researchers understand that one of the key drivers for born global internationalisation is their founder’s global vision / mind-set (Rennie, 1993; Knight & Cavusgil, 1996; Gabrielsson & Kirpalani 2004). In today’s knowledge-rich society, ‘vision’ is important for a born global entrepreneur attempting international expansion. Rennie (1993) and McKinsey & Co. (1993) highlighted that the management of a born global firm, from birth, views the ‘world’ as its market. This study examined the born global entrepreneur’s global mindset and revealed that the majority of founding entrepreneurs in the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry have a clear global vision from inception. The Digital, Film and TV production entrepreneur understands the small open economy which they operate within. Ireland’s domestic market alone cannot support the animation industry, therefore the managerial focus for its company has always been international, as one Founder stated,

“We have always known that Ireland is such a small country that it can’t support all of the animation is produces” (Founder, Firm B).
Therefore exporting their services is a must, particularly because of the funding restrictions they encounter. Co-productions with other countries play a large part in the Irish animation industry’s international progression. Considering this, entrepreneurs involved within the industry are driven internationally, having to adopt a global mind-set from early inception. The findings from this study agree with the work of Luostarinen & Gabrielsson (2006) who defined the characteristics of a born global, as a firm with a planned global growth path, which was one of the distinguishing characteristics of the born globals in this study.

Furthermore, a global mindset often develops as a result of entrepreneurs who have carried out international work experience (Reuber & Fischer, 1999), prior to setting up their own companies. Persinger et al. (2007) believes that “managers with overseas responsibilities who remain in their home countries do not develop the same depth of understanding as managers who are required to live internationally” (p.80). Therefore, managers that are capable of understanding and developing information can “level the playing field when faced with financial restrictions” (Persinger et al., 2007, p.80). As previously suggested by the work of Andersson (2011), the findings from this study have established that while the entrepreneurs have a defined global outlook, there is variation in their market knowledge and the extent of their international experience. While some of the entrepreneurs had only a ‘limited’ knowledge of the international market, the majority of those involved in this study had some experience working in the international animation industry.

“My previously established connections were really important and most useful when it came to setting up my own company. I had many established contacts that I pooled from in the beginning, in order to get our animations out there” (Co-Founder, Firm A).

The above statement supports the work of Oviatt & McDougall (1997), who have described the born globals internationalisation process in its entirety, highlighting the importance of connections.
7.3.2.1 Implications for the Born Global Entrepreneur

As the literature has shown, there is a lack of agreed clarity on whom or what an entrepreneur is. Therefore, it is not surprising that a definition for a born global entrepreneur is difficult to establish (Andersson, 2011). While the entrepreneurs in this study demonstrated all the elements of a born global entrepreneur i.e. innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking (Leonidou & Samiee, 2012), each of the entrepreneur’s international and educational backgrounds varied considerably. These findings have also shown that the entrepreneurs within this study had a degree of market knowledge prior to establishing their own companies, which is reflected in their global vision and rapid internationalising strategies which they have adopted, i.e. accelerated internationalisation (Weerawardena et al., 2007).

Prior international and educational experience have each played an important part in equipping the entrepreneurs described within this study, as they engaged in networking internationally and as Andersson & Evangelista (2006) noted, “entrepreneurs can use their international experience, visions, ambitions and networks as crucial competencies in an international expansion” (p.656). This type of activity is particularly important for born global firms given their lack of knowledge (Autio, 2005). Overall, while this study augments our knowledge and understanding of the born global entrepreneur, the following section highlights the important drivers of the born global firm’s international progression.

II. What are the drivers that allow the firm to follow a rapid internationalising path?

This research addresses the knowledge gap regarding the factors that have triggered the born global phenomenon (Rialp et al., 2005), as well as this it captures the reasons and motives for born global Irish Digital, Film and TV production firms to adopt a rapid internationalisation approach.

‘How’ and ‘why’ firms internationalise has been the subject of much debate since the 1960’s (Cavusgil et al., 2013). Several models that capture the internationalisation process for rapid internationalising firms have been described in the literature throughout the years (Johnanson & Vahlne, 2003, p.89). Many of these
models have been further developed since to include the internationalisation process models (the U-M and the I-M) developed in the 1970’s. These models suggest that internationalisation takes place in incremental stages over long periods of time i.e. gradual internationalisation (Cavusgil et al., 2013). However, this is not the internationalisation approach adopted by the firms in this study. Born global internationalisation starts early in the firms evolution (Cavusgil et al., 2013). This rapid internationalisation approach by firms has been labelled as ‘instant internationals’ (Preece et al., 1999).

“....we knew straight away....it was a given fact that it was an international business, we weren’t making content for Ireland ever...” (Founder, Firm B),

Therefore, a rapid internationalising approach is adopted by born globals, rather than a gradual incremental process. The findings from this study reveal that the firms involved in this case study have adopted a rapid internationalisation approach because of the nature of their business and given the smallness of the home market, “Ireland can’t support animation alone” (Co-Founder, Firm H) as well as this, there is limited funding and resources available to them. The following quote illustrates the above point;

“The National Broadcaster, RTÉ, have no money....when they have no money for their industry and particularly animation, how are we to survive in Ireland? Moneyless? Support less?” (Founder, Firm E)

While born globals are said to ‘flourish’ in countries with small open economies (Rennie, 1993), the drivers behind this born global phenomenon have been suggested as environmental, organisational and managerial (Leonidou & Samiee, 2012), which has been common to all firms described in this study. In particular, the environmental factors relating to this study was the global competitiveness of the industry,

“Our biggest competition is the Far East – India, because they can do the stuff we are doing a hell of a lot cheaper. So we try to pitch ‘quality’ and ‘Section 481’ and try and add to their fund” (Founder, Firm F).
The Section 481 tax incentive is a unique selling point for the Irish animation industry,

“Losing Section 481 would have a major impact, as it gives us a very distinctive advantage over international companies” (Founder, Firm H).

In contrast to other industries, the Irish animation industry has a tax shelter, on which the industry is dependent. While the Irish animation industry has highly recognised standards, given their numerous prestigious awards, there is a “growing convergence of consumer tastes and needs all around the world” (Gabrielsson et al., 2008, p.386), which is one of the main concerns for these companies and this is supported by the following comment:

“You really have to be ahead of the game, always setting higher and higher standards, as consumers want more and more” (Founder, Firm J).

Organisational factors also play a role in driving the Digital, Film and TV production companies internationally, because of their unique product, consumer orientation and organisational culture supporting the views of Leonidou & Samiee (2012). This study also recorded managerial influences as international driving factors. This relates to the entrepreneurs highly motivated desire to internationalise, which was as a result of their high morals and work ethic. This has been discussed earlier in the study with regard to their international vision and global mindset, which together demonstrates the rapid international growth patterns followed by each firm in this study. The findings from this research support the work of many authors in this field (Cavusgil et al., 2013), and questions the ability of traditional models of internationalisation, in capturing a rapid internationalisation approach followed by the born globals (Madsen & Servais, 1997). A more detailed model for describing the initial stages of a firm’s internationalisation is necessary, which may be used to identify the rapid international growth strategies they employ (Johanson & Vahlne, 2003). Cavusgil et al. (2013) suggests that the current trends towards early internationalising are becoming the norm for international business.
7.3.2.2 Implications for Drivers of Internationalisation

In agreement with Cavusgil et al. (2013) and others, these findings confirm that born globals do not follow the traditional mode of internationalisation i.e. ‘stage models’, but rather an early/rapid internationalising approach. The findings are also supported by the work of Persinger et al. (2007), as they believe “such models are insufficient to describe the growing number of firms that are providing goods and services globally from birth – born globals” (p. 74). The reasons why these firms need to internationalise has been identified as, limited funding and resources, lack of creditability and the smallness of the domestic market which drives a firm internationally particularly through attendance at international tradeshows and festivals. This together with a ‘secret recipe’ has driven the industries success.

Whilst the magic ingredients of the industries success are still somewhat unknown to some, the ideas, twists, creativity, design and artistic storytelling are some of the hidden talents within this industry, leading to its international recognition and success.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter merges existing literature in the field of international entrepreneurship, born global theory and social network theory with the analysis. Combining the analysis with theory has led to a discussion and potential insight into what the ‘black box’ of the born global network actually is. In addressing this primary research question, how do born global firms manage and operate their network intermediaries and forums to drive and facilitate their internationalisation process? each of the key elements of the network, i.e. the nodes and links have been revealed and discussed. Taking a microscopic view within the network of the born global has allowed us to view the so-called ‘black box’. Forums and/or ‘networking venues’ have also been identified as critical enablers of the internationalisation of born globals.

In addition, this research contributes to our current understanding of the born global entrepreneur, by considering their global outlook, international and market knowledge, as well as their degree of networking capability, prior to setting up their
own firm. While it is difficult to identify a typical ‘type’ of born global entrepreneur, most of entrepreneurs involved within this study had a clear global vision from inception as well as an adequate amount of international knowledge and experience. However, for some entrepreneurs, internationalisation was part of a natural progression, rather than a planned objective.

Overall, this study contributes to existing literature by opening the network ‘black box’ and presenting a born global internationalising network. The study also details the ‘born global tale’, which is outlined in following figure (Figure 7.4). This figure represents a comprehensive process of born global internationalisation. Each of the three most important ‘gears’, the entrepreneur, intermediaries and forums, have been identified as a part of a five stage process.
The next, and final chapter, concludes with the main contributions of this study as well as outlining the implications of the research, for both management and policy makers. The chapter closes with the limitations of the study and suggestions for potential future research.
CHAPTER EIGHT – CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis by providing an overview of the research output and the main theoretical contributions of this dissertation. In addition, the implications of the research findings for management and public policy makers are also discussed. Finally, the limitations of the research are presented, as well as suggested avenues for future research.

8.2 Summary of Contribution to Theory

This study augments the current theory on the internationalisation of born globals and has filled some very important gaps in the research. While the previous chapter has outlined the research originality and contributions, some of the main contributions of this study are concisely detailed below:

- The first major contribution of this research is that this work extends previous knowledge that used the network perspective to investigate the internationalisation of born global firms (Coviello & Munro, 1995; 1997; Sharma & Blomstermo, 2003; Evers & Knight, 2008; O’Gorman & Evers, 2011). By building on the work of previous authors who were involved in developing network frameworks (Andersson & Wictor, 2003; Weerawardena et al., 2007), we have gained an insight into how the born global network operates allowing the facilitation and internationalisation process for the indigenous Irish born global Digital, Film and TV production firms. Although contributions by Coviello & Munro (1995) and others have given us an insight into the internationalisation of born globals, the function of the network i.e. the network process and the importance of social capital (Jones et al., 2011), in the internationalisation process is very much underexplored. Coviello & Munro (1995) have recognised the significance of the ‘network’ factor in the internationalisation process for born global firms. However, the underlying nature and processes of the connections within the network have not been fully explored despite the increasing number of studies that
have examined networks in international entrepreneurship theory and the internationalisation of born global firms. Furthermore, Jones et al. (2011) categorised 23 articles in international entrepreneurship focusing on networks, however such failed to examines how intermediaries and forums influence the internationalisation process of born global firms. Thus, this network represents a sort of ‘black box’ in the internationalisation process. We have established that ‘connectors’ and ‘gatekeepers’ are vital in ‘plugging the structural holes’ (Burt, 1992) between the born global firm and their international customers in a globalised industry. However, we have a limited understanding about the operational process. Therefore, this thesis has attempted to address many of these key issues.

A second contribution that this study makes is the introduction of ‘network ties’ based on the work by Granovetter (1973; 1983; 1995). This study further develops the current literature on the internationalisation of small firms, by presenting an understanding of how network ties operate within the network, and the importance of networking venues / forums and their role in the overall process as previously highlighted in the work of Evers & Knight (2008). The findings have identified that the entrepreneurs frequently rely on ‘weak ties’, e.g. Animation Ireland and networking venues such as international festivals and tradeshows, as a means of establishing fundamental connections. This is argued to be a critical ‘node’ in the network. In addition, this study has also identified that there are a ‘suite’ of connectors, both strong and weak in the internationalisation process of born global firms. These are identified as a mechanism through which a connection to an international market is made viable. Therefore, this study opens the ‘black box’ and presents a microscopic view of how born global firms manage and operate their network intermediaries and forums to drive and facilitate their internationalisation process.
Furthermore, Figure 7.4 reveals the ‘born global tale’ by illustrating each essential ‘gear’ as part of a five stage process. This diagram represents the steps followed by a born global company seeking international expansion. Born global Digital, Film and TV production firms began as a result of innovative enterprising individuals who identified a niche in the market, through either their previous work experience or their education paths. Therefore, the entrepreneur represents the first critical ‘gear’ in the internationalising process as these individuals gave birth to unique firms which developed in a novel indigenous industry. However, given the nature of the industry were international from inception or driven international. Consequently, the second essential ‘gear’ in the internationalisation process for born global animation firms relates to intermediaries or a ‘suite of connectors’ which these companies use when seeking international customers. The intermediaries were classified as institutional and personal. These are viewed as vital nodes in the network that link firms with buyers. Strengthening this connection process is the third ‘gear’ which relates to networking venues or forums. These comprise of both physical and virtual venues which incubate connections, connecting firms with international markets. Overall, Figure 7.4 captures the essential components required for born global Digital, Film and TV production companies seeking customers in the international arena.

Thirdly, our knowledge of the born global firm has been restricted by the narrow focus on generally, purest software firms. As such, new research in other industry sectors is warranted (Gabrielsson & Kirpalani, 2012; Leonidou & Samiee, 2012). This thesis focused on the born global phenomenon in the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry. Whilst it has been acknowledged that this sector may be seen as a subset of the software industry, it is also argued that the features within this sector are differentiated. For firms within this sector that are active in such a small domestic market as Ireland, this industry is virtually by definition, international. Given the smallness of the Irish marketplace shared with the centrality of Hollywood and other ‘centres’ of excellence in production within the sector, the indigenous firms, for their survival
must quickly access the international marketplace, in order to achieve success. In addition, this research addresses the knowledge gap surrounding the born global firm, by providing a deeper understanding of the early adopters of internationalisation (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). This involved investigating their age, size, international performance as well as the drivers of internationalisation together with a call to explore, the reasons for early internationalisation (Rialp et al., 2005). Whilst it was established that the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production firms were ‘smaller’ born globals to that of previous studies, they are as equally competitive internationally and if it not more successful in their field of expertise.

Fourthly, augmenting the suitability of the ‘novel’ industry explored – the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production sector this study includes the findings of an all island animation firm study. The recognition and success of the industry internationally is the direct result of the numerous achievements and high profile awards and nominations which they have received, such as numerous Oscar nominations. From a global perspective, the industry is on par with many of the market leaders such as Hollywood, including European countries and those within the Hollywood hub and other centres alike. Born global theory supports the idea that born global industries are often found in small domestic markets (Andersson & Wictor, 2003), and the findings from this thesis support this assertion. In addition, the industry has several idiosyncratic characteristics. It is a closely ‘knit’ industry because the players know each other so well, studied and trained together, building strong business relationships. As a result a natural network has formed where each of the players benefit, and learn from one other and use each another as an intermediary. Furthermore, in this industry firms tender for projects and each firm pitches their idea which encourages and allows cooperation amongst players.

Fifthly, many previous models of internationalisation have failed to capture entrepreneurial orientation prior to the founders establishing their
own companies (Weerawardena et al., 2007). This study has addressed this by exploring the entrepreneur’s background, inclusive of their prior, global mindset, international knowledge and experience as well as their networking capability. These findings have established that prior knowledge and experience of the global marketplace is important, together with a global vision from inception.

- A final contribution of this study relates to the methodological nature of research. The research approach employed by this study was fundamentally qualitative, involving in-depth interviews, as part of a single industry case study investigation in response to a call by researchers such as Rialp et al., (2005), as they understand case study research can gain a better understanding of the born global, using in-depth interviews (Knight, 2000). This approach added significant value to the research, given its application and degree of flexibility. This allowed the respondents perspective and comments to be clearly viewed and discussed, building a comprehensive case tracing both strategic and tactical moves (Knight, 2000), which would not have been possible if a quantitative approach had been employed.

The broader contributions of this study have been outlined and the next section will specifically address the managerial implications of this research.

8.3 Managerial Implications

This study has noted managerial implications for indigenous Irish born global Digital, Film and TV production entrepreneurs that seek to exhibit and explore international markets. Some of the main recommendations from this research are detailed as follows:

- This research has built on the limited literature available on born globals networking, to formulate a testable network inclusive of social networks and connectors, for entrepreneurs involved in internationalisation. A unique insight into the network has been established together with how connections with international markets are achieved. However, this
network may have implications for management, that is, at the surface it may seem that it is easy to become involved in the network, crossing the bridge, from node to node, through various links. Although, this is not the case. Becoming involved in the network is a complex and difficult matter, which requires a lot of time and resource building, as well as openness to the interests, needs and wants of other elements within the network. However, when business relationships and ‘links’ are built, these develop as strong opportunities within the international arena.

- It is also important that entrepreneurs position their firms to enable a selection of readily available relationships from a ‘menu’. This provides new opportunities as well as the prospect of building on existing relationships. However, these should be managed effectively in order to maximise opportunities and potential ‘links’ within the network.

As outlined, this study presents managerial implications as well as further public policy implications, which are discussed in the following section.

8.4 Public Policy Implications

This study has observed public policy implications to assist indigenous Irish born global Digital, Film and TV production entrepreneurs seeking international markets, some of which are detailed below:

- This research has identified the importance of government funded institutional supports as facilitators and lubricators of the network and their role in increasing the extent and quality of social capital. The importance of key individuals within support agencies has also been identified. For example Ms. Eileen Bell at Animation Ireland plays an important role in the network, by providing access to international markets through support at forums. Therefore, individual entrepreneurs can more clearly recognise the role of support agencies in the internationalising process.
- Given the nature of the born global firms, their lack of resources and liabilities, public policy makers play an important role in the indigenous Irish born global Digital, Film and TV production industries success. This industry is dependent on the Section 481 tax incentive and the continued support of the financial government intervention is vital. Funding agencies such as Enterprise Ireland and the Irish Film Board have been identified as important elements in the network, therefore continual funding of such agencies is needed, to support this successful industry.

While many implications have been noted in this research, concerning both management and public policy makers, research limitations have also been observed.

8.5 Research Limitations

This study has outlined the research undertakings which involved numerous stages, approaches and styles. However, shortcomings and limitations have been noted. Specific limitations of this thesis have been identified and are highlighted below:

- This study is limited in generalisability, as the case study is on a distinctive and relatively unique sector (the Digital, Film and TV production industry) and the single case study is based in Ireland. However, the findings point to some very important implications for born global firms emerging from a small domestic economy in a highly international industry. Whilst this perspective has helped the study develop an understanding of the Irish animation sector and how the industry has developed, it has also shown how difficult it has been for these companies in this current economic climate. It could be argued that due to the specific Irish focus, results carry implications for only Irish firms, resulting in a bias for the research findings. Therefore, the choice of context and methodology carried out in this study impacted on the researcher’s ability to generalise finding and replicate to other firms in different industries.

- One could also argue that the number of firms that were sampled for the research was limited. However, only sixteen firms, meeting the research screening criteria, are trading in the Irish industry. Therefore this study
reported the findings from a ‘full’ industry population (100% response rate), drawing enriched data from a multi-phase research approach.

- Finally, another limitation and potential criticism from this research is the lack of a longitudinal research approach. Using a longitudinal research approach is believed to have the ability to describe the internationalisation process and network development over a longer period of time (Coviello & Munro 1995; Ruzzier et al., 2006). However, given the time constraints for this thesis, a longitudinal study, at this point, is impossible. Nevertheless, a multi-phase research approach is a significant improvement on a single-phase approach. Coviello & Munro (1995) suggested that case study research would be as effective as longitudinal research, drawing rich in-depth data (Rialp et al., 2005).

While limitations have been noted in this study, some of which related to timing constraints, the researcher has noted avenues for future research.

8.6 Suggested Future Research

This study has identified that there is room for further research on networks and the internationalisation approach adopted by born global firms, as this is such a dynamic process, which is constantly evolving. Some of the possibilities that could be further investigated are described as follows:

- Given that this study was conducted in a single country (Ireland), it would be interesting to explore how the nature of this global network in Ireland compares with other networks throughout the world. Moreover, further research could usefully endeavour to probe the ‘black box’ further, through additional qualitative study, in different contextual settings. This would investigate if the research results can be replicated in other industries and global market settings.

- Additionally, a cross-sectoral or industry comparison focus may also prove interesting, for example the Digital Film and TV production industry versus
the Video Gaming industry. This would allow the researcher to draw further comparisons of the network utilised by both industries.

- Future research could benefit from, the verification of the network for born globals internationalising to a large population, investigating the impact of each of the elements involved in the network as well as identifying any additional elements that could also be involved in the process.

- While this dissertation centred mainly on the born global internationalising network and the elements within, it would also be interesting to establish if the success of the Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry could be transferable to other industries, using similar competitive strategies. It also could prove advantageous to investigate the replication of the driving factors of internationalisation in other industries. Together with providing an evaluation of the support agencies in other industries.

- Finally, in an era where everyone is connected to the internet and there is an increase in the number of social network users, gaining a greater insight into the ‘virtual networking venue’ which this study has recognised, may prove useful. This may be an avenue in the future where connections can ‘spark’.

8.7 Concluding Remarks

This study is very much in line with current literature within this key area. The links between the processes for internationalisation and born global development have been described using case study analysis obtained from firms within a specific industry in Ireland. This research bridges the gap between the ‘big picture’ of the networks and born global internationalisation, giving us an understanding of the network and allowing us look within the ‘black box’ of social networks, connectors and more importantly identifying the networking venues and their role in the overall process.

While the research material on born globals is ever increasing, this research has contributed to the theoretical development of the field, by studying a new industry
through a ‘network lens’. This is the first study that has attempted to explore the so-called ‘black box’ of social networking for born globals.

On the whole, the presented born global network for the indigenous Irish born global Digital, Film and TV production industry has been quite a discovery, marking a substantial extension to existing literature on the internationalisation of born globals. The study has revealed a ‘menu’ of connectors that born global firms can draw from when attempting international expansion. The network includes numerous elements, each of which have been identified and critiqued. Overall, this born global internationalising network can be used by firms as a route map when exploring potential international markets. Furthermore, this study has expanded our current knowledge of the born global entrepreneur and their respective firms, allowing an insight into their activities and previous experience, prior to setting up each legal establishment. Together with the earlier findings, this study adds a new, fresh perspective to a relatively small born global industry. As such, it is the first ever study to investigate the indigenous Irish Digital, Film and TV production industry using a qualitative multi-phase methodological approach.

Finally, the findings from the thesis may be applied to support firms seeking international expansion within the Digital, Film and TV production industry. In particular, the ‘microscopic view’ of the network has revealed the elements in the network and this can be used as a ‘tool’ to probe future internationalisation. This discovery fulfils the research objectives of this study and is also a key theoretical development for the field of born global theory, whereby the born global ‘black box’ has been unlocked somewhat.
BIBLIOGRAPHY:


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Rapley, T. (2001). The art (fullness) of open-ended interviewing: some considerations on analysing interview. *Qualitative research*, 1(3).


## APPENDIX ONE – THE APPROACHES DESCRIBING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entrepreneurial Model</th>
<th>Central Focus or Purpose</th>
<th>Assumption</th>
<th>Behaviours and Skills</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Great Person&quot; School</td>
<td>The entrepreneur has an intuitive ability – a sixth sense – and traits and instincts he/she is born with</td>
<td>Without the &quot;inborn&quot; intuition, the individual would be like the rest of us mortals who “lack what it takes”.</td>
<td>Intuition, vigour, energy, persistence, and self-esteem.</td>
<td>Start-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological Characteristics School</td>
<td>Entrepreneurs have unique values, attitudes, and need which drive them.</td>
<td>People behave in accordance with their values; behaviour results from attempts to satisfy needs.</td>
<td>Personal values, risk taking, need for achievement, and others.</td>
<td>Start-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical School</td>
<td>The central characteristic of entrepreneurial behaviour is innovation.</td>
<td>The critical aspect of entrepreneurship is in the process of doing rather than owning.</td>
<td>Innovation, creativity, and discovery.</td>
<td>Start-up and early growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management School</td>
<td>Entrepreneurs are organisers of an economic venture, they are people who organise, own, manage, and assume the risk...</td>
<td>Entrepreneurs can be developed or trained in the technical functions of management.</td>
<td>Production planning, people organising, capitalisation, and budgeting.</td>
<td>Early growth and maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership School</td>
<td>Entrepreneurs are leaders of peoples; they have the ability to adapt their style to the needs of people.</td>
<td>An entrepreneur cannot accomplish his/her goals alone, but depends on others.</td>
<td>Motivating, directing, and leading.</td>
<td>Early growth and maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrapreneurship School</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial skills can be useful in complex organisations; intrapreneurship is the development of independent units to create, market, and expend services.</td>
<td>Organisations need to adapt to survive; entrepreneurial activity leads to organisational building and entrepreneurs becoming managers.</td>
<td>Alertness to opportunities, maximising decisions.</td>
<td>Maturity and change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Cunningham and Lischeron, 1991, p.47)
## Appendix Two - Definitions of the Entrepreneur

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brockhaus (1980)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>...an entrepreneur is defined as a major owner and manager of a business venture not employed elsewhere (p.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cole (1959)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>The purposeful activity (including an integrated sequence of decision) of an individual or group of individuals, undertaken to initiate, maintain, or aggrandize a profit-orientated business unit for the production or distribution of economic goods and services (p. 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins and Moore (1970)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>We distinguish between organisation builders who create new and independent firm and those who perform entrepreneurial functions within already established organisations. Perhaps we are, after all, thinking of the entrepreneur in the way Schumpeter viewed him: &quot;everyone is an entrepreneur only when he actually 'carries out new combinations,' and loses that character as soon as he has built up his business (p. 10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper and Dunkelberg (1981)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>This paper reports upon what we believe to be the largest and most varied sample of entrepreneurs studied to date. The findings are from a survey of 1805 owner-managers. Founders of new business (p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davids (1963)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Founders of new businesses (p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draheim (1972)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship – the act of founding a new company where none existed before. Entrepreneur is the person and entrepreneurs are the small group of persons who are new company founders. The term is also used to indicate that the founders have some significant ownership stake in the business (they are not only employees) and that their intention is for the business to grow and prosper beyond the self-employment stage (p. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ely and Hess (1937)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>The person of group of people who assume the task and responsibility of combining the factors of production into a business organisation and keeping this organisation in operation... he commands the industrial forces, and upon him rests the responsibility for their success of failure. (p. 113)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Hartman (1959)             | N    | A distinction between manager and entrepreneur in terms of their relationship to formal authority in the industrial organisation... The entrepreneur may justify his formal authority independently or he may describe it as delegate from others, notably form the stockholders. But within the organisation he alone is the source of all formal authority. Management is defined residually as "not being the
Definitions of the Entrepreneur (Continued 2 of 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hornaday and Aboud (1971)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>The “successful entrepreneur” was defined as a man or women who started a business where there was none before, who had at least 8 employees and who had been established for at least 5 years. (p.450451)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hornaday and Bunker (1970)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>....the “successful” entrepreneur was an individual who had started a business, building it where no previous business had been functioning, and continuing for a period of at least 5 years to the present profit-making structure...with 15 or more employees. (p. 50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howell (1972)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Entrepreneurship - the act of founding a new company where none existed before. Entrepreneur is the person and entrepreneurs are the small group of persons who are new company founders. The term is also used to indicate that the founders have some significant ownership stake in the business (they are not only employees) and that their intention for the business to grow and prosper beyond the self-employment stage. (p. 1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hull, Bosley, and Udell, (1980)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A person who organises and manages a business undertaking assuming the risk for the sake of profit. For present purposes, this standard definition will be extended to include those individuals who purchase or inherit an existing business with the intention of (and effort towards) expanding it. (p. 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lachman (1980)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>The entrepreneur is perceived as a person who uses a new combination of production factors to produce the first brand in an industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lavington (1922)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>In modern times the entrepreneur assumes many forms. He may be a private business man, a partnership, a joint stock company, a cooperative society, a municipality or similar body. (p. 19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leibenstein (1968)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>By routine entrepreneurship we mean the activities involved in coordinating and carrying on a well-established, going concern in which the parts of the production function in use (and likely alternatives to current use) are well known and which operates in well established and clearly defined markets. By N-entrepreneurship we mean the activities necessary to create or carry on an enterprise where not all the markets are well established or clearly defined and/or in which the relevant parts of the production function are not completely known. (p. 73)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definitions of the Entrepreneur (Continued 3 of 4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liles (1974)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>We have examined the entrepreneur who is involved in substantial ventures and have considered what we found in light of traditional thinking that he is a special type of individual – Somewhat an unusual and uncommon man – a man apart. It probably is true that very successful entrepreneurs become men apart. But, at the beginning, when they make the decision to start an entrepreneurial career, they are in most respects very much like many other ambitious, striving individuals. (p. 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Litzinger (1965)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>The distinction is drawn between “entrepreneurs” who are goal and action orientated as contrasted to “managers” who carry out policies and procedures in achieving the goals....Owners of mom and pop motels appear as the entrepreneurial type who have invested in their own capital and operate a business (p. 268)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McClelland (1961)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>...someone who exercises some control over the means of production and produces more than he can consume in order to sell (or household) income.... in practice such people turned out to be traders, independent artisans and firm operators (p. 65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer (1971)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>... the entrepreneurial function involves primarily risk measurement and risk taking within a business organisation. Furthermore, the successful entrepreneur is that individual who can correctly interpret the risk situation and then determine policies which will minimise the risk involved.... Thus, the individual who can correctly measure the risk situation, but is unable to minimise the risk, would not be defined as an entrepreneur. (p. 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say (1816)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>The agent who united all means of production and who finds in the value of the products.... the re-establishment of the entire capital he employs, and the value of the wages, the interest and the rent which he pays, as well as the profits belonging to himself. (p. 28-29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schumpeter (1934)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>....entrepreneurship, as defined, essentially. Consists in doing things that are not generally done in the ordinary course of business routine, it is essentially a phenomenon that comes under the wider aspect of leadership. (p. 254)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stauss (1944)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>This paper is an argument to advance the proposition that the firm is the entrepreneur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wainer and Rubin (1969)</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>The entrepreneur in McClelland’s scheme is “the man who organise the firm (the business unit) and/or increases its productive capacity.” (p. 178)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Adapted by Author from Gartner, 1989, p.49-56)
# APPENDIX THREE – FOUNDER AND COMPANY PROFILE OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Founder(s)</th>
<th>Nationality of Founder(s)</th>
<th>Education Background</th>
<th>Previous Involvement in Animation/International Experience</th>
<th>Global Vision from Inception</th>
<th>Year of Inception</th>
<th>Year of Internationalising / International Markets</th>
<th>No of Employees (Min-Max)</th>
<th>Additional Offices/ % of Sales in International Markets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>No at Inception: 2</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Ballyfermot - Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -Prague -Germany -London -Ireland (Cartoon Saloon)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Year: 2005</td>
<td>2-20</td>
<td>Additional office(s): NO</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Currently Involved: 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>No at Inception: 2</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Institution: DCU - Degree in Law Institution: Ballyfermot - Degree in Animation Institution: Dun Laoghaire - Animation Qualification</td>
<td>Location: - Los Angeles (Warner Brothers)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Year: 2003</td>
<td>2-17</td>
<td>Additional office(s): NO</td>
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<td>No Currently Involved: 1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Founder(s)</td>
<td>Nationality of Founder(s)</td>
<td>Education Background</td>
<td>Previous Involvement in Animation/International Experience</td>
<td>Global Vision from Inception</td>
<td>Year of Inception</td>
<td>Year of Internationalising / International Markets</td>
<td>No of Employees (Min-Max)</td>
<td>Additional Offices/ % of Sales in International Markets</td>
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<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>No at Inception: 2</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -USA -Ireland (Cartoon Saloon)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Year: 2000</td>
<td>20-40</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Currently Involved: 1</td>
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<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -USA -Canada -UK - Australia</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td></td>
<td>% of Int Sales: 96%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>No at Inception: 2</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -USA -UK -USA</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Year: 1995</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Additional Offices(s): YES LA</td>
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<td>No Currently: 2</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -UK -USA</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td></td>
<td>% of Int Sales: 100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>No at Inception: 1</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -Ireland (Emerald City, Sullivan Bluths, Zig &amp; Zag)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Year: 1995</td>
<td>7-30</td>
<td>Additional Offices(s): YES LA</td>
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<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -US -UK - Asia - Singapore -Holland</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<td>% of Int Sales: 100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Company</td>
<td>Founder(s)</td>
<td>Nationality of Founder(s)</td>
<td>Education Background</td>
<td>Previous Involvement in Animation/International Experience</td>
<td>Global Vision from Inception</td>
<td>Year of Inception</td>
<td>Year of Internationalising / International Markets</td>
<td>No of Employees (Min-Max)</td>
<td>Additional Offices/ % of Sales in International Markets</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>No at Inception: 2</td>
<td>Irish Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -England</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Year: 1999</td>
<td>19-75</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No Currently Involved: 2</td>
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<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -England</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Year: 1999</td>
<td>19-75</td>
<td>Additional Office(s): NO</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Irish Icelandic</td>
<td>Institution: NCAD -Degree in Design</td>
<td>Location: -Ireland -England</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Year: 2010</td>
<td>2-16</td>
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<td>Irish Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Edinburgh College of Art -Masters in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -Ireland -England</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Year: 2010</td>
<td>2-16</td>
<td>Additional Office(s): NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>No at Inception: 3</td>
<td>Irish Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -Ireland -Sullivan Bluths (Sullivan Bluths) -USA (Disney LA, Fox Animation) -France (Disney)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Year: 2002</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Additional Office(s): NO</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Currently Involved: 3</td>
<td>Irish Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -Ireland -Sullivan Bluths (Sullivan Bluths) -USA (Disney LA, Fox Animation) -France (Disney)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Year: 2002</td>
<td>20+</td>
<td>Additional Office(s): NO</td>
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## Founder and Company Profile Overview (Continued 4 of 6)

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<thead>
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<th>Company</th>
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<th>Nationality of Founder(s)</th>
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<th>Global Vision from Inception</th>
<th>Year of Inception</th>
<th>Year of Internationalising / International Markets</th>
<th>No of Employees (Min-Max)</th>
<th>Additional Offices/ % of Sales in International Markets</th>
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<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>No at Inception: 1</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Ballyfermot -Degree in Animation</td>
<td>Location: -USA (Disney LA) -Ireland</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Year: 2001</td>
<td>10+</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>No at Inception: 3</td>
<td>Irish Irish Irish</td>
<td>Institution: NCAD -Degree in Animation Institution: Gonzage College Institution: UCD</td>
<td>Location: -Ireland (Murakami Wolf)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Year: 2003</td>
<td>3+</td>
<td>Additional Office(s): NO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>No Currently: 3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>No at Inception: 1</td>
<td>German</td>
<td>Institution: University of Wuppertal and Bachum -Social Sciences and Communication</td>
<td>Location: -World Experience as a Journalist. Not in Animation</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Year: 1994</td>
<td>12-80</td>
<td>Additional Office(s): YES 8</td>
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### Founder and Company Profile Overview (Continued 5 of 6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
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<th>Education Background</th>
<th>Previous Involvement in Animation/ International Experience</th>
<th>Global Vision from Inception</th>
<th>Year of Inception</th>
<th>Year of Internationalising / International Markets</th>
<th>No of Employees (Min-Max)</th>
<th>Additional Offices/ % of Sales in International Markets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>No at Inception: 1</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Qualification: -Engineering Degree -Law Degree</td>
<td>Location: -USA (Self Employed)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Year: 2010</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>Additional Office(s): NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>No Currently Involved: 1</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Qualification: -Engineering Degree -Law Degree</td>
<td>Location: -USA (Self Employed)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Year: 2010</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>Additional Office(s): NO</td>
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<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>No at Inception: 2</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Institution: Trinity -BA Arts in English and French</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Year: 2005</td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>Additional Office(s): NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>No Currently Involved: 1</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Qualification: Accountant</td>
<td>Location: -Ireland (Sullivan Bluth)</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Year: 1998</td>
<td>12+</td>
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<td>Location: -Ireland (Sullivan Bluth)</td>
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<td>1995</td>
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<td>Founder(s)</td>
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<td>Education Background</td>
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<td>Global Vision from Inception</td>
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<td>Year of Internationalising / International Markets</td>
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Exhibiting Companies at MIPCOM (Continued 3 of 4)
## Appendix Six – Company Information Template

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Ms Adele Smith,
J.E. Cairnes School of Business & Economics,
National University of Ireland, Galway,
Galway,
Ireland

Dear Mr.………,

I am currently engaging in a PhD at the National University of Ireland, Galway. The focus of my research is business internationalisation and the networking approaches adopted throughout this process. Over the past eighteen months I have gathered and subsequently developed a potential dataset of indigenous Irish internationalisation animation companies suitable for the research at hand. My understanding is that (Company Name) fits the research criteria of this research agenda. Therefore, whilst I am fully aware that your own schedule is a complex one, I would be delighted if you would take a few moments and consider taking part in a research interview.

The principle aim of this research is to understand how Irish animation companies access global markets with respect to the reasoning, pace, pattern and mode of internationalisation adopted, as well gain an insight into the issues and challenges which was experienced by both the company and yourself throughout this process. In addition to this the research seeks to identify the networking approach used by such firms, as well as recognise the key connectors within each network. Overall it is anticipated that such findings will aid as well as educate future entrepreneurs in their decision making process. Given the nature of your company, and as it is a fascinating and illustrative example, it offers the potential to guide policy making and provide a positive outcome for those in similar situations.

There are a number of valuable attributes as to why you might give serious consideration to partaking in this proposed research. Firstly, you will be given the opportunity to discuss your personal experiences on behalf of the company, with the potential to guide future policies which may impact upon the animation industry. Secondly, you will be kept informed of our research developments and findings throughout this research process. And thirdly, you have the chance to equip future business founders with the skills they may need to succeed in any given industry by offering to share your insights and knowledge with this study.
There are a number of assurances included in this study if you agree to take part. Most importantly, confidentiality is guaranteed, as the company details and the names of the individual participants will remain anonymous, unless instructed otherwise. Furthermore, the research agenda will not be seeking information of a confidential or sensitive nature, and in any case the respondent is not obliged to answer questions which are believed to intrude in privacy. Certainly, the sole focus of this research will be to gain an understanding of the internationalisation process of animation companies.

I would kindly advise you to strongly consider taking part in this research. While it is of obvious benefit to my own research agenda, it could possibly evolve to be of huge benefit to your own understanding and assimilation of your experience in business within the animation industry.

I am contactable through the email address and mobile number below and I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Ms Adele Smith (PhD Candidate)
Email: a.smith15@nuigalway.ie or adele_smith1@hotmail.com
Mobile: +353 87 7593243

Dr. Paul Ryan (PhD Research Supervisor)
Email: paul.ryan@nuigalway.ie
Tel: +353 91 492020
## APPENDIX EIGHT – IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

In-depth Interview Schedule For Semi-Structured Interviews with Founder(s) of Indigenous Irish Born Global Animation Companies

(This schedule is designed to provide a framework for a semi-structured interview. It is intended to provide a broad, flexible framework for the interviews and ensure that all key issues are addressed while allowing space to interrogate specific issues in greater detail if appropriate)

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEWER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERVIEWEE (S)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSITION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 1.0 Individual/ Founder(s) Profile and Information – Pre- Inception and Pre-Internationalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF NO</th>
<th>TIMESPAN</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business idea, formation, feasibility and experimentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How many founders involved?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How did founders meet?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How did the idea come about?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- How was idea tested?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Founder(s) background and experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Prior international experience,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- International orientation/direction of interest/ mindset,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Networking capability,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Education background,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Previous involvement in Animation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### In-depth Interview Schedule (Continued 3 of 12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Founder(s) objective</th>
<th>Pre international knowledge/ Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>- Global vision from inception,</td>
<td>- Competitors,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Future plans pre-inception/ pre-internationalisation</td>
<td>- Products/Services,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Market,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Funding,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Barriers - Language, Culture, Knowledge,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Finance, Importing,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Market Access</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 2.0 Industry / Company Profile and Information – *Internationalising*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF NO</th>
<th>TIMESPAN</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2.1    |          | Year of inception  
          | - Year of registration |
| 2.2    |          | Company size  
          | - No of employees,  
          | - Yearly Average turnover/ revenue –  
          | Eg (2008 vs 2009),  
          | - Recession – Increasing/Decreasing,  
          | - No of additional offices/sites |
| 2.3    |          | Profile -Type of Productions  
          | - Co-Productions, Service Work etc,  
          | - Role in Production |
### In-depth Interview Schedule (Continued 5 of 12)

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2.4 | **No of years involved in internationalisation**  
- When did the company first become involved in International Markets?  
- No of international market(s) currently involved in (Top Five),  
- % of Sales in International Markets |
| 2.5 | **Reason for international expansion**  
- Company sought international markets i.e. Market “Callings”/  
  International markets sought company-Company headhunted ,  
- Domestic market too small, Lower labour costs, increase in internal competition. |
| 2.6 | **List of activities performed outside of Ireland**  
- Sales base,  
- Distribution,  
- Production-Outsourcing |
## In-depth Interview Schedule (Continued 6 of 12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF NO</th>
<th>TIMESPAN</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.7</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Importance of R&amp;D</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Important factor?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- % of turnover spent on R&amp;D – Fixed/Variable yearly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- PLC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>USP/ Competitive Advantage</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Differences that exist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**3.0 Globalisation – Internationalisation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF NO</th>
<th>TIMESPAN</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Key drivers of the companies internationalisation path</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Attendance at international festivals,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- International awards/Nominations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Role of the internet within the company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Importance of internet ,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Communication,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Design,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Advertising – Company Website, Social Networking Sites i.e. Success of such.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.0 Networking – Pre-Internationalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF NO</th>
<th>TIMESPAN</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal related networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Previous work experience,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Family or friend networks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational/ industrial related networks</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Suppliers,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Customers,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Financiers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In-depth Interview Schedule (Continued 9 of 12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4.3</th>
<th>Who are the connectors? (Those that link us up with the rest of the world, Gladwell (2000) – Agents etc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CONNECTORS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Animation Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES ☐ NO ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enterprise Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES ☐ NO ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IBEC Audiovisual Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES ☐ NO ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irish Film Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES ☐ NO ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pegbar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES ☐ NO ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Screen Producers Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES ☐ NO ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other Specify___________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES ☐ NO ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 4.4 | How were connections/ bonds established? |
### In-depth Interview Schedule (Continued 10 of 12)

| 4.5 | Sketch the network – *Separate Sheet*  
- Strong lines/ties,  
- Weak lines/ties |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Examples of existing animation companies which could be used as a model for internationalisation followed by the company.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 Draw A Sketch of the Companies Network

For Example:
### 5.0 Subsequent Company Decisions – Post Internationalisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REF NO</th>
<th>TIMESPAN</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Philosophy behind seeking / identifying new markets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>Current internationalising problems/ barriers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Market access, finance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Changes incurred</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Organisation,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Staffing,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Entry mode – in existing markets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Market withdrawal,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Exit opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Future objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Additional Information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>