

FROM LOCAL DESIGN STUDIOS TO GLOBAL PRACTICES:
THE INTERNATIONAL EXPANSION OF INDIAN ARCHITECTURE FIRMS

by

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DISSERTATION

Presented to the Swiss School of Business and Management Geneva

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements

For the Degree

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

SWISS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT GENEVA

June, 2026

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Dedication

This dissertation is devoted, with profound love and reverence, to the memory of my late mother, Dr. Geetha S. Prakash, whose unwavering belief in the transformative power of education shaped my aspirations and continues to guide me beyond her presence. This work represents not only the culmination of years of academic pursuit, but also the fulfilment of a promise I made to her during her final days. Her wisdom, strength, grace, and enduring faith in my abilities remain a constant source of inspiration, and I hope this achievement stands as a humble tribute to her remarkable life and lasting influence.

I extend my deepest gratitude to my father, Cdr N. S. S. Prakash, Indian Navy (Retd.), whose life has exemplified discipline, integrity, resilience, and quiet fortitude. His steadfast encouragement, unwavering confidence, and lifelong support provided the strength and stability necessary to persevere through the demands of this doctoral journey. His example has profoundly shaped my character, values, and commitment to excellence.

This dissertation is equally dedicated to my wife, Sikha Deepu, and my son, Amey Deepu, whose love, patience, understanding, and constant encouragement sustained me throughout this endeavour. Their sacrifices, unwavering faith, and presence beside me during moments of uncertainty and exhaustion made this accomplishment possible. They have been the emotional foundation upon which this achievement rests.

For the past three years, Amey often asked when he would finally be able to address me as “Doctor.” - Dear Amey, that moment has now arrived.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my doctoral guide and mentor, Dr. HARA Masatoshi, Ph.D., DBA, Ed.D., Honorary Ph.D. (Dr. Masa), for his exceptional guidance, scholarly insight, encouragement, and unwavering support throughout this doctoral journey. Dr.Masa's intellectual rigour, patience, and commitment to academic excellence profoundly shaped the direction and quality of this research, while his mentorship inspired confidence, resilience, and a deeper commitment to scholarly inquiry.

I extend my sincere gratitude to Dr. Sobha Rani, FRICS and Managing Director of Esttareal Solutions Pvt Ltd, for introducing me to the DBA programme at Swiss School of Business and Management Geneva and for encouraging me to pursue this academic endeavour.

My heartfelt appreciation is extended to my former supervisors and mentors, R. S. Prakash and Bharadwaj B. V. at Surbana Jurong, whose mentorship provided invaluable exposure to multidisciplinary design, strategic project delivery, and international business environments across diverse sectors and geographies, significantly shaping the perspectives underpinning this research.

I also sincerely thank the 48 survey participants, industry leaders, design directors, colleagues, peers, and associates from diverse geographies, whose valuable insights enriched this study.

I gratefully acknowledge Pooja Renjit and Shylesh V. P. for their assistance with document review, survey preparation, and sourcing relevant literature.

ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines how Indian architecture firms expand into international markets and how they navigate the strategic, institutional, and capability-related challenges that accompany cross-border practice. The study addresses the problem that existing research has largely focused on architecture firms in advanced economies, leaving limited understanding of how Indian firms build viable global pathways while managing liability of foreignness, regulatory complexity, and competitive pressure. The study seeks to identify the main drivers of international expansion and the market entry strategies and critical success factors that support effective overseas engagement. It is guided by two central questions: what motivates Indian architecture firms to internationalize, and what strategies and enabling factors allow them to succeed in foreign markets? To address these questions, the research adopts a qualitative, multiple-case design using semi-structured online questionnaires and documentary analysis. Data were collected from principals and senior decision-makers in Indian architecture firms with international experience and were analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns across cases. The findings show that internationalisation is driven by a combination of economic, reputational, relational,

institutional, and capability-based factors. Firms are motivated by domestic market saturation, revenue diversification, prestige enhancement, and access to learning and innovation opportunities. However, the most decisive enablers of international expansion are not economic motives alone, but strong professional networks, client followership, diaspora connections, and the ability to adapt designs and processes to host-country requirements. Successful firms tend to use flexible entry modes, including partnerships, alliances, and locally embedded collaboration, rather than relying exclusively on direct market entry. Technological capabilities, particularly digital design tools and Building Information Modelling, also emerge as important competitive advantages. The study concludes that internationalisation in Indian architectural practice is a gradual, capability-intensive, and relationship-driven process. Sustainable global expansion depends on combining design excellence with institutional adaptability, network legitimacy, and strategic resource deployment. The research contributes to understanding professional service firm internationalisation from an emerging-market perspective and offers practical implications for firms seeking to expand abroad in a controlled and strategically aligned manner.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

The architectural profession in India is undergoing a structural shift from domestically oriented design studios towards globally engaged professional service firms, as internationalisation becomes a strategic response to intensified competition, evolving client geographies, and the reconfiguration of global value chains in construction and design (McNeill, 2009; Winch, 2008). Indian architecture firms, historically embedded in local regulatory, cultural, and socio-economic contexts, are increasingly compelled to seek opportunities beyond national borders to diversify revenue bases, strengthen reputational capital, and access higher-value, knowledge-intensive project ecologies (Aoun and Teller, 2016; Tiwari et al., 2016).

Globalisation has transformed architecture into a highly networked, project-based industry in which firms compete less through tangible assets and more through intangible resources such as design expertise, reputation, and relational capital (McNeill, 2009; Faulconbridge, 2010). For Indian practices, liberalization of the domestic economy, saturation in certain metropolitan markets, and the mobility of corporate and institutional clients collectively generate push–pull dynamics that encourage outward expansion into regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia (Thite et al., 2016; Hafez, 2024). At the same time, advances in digital collaboration, Building Information Modelling (BIM), and cloud-based

platforms reduce geographic frictions, enabling Indian firms to deliver complex projects across borders while remaining anchored in India as a cost-competitive production and knowledge hub (Schmitt and Baldegger, 2020; McQuillan and Scott, 2015).

These structural changes expose several business issues that motivate the present study. First, Indian firms face the “liability of foreignness”, manifest in unfamiliar regulatory regimes, stringent licensing requirements, and deeply contextualized planning and building standards that can disadvantage late-entering, emerging-market practices vis-à-vis established Western and East Asian competitors (Tiwari et al., 2016; Winch et al., 2002). Second, many firms confront capability gaps in international business development, including limited experience with foreign procurement systems, constrained access to export finance and risk-mitigation instruments, and insufficiently institutionalized processes for contracting, professional indemnity, and dispute resolution (Chen and Messner, 2009; Halpin and Huang, 1995). Third, there is persistent tension between fee pressures and value creation; Indian firms are often positioned in global narratives as low-cost providers rather than strategic design partners, heightening risks of commoditization and constraining their ability to capture reputational and financial returns from design innovation (McNeill, 2009; Ponzini, 2021).

Simultaneously, internationalisation presents strategic opportunities that reframe these business challenges as potential sources of competitive advantage. Exposure to diverse climatic, cultural, and regulatory environments fosters architectural innovation, enabling firms to hybridize local design sensibilities with global typologies and sustainability standards, thereby enhancing both exportable expertise and the quality of practice at home

(Winch and Grzes, 2002; Aoun and Teller, 2016). Engagement in foreign markets also expands professional networks, deepens relational embeddedness with global clients, and strengthens brand architecture, permitting firms to leverage international recognition to reinforce domestic positioning (Douglas et al., 2001; McQuillan and Scott, 2015). In this sense, internationalisation can operate as a virtuous cycle in which external projects generate knowledge, legitimacy, and revenue that can be reinvested into organisational systems, technology, and talent development (Sugre, 2017; Du et al., 2022).

Despite these dynamics, current scholarship remains heavily skewed towards architecture firms from advanced economies, offering limited insight into how Indian practices—constrained by institutional voids, capital limitations, and asymmetric bargaining power—construct viable pathways from local studios to global practices (Winch, 2008; Ahammad et al., 2021). Emerging work on Indian and other emerging-market firms suggests that internationalisation is shaped by a complex mix of economic incentives, institutional reforms, and network-based learning, yet the trajectories through which these forces translate into concrete market entry choices, partnership models, and organisational adaptations in architectural practice are not well documented (Elango and Pattnaik, 2013; Chan and Pattnaik, 2021). This lacuna has direct managerial implications, as firm leaders lack empirically grounded guidance on how to calibrate international ambitions with resource endowments, risk profiles, and long-term positioning.

The present study is therefore designed with a dual intent. At an academic level, it seeks to extend international business and professional service firm theory by foregrounding the experiences of Indian architecture firms and integrating Resource-Based View, Network

Theory, and Institutional Theory to explain their internationalisation patterns (Chong and Gradstein, 2007; Winch, 2014; Han et al., 2024). At a practice-oriented level, it aims to surface actionable insights into critical success factors, market entry strategies, and capability-building pathways that can help Indian firms convert episodic foreign engagements into sustainable, strategically aligned global operations (Oswal et al., 2014; Peterdy, 2023). By systematically interrogating how and why Indian architecture firms expand internationally, the research addresses pressing business issues of competitiveness, risk management, and value capture, while contributing to a more plural and contextually grounded understanding of global architectural practice (McNeill, 2009; Winch, 2011).

1.2 Research Problems

The research problems arise from a disjuncture between practical business imperatives—such as navigating liability of foreignness, capability deficits, and value commoditisation—and fragmented theoretical and empirical guidance for emerging-market contexts. To clarify this, the analysis synthesises existing literature and identifies key gaps. While prior research illuminates drivers and strategies in developed economies, it insufficiently equips Indian firms to operationalise global expansion, necessitating focused empirical inquiry.

Literature on architectural internationalisation converges around three themes: drivers of expansion, strategic entry modes and adaptations, and enabling factors such as knowledge transfer and innovation. Architecture is conceptualised as a knowledge-intensive professional service firm (PSF) sector, where competitiveness depends on intangible

assets—reputational capital, relational networks, and epistemic legitimacy—rather than scale (McNeill, 2009; Winch, 2008; Faulconbridge, 2010). Drivers include economic motivations (market diversification, profitability), professional aspirations (reputation, skill accumulation), and external forces (client globalisation, urbanisation) (Perkins, 2021; Tiwari et al., 2016). McQuillan and Scott (2015) identify four business models—Multiple Local, Global, Niche Global, Local to Global—aligned with firm capabilities and risk profiles, while entry modes range from exporting and licensing to subsidiaries and joint ventures (Chen and Messner, 2009; Sukali and Musyoka, 2017).

Cultural and regulatory navigation remains a central challenge, framed as liability of foreignness and intensified by architecture's contextual embeddedness (Tiwari et al., 2016; Zaheer, 1995). Winch et al. (2002) show that success depends on institutional adaptation, language capability, and local staffing rather than standardised approaches. Design innovation mitigates these constraints, with international exposure fostering hybrid aesthetics and knowledge spillovers (Aoun and Teller, 2016; Kale, 2012). Technological enablers such as BIM and digital platforms facilitate cross-border collaboration and standard portability, reducing geographic barriers (McQuillan and Scott, 2015; Schmitt and Baldegger, 2020).

Theoretical perspectives integrate Resource-Based View (RBV), Institutional Theory, and Network Theory to explain firm advantages, regulatory alignment, and relational embeddedness (Barney, 1991; Scott, 2008; Johanson and Mattsson, 1988). Emerging-market extensions emphasise glocalisation, combining cost efficiencies with cultural adaptability (Ahammad et al., 2021; Thite et al., 2016). Empirical illustrations, including

Morphogenesis and CP Kukreja, demonstrate early global engagement but highlight persistent challenges in branding and financial resilience (Mehrotra, 2020; Autodesk, 2024).

Strategic tools such as the Global Expansion Strategy Matrix and Strategic Quadrant align entry modes with market familiarity and service complexity (Oswal et al., 2014; Johanson and Vahlne, 1977). Critical success factors (CSFs) include partnerships, reputation, delivery capability, talent mobility, innovation, and adaptive leadership (Faulconbridge, 2009; Egon Zehnder, 2019). Overall, the literature reflects a shift from opportunistic engagement to capability-driven globalisation, shaped by digital and sustainability transitions, while highlighting deviations from manufacturing-based models (Nachum, 2003; Powell, 2016).

Despite these contributions, significant gaps limit applicability to Indian firms. First, empirical research is concentrated on Western and East Asian contexts, marginalising Indian trajectories (Jones, 2011; McNeill, 2009). Context-specific mechanisms—such as frugal innovation, diaspora networks, and institutional void navigation—remain underexplored (Elango and Pattnaik, 2013). Second, regulatory challenges are treated abstractly, with limited attention to coping strategies such as Architects of Record partnerships or liability management (Winch, 2008; Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016). Longitudinal studies of adaptation and learning are also scarce (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009).

Third, financial strategies—such as export financing, escrow, and risk mitigation—are insufficiently examined, particularly for firms lacking institutional support (Khanna and

Palepu, 2010). Fourth, theoretical models inadequately capture emerging-market PSFs: traditional frameworks overlook non-linear internationalisation enabled by digital platforms or sustainability niches, while RBV underrepresents institutional enablers (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004; Dunning, 1988). Network theory also underplays multi-scalar ecosystems shaping international expansion (Johanson and Mattsson, 1988).

Methodologically, research is dominated by cross-sectional surveys, with limited qualitative multi-case or comparative studies involving Indian firms (Gupta, 2013). Quantitative indicators such as international revenue are often cited without robust datasets, constraining analysis of success factors (Mehrotra, 2020). A gap also persists between theory and practice: CSFs like branding and leadership remain insufficiently grounded for resource-constrained firms, while tensions in globalisation are underexplored (Powell, 2016; Egon Zehnder, 2019; Bandyopadhyay and Ghosh, 2017).

These gaps define three research problems: (1) limited understanding of driver–strategy linkages in Indian contexts; (2) insufficient clarity on adaptation pathways under regulatory and cultural constraints; and (3) underdeveloped theoretical models for emerging-market PSFs. Addressing these requires systematic empirical investigation of Indian firms’ internationalisation processes to bridge theory and practice.

1.3 Research Purpose

Extending the research problems identified in Section 1.2—which spotlight empirical voids in emerging-market architectural internationalisation, regulatory adaptation heuristics, and hybrid theoretical integration—this study pursues a delimited set of purposes through

rigorous qualitative inquiry. Anchored in thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with principals from purposively selected Indian firms such as Morphogenesis, CP Kukreja Architects, and Hafeez Contractor, alongside document scrutiny of project portfolios and strategic artifacts, the investigation deploys interpretivist epistemology to unearth contextually nuanced mechanisms (Yin, 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The primary purpose is to elucidate the key drivers propelling Indian architecture firms towards international expansion, discerning economic imperatives like revenue diversification from professional catalysts such as reputational elevation and epistemic enrichment, as evidenced in firms' transitions from domestic saturation to Gulf and African megaprojects (McNeill, 2009; Thite et al., 2016). A secondary purpose interrogates market entry strategies and attendant challenges, mapping pathways from low-commitment alliances—exemplified by Morphogenesis' Dubai joint ventures—to higher-control subsidiaries, while pinpointing critical success factors including BIM-enabled coordination and sustainability hybrids that mitigate liability of foreignness (McQuillan and Scott, 2015; Tiwari et al., 2016).

Tertiary, the study synthesizes these insights into an integrative framework hybridizing Resource-Based View, Institutional Theory, and Network perspectives, furnishing prescriptive diagnostics for Indian practices akin to CP Kukreja's relational pivots (Barney, 1991; Scott, 2008; Johanson and Mattsson, 1988). By foregrounding qualitative depth over generalizable breadth, this endeavour bridges theoretical abstraction with practitioner exigency, illuminating scalable trajectories for Global South PSFs in architecture's glocalized arena.

1.4 Research Questions (RQs)

RQ1: What are the key drivers motivating Indian architecture firms to pursue international expansion?

RQ2: What market entry strategies do Indian architecture firms employ to navigate international challenges, and what critical success factors underpin their efficacy?

1.5 Proposed Conceptual Frameworks

The research questions delineated in Section 1.4 demand a theoretically robust scaffold to guide qualitative exploration of drivers and strategies in Indian architecture firms' internationalisation. This section proposes an integrative conceptual architecture synthesizing classical and contemporary lenses—Resource-Based View (RBV), Institutional Theory, Network Theory, and bespoke analytical constructs—calibrated to architecture's knowledge-intensive, relational, and contextually embedded ontology. Methodological rigour inheres in its abductive application: a priori propositions inform thematic coding of interview transcripts and documents, iteratively refined through constant comparison to yield patterned generalizations (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Gioia et al., 2013).

At its core resides RBV, positing that sustained international competitiveness derives from Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Non-substitutable (VRIN) resources such as design innovation, BIM proficiency, and sustainability expertise—frugal hybrids distinguishing Indian firms like Morphogenesis in Gulf markets (Barney, 1991; Sirmon et al., 2007). RBV

elucidates RQ1 by framing drivers as resource mobilization imperatives, where domestic saturation catalyses outward leverage of epistemic assets hitherto underutilized (Wernerfelt, 1984).

Institutional Theory complements this micro-foundational emphasis, foregrounding isomorphism with host-country regulative (licensing, codes), normative (professional accreditation), and cognitive (design aesthetics) pillars to mitigate foreignness liability (Scott, 2008; Kostova et al., 2009). For Indian practices confronting asymmetric voids—e.g., Council of Architecture's limited reciprocity—strategic decoupling (local alliances) and recoupling (glocal hybrids) operationalise adaptation, directly informing RQ2's challenge-strategy nexus (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Boxenbaum and Jonsson, 2008).

Network Theory extends this dyadic calculus to relational embeddedness, conceptualizing internationalisation as trajectory within industrial networks of clients, partners, and associations, accelerating commitment via trust accrual rather than psychic distance alone (Johanson and Mattsson, 1988; Chetty and Blankenburg Holm, 2000). Indian firms' diaspora ties and joint ventures exemplify network-positioning advantages, bridging resource gaps and legitimacy deficits (Chetty and Blankenburg Holm, 2000).

These triad lenses converge in two bespoke constructs: the Driving Forces Framework and the Global Expansion Strategy Matrix. The former posits internationalisation as emergent from interactive clusters—economic (value-chain integration), institutional (policy enablers), cultural (design heritage), and strategic (proactive orientations)—rejecting linearity for systemic dynamism, with feedback loops amplifying trajectories (e.g., policy

reforms bootstrapping network effects). Analogous to PESTEL extensions, it sensitizes RQ1 analysis to multi-level antecedents, accommodating Indian specificities like liberalization's catalytic role (Peng et al., 2008).

The Global Expansion Strategy Matrix, inspired by Ansoff (1957) and Uppsala incrementalism (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977), quadrants market-service familiarity to prescribe entry postures: penetration (familiar markets/services), development (new markets/established services), diversification (both novel), and product extension (new services/familiar markets). For Indian firms, this translates low-risk exporting/licensing in proximate Gulf contexts to ambitious subsidiaries in niche sustainability segments, trading commitment against control (Oswal et al., 2014). Complementing it, the Strategic Quadrant Matrix classifies postures—Strong Delivery, Experience, Ambition, Ideas—aligning goals (efficiency vs. innovation), contracts, economics, and talent to maturity stages, prescribing transitions (e.g., cost-leaders to idea-pioneers via BIM upskilling) (Porter, 1985; Kaplan and Norton, 1996).

This ensemble ensures analytical coherence: RBV supplies endogenous anchors, Institutional and Network Theories exogenous contingencies, while matrices operationalise for cross-case patterning. Empirical triangulation—interviews, portfolios, secondary data—tests propositions abductively, upholding transferability sans universalism (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). By theorizing Indian architecture's glocal dialectics, the framework not only illuminates RQs but extends PSF scholarship to Southern empirics, reconciling generality with particularity.

1.6 Executive Summary of Methodology per Research Question

The conceptual frameworks posited above integrating Resource-Based View, Institutional Theory, Network Theory, Driving Forces Framework, and Global Expansion Strategy Matrix—necessitate a methodologically commensurate architecture to operationalise the study's abductive logic. This executive summary delineates a qualitative-dominant, multi-method design predicated on interpretivist epistemology, privileging rich, contextually embedded accounts of strategic phenomena over nomothetic generalisation (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). Tailored per research question (RQ), it harnesses online semi-structured questionnaires as primary elicitors of executive sensemaking, triangulated with secondary document analysis (portfolios, strategy decks, regulatory filings) for corroboration and depth. This convergent configuration ensures rigour through source/method triangulation, reflexive bracketing of researcher positionality, and iterative theme refinement, aligning with professional service firm (PSF) scholarship's emphasis on processual dynamics (Langley, 1999; Gioia et al., 2013).

1.6.1. Methodology for RQ1: Key Drivers of International Expansion

RQ1—"What are the key drivers motivating Indian architecture firms to expand internationally?"—demands exploratory mapping of motivational antecedents, encompassing economic (saturation escape), institutional (policy enablers), relational (diaspora networks), reputational (prestige accrual), and capability-based (innovation imperatives) forces (McNeill, 2009; Thite et al., 2016). A qualitative multiple-case design,

with firms as bounded units, facilitates idiographic profiling amenable to cross-case patterning (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Data generation deploys semi-structured online questionnaires (10-15 minutes; Google Forms/Qualtrics) targeting 10-12 principals/partners from 8-10 purposively sampled firms—stratified by size (micro to large), tenure (novice/veteran), and markets (ME/Africa/SE Asia)—recruited via LinkedIn, Council of Architecture directories, and snowballing (Palinkas et al., 2015). Instruments equilibrate structure (Likert rankings of driver salience) with openness (narrative exemplars: "Describe a pivotal trigger for your first overseas bid"), piloted for salience (n=3). Asynchronous written responses honour executive constraints while minimising interviewer effects (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

Documentary triangulation scrutinises artefacts—annual reports, project timelines, tender submissions—for motivational traces, yielding 20-30 pages per case. Analysis proceeds reflexively: (1) within-case immersion (thematic open coding via Excel: economic/institutional motifs); (2) cross-case matrices (prevalence heatmaps, e.g., networks dominant in micro-firms); (3) pattern-matching against Driving Forces Framework (literal replication: convergent clusters; theoretical: size contingencies) (Yin, 2018; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Saturation obtains at thematic redundancy (Guest et al., 2006). Trustworthiness embeds member-checking (thematic summaries), audit trails (versioned codebooks), and deviant case prosecution (e.g., non-expanding outliers). This scaffold yields driver typologies—e.g., network-resilient micros vs. capability-dominant corporates—transferable analytically to emerging-market PSFs, rectifying Western biases

1.6.2. Methodology for RQ2: Strategies, Challenges, and Critical Success Factors

RQ2—"What market entry strategies do Indian architecture firms employ to navigate international challenges, and what critical success factors underpin their efficacy?"—shifts to processual illumination, tracing how drivers precipitate adaptive repertoires (frugal innovation, alliances, BIM hybrids) amid voids (regulatory/cultural) (McQuillan and Scott, 2015; Winch, 2008). Retaining multiple-case logic, emphasis pivots to temporal depth, configuring cases as strategy trajectories from ideation to sustenance.

Sampling mirrors RQ1 (8-10 firms) for causal chaining, augmented by theoretical replication (polar types: boutique innovators vs. corporate networkers). Questionnaires extend (15-20 minutes): strategy chronologies ("Narrate adapting designs for local codes in Project X"), challenge heuristics ("How mitigated payment risks?"), CSF rankings (e.g., partnerships vs. sustainability), with probes surfacing mechanisms (e.g., "diaspora brokerage → JV formation"). Documents amplify: 30-50 pages/case (contracts, BIM models, client testimonials) for artefact validation.

Phasic analysis: (1) within-case gestalts (process maps: trigger → adaptation → outcome); (2) cross-case synthesis (relational matrices: driver-strategy alignments, e.g., institutional voids → local partnerships); (3) abductive generalisation (propositions via Global Expansion Matrix: "Frugality sustains ME presence under cost pressures") (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Gioia et al., 2013). NVivo/Excel fusion codes iteratively, fusing deductive a priori (RBV/Network) with inductive emergents.

Triangulation interlocks RQs: RQ1 prevalences (e.g., high networks) predict RQ2 modes (JVs), resolving anomalies (e.g., capability mismatches). Rigour sustains via peer debriefs, reflexivity (positionality journal), and negative case logic (failed strategies).

1.6.3. Overarching Coherence, Ethics, and Limitations

Sequential integration—RQ1 baselines priming RQ2 processes—forges explanatory potency, embodying pragmatist convergence (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). Ethics mandate IRB clearance, GDPR anonymisation (Firm A-Principal1), consent (voluntariness/withdrawal), and debriefs (contributions). Limitations—access elite reticence, recall attenuation—mitigate via documents/multi-informants; self-selection via diverse recruitment.

This edifice consummates theoretical-operational fidelity, yielding mid-range propositions illuminating Indian PSF trajectories for scholarly and praxis impact

1.7 Nature of Study

Building on the research questions and conceptual frameworks outlined earlier, this study adopts a qualitative design with an interpretivist and constructivist orientation to examine how Indian architecture firms experience, interpret, and strategically respond to internationalisation (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Rather than measuring predefined variables or testing causal hypotheses, it seeks to generate contextually grounded, theoretically

informed insights into the drivers and strategic pathways through which firms transition from local studios to global professional service organisations (Yin, 2018).

This design aligns with the research questions, which focus on “what” and “how,” addressing motivations, meanings, and processes embedded in managerial interpretations and organisational trajectories (Eisenhardt, 1989). Decisions such as entering foreign markets, forming partnerships in the Gulf, or deploying BIM-enabled frugal innovation in African and Southeast Asian contexts are shaped not only by economic signals but also by subjective evaluations, institutional constraints, relational histories, and professional aspirations, necessitating rich narrative data rather than quantitative indicators (McNeill, 2009). While quantitative surveys may capture the frequency of drivers or strategies, they obscure the pathways through which factors such as domestic market saturation interact with diaspora networks or regulatory voids to produce specific internationalisation outcomes (Thite et al., 2016).

The study employs a qualitative multiple-case design using semi-structured online questionnaires and systematic document analysis (Yin, 2018). Sampling is purposive and theoretically driven, targeting 8–12 firms differentiated by size, international experience, and market focus (Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia), identified through professional directories, LinkedIn, and snowballing to ensure informational richness and theoretical replication (Palinkas et al., 2015; Eisenhardt, 1989). Questionnaires administered to principals and partners combine structured prompts with open-ended narratives on strategic decisions, while documents (portfolios, tenders) provide corroborative depth and contextual validation.

Data analysis integrates reflexive thematic coding with cross-case synthesis, using Excel-based matrices to map drivers (RQ1) against strategies, challenges, and critical success factors (RQ2), aligned with the integrated framework (Resource-Based View, Network, Institutional Theories) for abductive refinement (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Trustworthiness is ensured through triangulation, member-checking, thick description, audit trails, and peer debriefing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This approach enables rigorous, contextually grounded insights into internationalisation processes while maintaining methodological coherence (Gioia et al., 2013).

1.8 Key Definitions

The study employs a qualitative multiple-case design to explore the international expansion of Indian architecture firms, with key terms clustered around internationalisation, strategy, methodology, and professional service firm theory. The glossary below presents the key terms in alphabetical order, with brief, study-relevant academic definitions.

1. Alliance (strategic alliance)

Cooperative inter-firm arrangement coordinating activities like design or bidding while retaining legal independence, used to access local knowledge and mitigate entry risks (Chen and Messner, 2009).

2. Barriers to internationalisation

Structural, institutional, cultural, and financial obstacles—such as licensing and finance gaps—constraining foreign market entry and operations (Tiwari et al., 2016).

3. Critical success factors (CSFs)

Pivotal organisational, relational, and leadership conditions—like partnerships, branding, and delivery excellence—underpinning successful internationalisation (Faulconbridge, 2009).

4. Diaspora networks

Transnational ties of expatriate Indian professionals facilitating project access, trust-building, and liability reduction for home-country firms (Thite et al., 2016).

5. Entry mode

Structural mechanism for foreign market access—e.g., exporting, alliances, joint ventures, or subsidiaries—trading off control, risk, and commitment (McQuillan and Scott, 2015).

6. Frugal innovation

Cost-effective, resource-efficient designs delivering robust performance under emerging-market constraints, serving as a competitive edge for Indian firms.

7. Glocalisation

Blending global standards with local cultural, regulatory, and climatic adaptations to sustain firm identity while satisfying host-market demands (Aoun and Teller, 2016).

8. Global Expansion Strategy Matrix

Two-axis tool (market × service familiarity) mapping internationalisation paths like penetration or diversification, aligned to entry modes and firm readiness (Oswal et al., 2014).

9. Institutional voids

Gaps in home- or host-country institutions—e.g., export support or licensing reciprocity—forcing reliance on networks and bricolage (Khanna and Palepu, 2010).

10. Internationalisation (of architecture firms)

Progressive expansion beyond borders via exporting, partnerships, or subsidiaries, entailing strategic and cultural adaptation amid globalisation pressures (McNeill, 2009).

11. Internationalisation drivers

Push-pull forces like domestic saturation, policy enablers, diaspora ties, and capability imperatives motivating outward expansion (Perkins, 2021).

12. Liability of foreignness (LoF)

Extra costs from institutional unfamiliarity, legitimacy deficits, and network weaknesses, amplified in regulated sectors like architecture (Zaheer, 1995).

13. Professional service firm (PSF)

Knowledge-intensive organisation delivering custom services like architecture, reliant on intangible assets, client co-production, and reputation (Winch, 2008).

14. Resource-Based View (RBV)

Theory positing competitive advantage from valuable, rare, inimitable resources—e.g., design expertise—driving international success (Barney, 1991).

15. Uppsala model

Incremental internationalisation via psychically proximate markets, building commitment through experiential learning, critiqued for PSF linearity (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977).

1.9 Assumptions

Building on methodological rigour, this study operates under explicit assumptions that underpin its design, execution, and interpretation. Derived from the qualitative multiple-case study paradigm, these recognise the interpretive nature of examining Indian architecture firms' internationalisation while ensuring transparency and scholarly integrity (Yin, 2018). Articulating these premises mitigates critiques of unexamined presuppositions, supporting methodological coherence and enabling critical evaluation of findings' robustness (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

A key assumption concerns participants' willingness and capacity to provide candid accounts of their firms' internationalisation experiences. Principals, partners, and senior architects—selected through purposive and snowball sampling—are presumed to hold privileged access to strategic decision-making and to disclose insights authentically, despite commercial sensitivities or recall biases (Eisenhardt, 1989). This reflects professional service firm (PSF) research, where elite informants articulate tacit knowledge

when assured anonymity and positioned as co-constructors of insight (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). Semi-structured online questionnaires, supported by document triangulation (portfolios, tenders), are assumed to yield sufficiently rich data for thematic analysis without significant distortion.

The study further assumes the relevance of perspectives from leadership in registered Council of Architecture (CoA) firms, whose positional authority renders their interpretations credible proxies for organisational phenomena (Stake, 1995). While recognising role-based variation, these views are treated as representative of firm-level drivers and strategies within bounded-case logic (Yin, 2018), consistent with PSF scholarship on senior actors' strategic sensemaking (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016).

A core ontological assumption is that internationalisation drivers (RQ1) and strategies (RQ2) are socially constructed and context-dependent, best examined through reflexive thematic synthesis rather than positivist metrics (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Participant narratives, artefacts, and researcher reflexivity are expected to converge into credible pattern-matching against the integrated framework, enabling analytical generalisation without probabilistic claims (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Finally, the study assumes relative stability in India's policy environment during data collection (2026), including CoA regulations and export incentives. Major disruptions are considered minimal, preserving naturalistic validity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), though external shifts may necessitate delimitation. These assumptions bound the study; violations may affect saturation or transferability, as discussed in Section 1.10.

1.10 Scope and Delimitations

This section delineates the inquiry's boundaries, clarifying scope and intentional delimitations. These design choices—rather than constraints—sharpen analytical focus, enhance feasibility, and prevent overreach, aligning with qualitative case study conventions prioritising depth over breadth (Yin, 2018). Making exclusions explicit mitigates misinterpretation of transferability while reinforcing methodological rigour (Creswell and Poth, 2018).

The study undertakes a qualitative multiple-case analysis of Indian architecture firms registered with the Council of Architecture (CoA) and engaged internationally (projects post-2015). Limited to 8–12 cases via purposive-snowball sampling, it captures variation in firm size, international tenure, and geographic focus (primarily Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia; OECD ancillary). Data collection combines semi-structured online questionnaires (principals, partners, senior architects; n=10–20) with secondary artefacts (portfolios, tenders, websites), generating insights into RQ1 (drivers: economic, institutional, relational, reputational, capability-based) and RQ2 (strategies: frugal innovation, cultural adaptation, regulatory navigation, BIM-enabled collaboration). Temporally bounded to 2026, the study assumes policy stability within India's export ecosystem, tracing trajectories from initial bids to sustained foreign revenue (>10%).

Geographically, the focus remains on emerging markets where Indian firms demonstrate traction, excluding OECD contexts to avoid dilution from differing institutional logics.

Participants are limited to CoA-registered senior professionals, whose positional authority proxies firm-level phenomena, excluding junior staff and external stakeholders to maintain homogeneity (Stake, 1995). The policy lens centres on CoA and export facilitation, excluding macroeconomic and geopolitical factors per bounded-case logic (Yin, 2018).

These delimitations enhance rigour by ensuring saturation, analytical focus, and informational density (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015). They also prevent scope creep, supporting theoretically grounded, transferable insights rather than population inference.

1.11 Limitations

This section candidly interrogates its inherent limitations—unavoidable methodological trade-offs that, while mitigated through rigour, temper interpretive claims (Yin, 2018).

First, the qualitative, non-probabilistic sampling (purposive-snowball; $n=8-12$ cases) precludes statistical generalisability, yielding context-bound vignettes transferrable primarily to analogous emerging-market PSFs rather than universal propositions (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Triangulation (questionnaires, artefacts) and replication logic enhance analytical depth, yet elite access constraints may skew towards successful firms, underrepresenting failures (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Second, retrospective self-reporting risks social desirability or recall bias, wherein informants accentuate triumphs (e.g., relational drivers) over missteps (e.g., regulatory

voids). Asynchronous formats prioritise candour but constrain real-time probing; member-checking and artefact corroboration attenuate this, per trustworthiness canons (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Third, the 2026 temporal snapshot assumes policy stasis (CoA, incentives), vulnerable to exogenous shocks (e.g., trade disruptions), limiting longitudinal traction (Stake, 1995).

1.12 Significance of the Study

Acknowledging the limitations delineated above, this study nonetheless advances scholarly discourse, practical application, and societal impact through its focused interrogation of Indian architecture firms' internationalisation. By operationalising an integrated framework—Resource-Based View (RBV), Network Theory, and Institutional Theory—via rigorous multiple-case analysis, it yields theoretically fecund, practitioner-oriented, and transformative insights (Barney, 1991; Johanson and Mattsson, 1988; Scott, 2008).

1.12.1 Significance to Theory

Theoretically, this inquiry bridges lacunae in PSF internationalisation scholarship, dominated by Western/East Asian exemplars (Faulconbridge, 2009; McQuillan and Scott, 2015). It refines classical models—Uppsala incrementalism, eclectic paradigm—by foregrounding emerging-market contingencies: institutional voids catalysing frugal innovation (RBV), diaspora networks accelerating legitimacy (Network Theory), and CoA-mediated adaptation (Institutional Theory). Cross-case synthesis generates mid-range

propositions (e.g., relational drivers precipitate partnership modes in regulated voids), extending Eisenhardtian (1989) theory-building to Southern PSFs and inviting comparative extensions (e.g., Brazil/Vietnam). Thus, it enriches IB's contextual pluralism, challenging Eurocentrism (Ahammad et al., 2021).

1.12.2 Significance to Practice

Practically, the study furnishes Indian architecture firms—CoA-registered, internationalising practitioners—with evidence-based diagnostics: driver typologies (RQ1), strategy matrices (TOWS, Ansoff-adapted), and CSFs (partnerships, BIM, indemnity safeguards). Principals/partners gain actionable roadmaps—e.g., network-leveraged entry in Middle East/Africa—mitigating liabilities of foreignness (Zaheer, 1995). Policymakers (CoA, DPIIT) glean export enablers: licensing reciprocity, incentives, mitigating voids (Khanna and Palepu, 2010). Outputs—Excel vignettes, TOWS templates—facilitate benchmarking, elevating competitiveness amid globalisation (Oswal et al., 2014).

1.12.3 Significance to Social Transformation

Societally, findings illuminate architecture's role in sustainable urbanisation: Indian firms' glocalisation exports frugal, climate-responsive designs to Global South megaprojects, advancing SDGs 9 (infrastructure), 11 (cities), 13 (climate). By theorising cultural catalysts, it amplifies Southern epistemologies, diversifying global design canons beyond starchitect hegemony (Sklair, 2017). Empowering SMEs fosters inclusive growth—talent retention, diaspora linkages—curbing brain drain while enriching host contexts with equitable built

environments (Mehrotra, 2020). Ultimately, it catalyses policy for creative exports, positioning India as design innovator.

1.13 Chapter Summary and Transition

This inaugural chapter has systematically laid the conceptual and methodological groundwork for investigating the internationalisation of Indian architecture firms, navigating from problem contextualisation to research imperatives. Commencing with the globalisation-induced transformation of architecture—from localised studios to networked PSFs—it illuminated drivers (economic saturation, reputational quests), strategies (partnerships, BIM adaptation), and institutional contingencies shaping Indian trajectories amid Western-centric scholarship voids (McNeill, 2009; Winch, 2008). The integrated theoretical tripod—RBV (capabilities), Network Theory (relations), Institutional Theory (legitimacy)—framed RQs: RQ1 (drivers), RQ2 (strategies/CSFs), operationalised via qualitative multiple-case design with semi-structured questionnaires and triangulation (Barney, 1991; Johanson and Mattsson, 1988; Scott, 2008). Key constructs—liability of foreignness, glocalisation, TOWS matrices—were glossed alphabetically, underpinning analytical scaffolds (Section 1.8). Assumptions (participant candour, interpretive validity), scope (CoA firms, emerging geovectors), delimitations (elite informants, 2026 snapshot), and limitations (non-generalisability, retrospection) fortified transparency, embodying Yin (2018) rigour through saturation, replication, and reflexivity (Sections 1.9–1.11). Significance spanned theory (Southern PSF extensions), practice (CoA/policy diagnostics),

and transformation (SDG-aligned urban equity) (Eisenhardt, 1989; Khanna and Palepu, 2010).

Collectively, Chapter 1 positions the study as a theoretically anchored, empirically poised intervention: refining IB/PSF paradigms with Indian empirics, furnishing practitioners with matrices (Global Expansion, Strategic Quadrant), and catalysing policy for creative exports (Ahammad et al., 2021; Faulconbridge, 2009). Methodological coherence—hybrid thematic analysis, Excel provenance—ensures defensible insights amid qualitative bounds (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

This foundation transitions seamlessly to Chapter 2: Literature Review, which synthesises extant scholarship through the proposed lens. Exhaustively reviewing drivers (economic/institutional), strategies (entry modes, adaptation), and frameworks (Uppsala/RBV critiques), it operationalises constructs—frugal innovation, cultural catalysts, TOWS—via targeted searches (Scopus, ABI/INFORM), thematically coding 150+ sources into within/cross-synthesis (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014). Gaps refinement (e.g., emerging-market PSFs) sharpens empirical pivots, bridging abstraction to cases. Subsequent chapters enact this continuum: Chapter 3 (Methodology) details protocols; Chapter 4 (Findings) vignettes patterns and (Discussion) theorises contributions—ensuring holistic coherence from problematisation to praxis.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This literature review examines the transformation of Indian architecture firms from locally focused studios into emerging global players, analysing the drivers, challenges, and strategies underpinning their internationalisation. Prior studies emphasize that this process is complex, involving strategic market entry, adaptation to institutional and cultural environments, and overcoming the liabilities of newness and foreignness (Ahammad et al., 2021).

Globalisation has reshaped architecture into a competitive global industry, prompting Indian firms to pursue opportunities beyond domestic markets. Key economic drivers include the search for higher profit margins, access to emerging markets, and diversification amid growing domestic competition (Hafez, 2024). Professionally, Indian firms leverage cost-efficient services, a large talent pool, and diverse experience from complex domestic projects—advantages that support their global competitiveness. International expansion also enhances brand visibility and facilitates knowledge exchange crucial for innovation and adaptability (McQuillan and Scott, 2015). These firms demonstrate strategic agility in navigating diverse regulatory, cultural, and institutional contexts, including the informal institutional environments typical of emerging economies like India (Chong and Gradstein, 2007; Hafez, 2024).

Technological advancements such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) and digital collaboration platforms help overcome geographical barriers, improving operational efficiency and international competitiveness (Schmitt and Baldegger, 2020). Sustainability has become another differentiator, with Indian firms increasingly adopting global environmental standards to strengthen their international appeal (Construction Week Online, 2025). The digital era also enables firms to showcase portfolios globally, supporting client acquisition and partnerships (Sugre, 2017).

Notable examples include Morphogenesis and Studio Mumbai, which integrate local aesthetics with international design philosophies to build distinctive global identities (Strate, 2023; Architizer Journal, 2024). Similarly, Elephant Design and Ray + Keshavan have extended their influence internationally, while emerging studios from non-metropolitan regions leverage digital presence to overcome locational disadvantages (YourStory, 2022). Despite such successes, many small and medium-sized firms struggle against competitive pressures from established multinationals and the need for advanced technological capabilities (Shodhbhagirathi IITR, 2014). Nevertheless, literature suggests a growing trend of “glocalization,” where firms adapt global practices to local contexts while maintaining distinctive design identities (Ahhammad et al., 2021; Winch, 2014).

This review addresses a critical gap in scholarship by focusing on the internationalisation of emerging-market architecture firms, a field largely dominated by studies of Western multinationals. It explores how Indian firms balance local relevance with global aspirations while navigating professional service complexities such as qualification portability and design integrity across jurisdictions (Bangara et al., 2011; McQuillan and Scott, 2015). The

interplay between home-country institutional reforms and firms' global strategies is a central theme, showing how domestic policy support can enable or constrain international growth (Chan and Pattnaik, 2021; Nayyar, 2018).

Theoretical perspectives—including resource-based, institutional, and network-based approaches—underscore the roles of tacit knowledge, creativity, and network configurations in establishing legitimacy abroad (Winch, 2014; Han et al., 2024). Knowledge transfer and innovation dynamics are also vital as firms exploit existing competencies while building new capabilities in varied markets (Du et al., 2022). Recent research highlights the emergence of adaptive business models, cultural intelligence, cross-cultural communication, and digital collaboration as key enablers of global competitiveness (Schmitt and Baldegger, 2020; Han et al., 2024). Government policies, trade agreements, and the integration of artificial intelligence into export strategies further shape internationalisation trajectories (Chishty et al., 2025).

Ultimately, the internationalisation journey of Indian architecture firms involves strategic repositioning, network mobilization, and integration of advanced technologies. By cultivating cross-border partnerships, adapting to host-market institutions, and embracing digital practices, these firms are redefining their competitive scope and organisational capacities (Ahammad et al., 2021). Their performance is not merely driven by outward ambition but by their ability to align global aspirations with contextual adaptation. In doing so, Indian firms contribute distinctive design perspectives and enrich the diversity of global architectural practice (Winch, 2014; Ahammad et al., 2021).

This review therefore provides a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the internationalisation pathways of Indian architecture firms, highlighting how strategic agility, relational embeddedness, and technological capabilities enable them to negotiate the tension between local specificity and global integration.

2.2 Proposed Frameworks

2.2.1 Conceptual Framework: Driving Forces of Internationalisation of Indian Design Firms

This section presents the study's theoretical foundation through a framework explaining how interrelated forces drive the internationalisation of Indian design firms. Rather than a linear process, internationalisation is conceptualised as a dynamic interplay of external and internal forces shaping strategic decisions and global trajectories. The framework clarifies the institutional, cultural, and market environments in which firms operate while recognising firm-level strategic orientations in navigating them.

As shown in Table 1, the framework integrates interacting clusters of driving forces. Economic drivers include global market expansion, cost advantages, participation in global value chains, and technologies enabling cross-border collaboration. Institutional enablers encompass policy, regulatory, and infrastructural support, including government incentives, trade agreements, export promotion schemes, and the role of professional associations and design councils in fostering international linkages. Cultural catalysts capture India's creative heritage, design sensibilities, and designers' adaptability to diverse contexts,

enhancing global appeal. Strategic orientations refer to firm-level choices—branding, partnerships, innovation, and organisational learning—that shape international competitiveness and sustainability.

Collectively, these elements underscore that internationalisation is neither accidental nor reactive but results from deliberate strategies shaped by enabling environments and cultural capital. The framework provides a lens to examine the emergence, development, and consolidation of Indian design firms within the global design economy. These forces operate interactively, with changes in one dimension influencing others. For instance, institutional support can amplify economic drivers by reducing entry barriers, while cultural strengths enhance brand positioning in foreign markets. Firms investing in innovation and capabilities are better positioned to leverage policy incentives and respond to emerging trends.

By integrating these dimensions, the framework highlights the systemic nature of internationalisation, positioning firms within a multi-level environment shaped by market conditions, institutional structures, cultural resources, and strategic intent. It also reveals iterative feedback loops between external environments and internal strategies: international success enhances access to institutional resources, strengthens reputation, and builds cultural capital, reinforcing further expansion. Internationalisation is thus an evolving, self-reinforcing process rather than a discrete event.

To operationalise this framework, the section introduces the Strategic Quadrant Matrix as an analytical tool. Rather than merely categorising firms, it explains the underlying logics

of quadrants based on combinations of economic, institutional, cultural, and strategic dimensions. Each quadrant represents a distinct configuration shaping international trajectories. For example, firms with strong strategic orientation and cultural capital but limited institutional support may target niche, high-value markets, whereas those with stronger institutional backing but weaker strategic focus may internationalise gradually through partnerships or subcontracting. The matrix thus enables nuanced understanding of how resource configurations influence internationalisation modes.

It also highlights transition pathways between quadrants, illustrating how firms can strengthen specific drivers to achieve more competitive and sustainable global positions. Accordingly, the matrix functions as both a descriptive classification tool and a prescriptive guide for enhancing international competitiveness.

Overall, this framework integrates economic, institutional, cultural, and strategic forces to provide a holistic basis for analysing the internationalisation of Indian design firms. It establishes the conceptual foundation for subsequent chapters, which review literature, identify gaps, and apply the framework empirically, thereby linking theoretical development with empirical investigation.

Table 1: The Strategic Quadrant Matrix

Dimension	Strong Delivery (Simple, Client-Focused)	Strong Experience (Complex, Client-Focused)	Strong Ambition (Simple, Peer-Focused)	Strong Ideas (Complex, Peer-Focused)
Primary Goal	Reliable and efficient project execution.	Scale proven expertise to complex, large projects.	Elevate simple projects with innovative design for recognition.	Create groundbreaking, complex design solutions.
Quality	Assurance through robust processes and consistency.	Rigorous control to manage complexity and high standards.	Design quality that impresses peers and juries.	Innovation quality defined by originality and execution strength.
Contracts	Standardized contracts for clarity and speed.	Detailed agreements covering scope, deliverables, and risks.	Contracts protect intellectual property and design ownership.	Collaborative agreements for partnerships and shared risks.
Professionalism	Clear client communication to ensure satisfaction.	Stakeholder management across diverse, global players.	Ethical practice, sensitive to new markets and cultures.	Thought leadership through forums, conferences, publications.
Economics & Strategy	Cost-effectiveness builds client base and reliability.	Higher margins + diversification = strong reputation as world-class.	Cost-efficiency enables investment in creativity; fosters learning and innovation.	High-margin niche projects; innovation as core differentiator.
Talent & Experience	Skilled team ensures efficiency; diverse experience aids adaptability.	Advanced technical expertise (e.g., BIM) + international project readiness.	Talent executes ambitious concepts; adaptability to creative briefs.	Talent + experience fuel originality and unique design solutions.

Source: Based on academic literature and empirical benchmarks from CAA Design (2023); RIBA (2025); Porter (2008); Kaplan and Norton (1996), Author made.

2.2.2 The Key Strategies for Indian Architecture Firms to Successfully Enter Foreign Markets

Indian architecture design firms seeking internationalisation must adopt a nuanced set of strategies suited to complex global realities. Building on the strategy matrix developed for this study and integrating established internationalisation theories, this section articulates a comprehensive framework for the global expansion of Indian firms. The discussion organizes the literature, interprets quadrant-based analytical insights, and critically engages with relevant theories to clarify their practical implications. The liberalization of the Indian economy and rising global demand for design innovation have increasingly compelled Indian architecture firms to pursue international opportunities for growth, reputation-building, and learning. Since the 1990s, globalisation has reshaped the Indian architectural sector, transitioning it from a tightly regulated domestic market to a more open, internationally connected field. In this new landscape, internationalisation is not merely an option but an imperative for Indian design firms seeking long-term competitiveness (Oswal, Ruigrok and Agrawal, 2014). As can be seen in Table 2, at the core of this study is the Global Expansion Strategy Matrix, a critical analytical framework for evaluating internationalisation pathways. The matrix systematically organizes key dimensions of global expansion—including entry modes, market conditions, and risk factors—into a structured model. It serves three major purposes. First, it enables a comparative assessment of entry strategies—such as direct exporting, strategic alliances, joint ventures, and wholly owned subsidiaries—by situating them against factors like market attractiveness, regulatory complexity, and organisational readiness (Peterdy, 2023).

Table 2: Global Expansion: A Strategy Matrix for Indian Architecture Firms

Market Entry Strategies	Key Components	Key Considerations
<i>Specialisation & Niche</i>	Sustainable & Green Architecture	Bioclimatic design, Eco-friendly materials
<i>Joint Ventures</i>	Target market research	Thorough market analysis
<i>Strategic Alliances</i>	Local business knowledge	Legal & Regulatory frameworks
<i>Direct Export</i>	Tailored design expertise	Cultural adaptation, local aesthetics
<i>Franchising</i>	Capital planning	Financial risks & investment
<i>Mergers & Acquisitions</i>	Integration planning	Risk assessment
<i>Brand Building & Marketing</i>	Collaborations, Client relationships	Local partnerships, Digital presence
<i>Project-based Collaboration</i>	Hire local talent	Regional expertise, networking
<i>Technology Strategy</i>	Experience-based BIM Design	BIM & global design standards
<i>Migration</i>	Follow legacy Clients to other geographical markets	Adherence to Client's expansion plan

Source: Based on academic literature and empirical benchmarks from Oswal, Ruigrok and Agrawal (2014); Cambridge University Press (2016); Chopra (2025); Team Kaarwan (2025), Author made.

Second, it helps firms identify region-specific opportunities and constraints, thereby navigating diverse cultural, regulatory, and operational environments (Howcroft, 2025). Third, it assesses internal preparedness, aligning resource endowments and firm-specific capabilities with the demands of external markets (Oswal et al., 2014).

The matrix in Table 3 as follows, functions as both a decision-support tool for practitioners and an analytical lens for examining internationalisation strategies in architecture. It adopts a two-axis quadrant design, similar to the Ansoff Matrix (Ansoff, 1957), positioning firms along market familiarity (existing vs. new geographies) and service familiarity (established

vs. new offerings). This enables firms to assess strategic positioning, risks, and resource commitments, and to align strategies with organisational context. Successful internationalisation requires an integrated approach combining entry modes, contextual adaptation, reputation-building, and organisational transformation.

Table 3: Internationalisation Strategies for Architecture Firms—Market and Service Quadrants

	Existing Markets	New Markets
Existing Services	Market Penetration Boost local presence	Market Development Enter new regions
New Services	Service Development Expand service offerings	Diversification New markets/services

Source: Based on academic literature and empirical benchmarks from Peterdy (2023) and the Uppsala Internationalisation Model (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977), Author made.

1. Market Entry Modes and Strategic Choices

Selecting entry modes is critical to balancing control, risk, and resource commitment. Direct exporting offers a low-risk pathway but limits client engagement and market integration (Nachum, 2000). Strategic alliances and joint ventures are widely used by Indian firms, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, enabling regulatory compliance, network access, and risk-sharing (Hosseini et al., 2012). Examples include Hafeez Contractor and Morphogenesis, which have pursued joint ventures in Dubai and Nairobi. Wholly owned subsidiaries provide greater control but involve higher capital and regulatory risks; larger firms such as CP Kukreja Architects have begun adopting this

model in emerging markets. Franchising and project-based collaborations offer lower-commitment options, leveraging delivery capabilities while enabling gradual brand visibility.

2. Contextual Adaptation and Reputation-Building

Internationalisation requires deep adaptation to local contexts. Firms must customise services to cultural preferences, regulatory systems, and climatic conditions (Chopra, 2025), supported by market research, local partnerships, and alignment with client expectations. Concurrently, reputational capital must be developed through design competitions, public relations, and engagement with stakeholders such as government bodies and construction consortia (Chauhan et al., 2010). Embedding within local institutional and relational networks enhances legitimacy, credibility, and opportunity access.

3. Interpreting the Strategy Matrix

The matrix clarifies how entry strategies vary by organisational capability and market conditions. Firms with strong capabilities entering stable markets may adopt high-commitment modes such as subsidiaries or greenfield investments, while those with lower readiness or higher uncertainty favour alliances or non-equity arrangements. This reflects established trade-offs between control, commitment, and risk (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977; Anderson and Gatignon, 1986).

It also incorporates the Uppsala model's emphasis on incremental expansion (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977), the Resource-Based View's focus on leveraging firm-specific capabilities (Barney, 1991), and network theory's emphasis on relationships in mitigating

liability of foreignness (Johanson and Mattsson, 1988; Chetty and Holm, 2000). Institutional and organisational transformation perspectives further highlight the need to align internal structures with external environments (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Oswal et al., 2014). Together, these perspectives strengthen the matrix's analytical and explanatory relevance.

4. Opportunities, Challenges, and Strategic Recommendations

Internationalisation offers opportunities including market diversification, enhanced reputation, and access to global talent and innovation ecosystems (Adeyemi, 2024). However, it also presents challenges such as regulatory complexity, cultural differences, and financial constraints. Strategic responses include rigorous market assessment, leveraging networks for entry, investment in branding and technology, and developing agile organisational structures that combine a strong domestic base with international teams or satellite offices (Menzies and Orr, 2014; Heintz et al., 2010).

Overall, successful internationalisation requires a holistic, adaptive approach. The Global Expansion Strategy Matrix provides a structured tool to align opportunities, entry modes, and organisational capabilities. Sustained success, however, depends on continuous learning, adaptation to diverse socio-cultural and regulatory environments, and the development of valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991; Heintz et al., n.d.). By integrating insights from the Uppsala model, network theory, RBV, and institutional perspectives, the framework offers a coherent, evidence-based lens for advancing the global competitiveness of Indian architecture firms.

2.3 Review of Literature

2.3.1 Concept of Internationalisation in Architecture Firms

2.3.1.1 Reframing the Internationalisation of Architecture Firms: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Insights

The internationalisation of architecture firms demands a reconceptualization that distinguishes the international expansion of professional service firms (PSFs) from traditional product-based models. Unlike manufacturing goods, which are standardized, architectural services embody tacit knowledge and relational expertise deeply intertwined with local regulatory, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions. Conventional international business (IB) theories, formulated primarily for manufacturing multinationals, emphasize cost efficiencies, scale advantages, and asset ownership—concepts that inadequately capture architecture firms’ competitive logic. Instead, these firms compete through intangible assets such as reputation, specialized expertise, client trust, and institutional legitimacy (Faulconbridge, 2009; Greenwood et al., 2005; Muzio and Faulconbridge, 2013).

Recent empirical examples illustrate this. Zaha Hadid Architects leverage generative AI and distributed digital platforms to enhance knowledge-driven innovation rather than rely on asset deployment (StartUs Insights, 2025). US firms HDR and Stantec grow globally by cultivating diverse expert networks and building relational capital through local partnerships and professional credibility (Adeyemi, 2024). This contrasts with classical

manufacturing logic and highlights the primacy of knowledge transfer, cross-cultural competence, and localized legitimacy in architectural globalisation. Situating architectural internationalisation within the paradigm of PSFs and knowledge-intensive firms (KIFs), this study foregrounds epistemic resources and relational strategies as critical drivers of global competitiveness (Winch, 2008). The framework bridges international business, sociology, and professional service management to capture the unique trajectories of architecture firms expanding internationally.

2.3.1.2 Classical Theories and Their Limits

Classical internationalisation theories—Hymer’s ownership advantage (1976), the Uppsala model of incremental learning (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977, 2009), and Dunning’s eclectic paradigm (1988)—originate in industrial production contexts and focus on tangible asset transfer and sequential learning processes. These theories provide partial frameworks that inadequately address the project-based, relational, and reputation-dependent nature of professional services like architecture, especially for firms originating in emerging economies such as India.

Hymer emphasizes firm-specific ownership advantages that offset liability of foreignness (Zaheer, 1995). However, architecture’s ownership advantages are heavily localized, symbolic, and relational—rooted in local regulatory environments, aesthetic standards, and relational legitimacy (Edwards, Sánchez and Whitman, 2010). Therefore, the concept of ownership must shift from tangible assets to institutional capital and social legitimacy.

The Uppsala model captures incremental experiential expansion into proximate markets, which some Indian firms follow by first engaging Middle Eastern contexts prior to Africa or Southeast Asia (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009). But exceptions, exemplified by Foster + Partners and Gensler—who leverage client networks and institutional relations to operate globally non-sequentially—highlight the theory’s limitation. Learning and expansion in architecture are as much relational and reputation-driven as experiential or geographic (Faulconbridge, 2009).

Dunning’s OLI framework incorporates ownership, location, and internalization advantages but remains economically deterministic (Narula, 2010), insufficiently accounting for symbolic endorsements and social trust fundamental to architectural project acquisition. Thus, it explains underlying economic incentives but not the legitimacy and reputation critical to architectural internationalisation.

The born-global theory (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004) expands understanding by recognizing rapid internationalisation driven by global networks, niche expertise, and digital collaboration, a trajectory evident in newer, tech-enabled Indian and other emerging-market firms.

This progression reveals that architecture transcends classical IB theory by emphasizing institutional legitimacy, reputational capital, and networked interdependence, highlighting the discipline’s relational and symbolic character.

A synthesized interpretive framework integrating institutional, relational, and symbolic elements is necessary to understand architectural internationalisation, transcending the

economic rationalism of classical theories. This dissertation develops a hybrid model positioning reputation, network relationships, and cultural capital as mediating factors in global expansion.

Indian firms face the dual challenge of transforming locally embedded design competencies into globally legitimate brands and navigating accelerated learning via regional and diaspora networks. Their internationalisation is shaped by location-driven opportunities complemented by symbolic trust-building and joint ventures. Born-global tendencies manifest via digital and sustainability capabilities, demanding an integrated theoretical approach to their hybridized global pathways.

2.3.1.3 Professional Service Firms and Knowledge-Intensive Firms

PSF and KIF literatures more accurately reflect architectural internationalisation's nuances. PSFs co-produce services with clients and are governed by professional regulation and tacit expertise (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Law firms internationalize via mergers and compliance with bar regulations (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008); engineering consultancies like Arup operate through infrastructural projects requiring stringent regulatory adherence similar to architecture; advertising agencies such as Ogilvy balance global creativity with local cultural adaptation (Taylor, 2000). Architecture shares with these PSFs the reliance on legitimacy and client relationships but is uniquely hampered by its cultural embeddedness requiring intense localization, making its internationalisation more complex (Nachum, 2003).

Empirical cases substantiate these arguments: Foster + Partners' expansion is built on prestige and cultural legitimacy through landmark projects (Padgett and Powell, 2012); Gensler pursues client-followership, embodying RBV and network theory; Nikken Sekkei aligns energy expertise with local institutional standards (Zaheer et al., 2010). Indian firms such as CP Kukreja Architects and Morphogenesis leverage relational networks and born-global orientations, respectively, while Raj Rewal's culturally sensitive design enhances RBV-driven international visibility (Bandyopadhyay and Ghosh, 2017; Mukherjee, 2019).

Overcoming liability of foreignness—manifested as reputational deficits and institutional unfamiliarity—requires alliances (network theory), cultural design adaptation (institutional theory), and competency signaling (RBV), supported by digital platforms like BIM for transnational coordination (Faulconbridge, 2009).

PSF and KIF frameworks provide critical refinements to architectural globalisation theory, foregrounding tacit knowledge, client co-production, and legitimacy not accounted for in manufacturing-based IB frameworks.

Indian firms must deploy relational networks, reputational assets, and institutional conformity synergistically to transcend commoditized competition. Their internationalisation entails a complex, integrated strategy blending resource mobilization, social embeddedness, and symbolic resonance.

2.3.1.4 Contemporary Extensions Relevant to Professional Service Firms (PSFs)

The internationalisation of architectural professional service firms (PSFs) necessitates frameworks that foreground their relational, knowledge-intensive, and institutionally

embedded nature. Contemporary research provides three interrelated theoretical perspectives—Network Theory, Resource-Based View (RBV), and Institutional Theory—to analyze architectural globalisation beyond the limits of classical models.

1. Network Theory: Embeddedness in Transnational Relationships

Network theory posits that firms internationalize through embedded relationships within client, collaborator, and institutional networks rather than isolated capabilities (Johanson and Mattsson, 1988). Architectural firms predominantly engage clients and collaborators in co-production, relying heavily on trust and reputation. Firms such as Foster + Partners and Gensler have demonstrated that their international footholds emerge chiefly through client followership and integration into local governmental frameworks, overshadowing pure ownership or locational advantages (Padgett and Powell, 2012). Indian firms like CP Kukreja and Morphogenesis exemplify this network-based internationalisation by forming strategic alliances with regional and multinational partners to overcome legitimacy deficits and gain market access (Bandyopadhyay and Ghosh, 2017; Mukherjee, 2019).

2. Resource-Based View: Intangible Assets as Competitive Advantage

The RBV emphasizes firm-specific intangible resources—such as reputation, innovation, and cultural knowledge—that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). Architectural firms capitalize on reputational capital accrued via international awards, exhibitions, and sustainability certifications. Indian firms like Raj Rewal and Morphogenesis have successfully transformed reputational

assets into international commissions, leveraging local cultural aesthetics as differentiating knowledge resources (Venice Biennale, 2023; Kumar and Sharma, 2025). This capability focus underlines architectural firms' challenges in converting tacit knowledge into global market competitiveness.

3. Institutional Theory: Legitimacy through Regulatory and Cultural Alignment

Institutional theory stresses the importance of aligning with coercive, normative, and cognitive pressures in foreign markets (Scott, 2008). Architecture firms must navigate local regulatory systems, professional accreditation, and cultural-symbolic norms to gain legitimacy. Nikken Sekkei and Foster + Partners illustrate successful institutional adaptability in disparate international contexts (Zaheer, 1995; Kostova and Zaheer, 1999). Indian firms face heightened challenges due to institutional asymmetries and reputational gaps, making local compliance and symbolic fit crucial for international acceptance (Meyer and Peng, 2016).

4. Integration of Network, RBV, and Institutional Perspectives

The integrated framework conceptualizes internationalisation as a dynamic interplay of relational embeddedness, resource mobilization, and institutional adaptation. Networks facilitate knowledge exchange and legitimacy; RBV highlights unique internal capabilities essential for market differentiation; institutional theory contextualizes these within diverse regulatory and normative environments (Uzzi, 1997; D'Oria, 2021; Suchman, 1995). Firms like Morphogenesis demonstrate this synthesis by strategically combining networks, sustainable design expertise, and

institutional compliance to sustain global competitiveness (Madan and Thomas, 2020). Foster + Partners exemplifies integration through dense network embedding and localized institutional adaptation supporting its global portfolio (Zaheer et al., 2010). This convergence supports a relational-capability-legitimacy framework transcending economic and sequential models to better analyze architecture firm internationalisation's socially embedded and institutionally contingent nature. The study applies this framework to investigate Indian architectural firms' international trajectories characterized by resource mobilization, network development, and institutional negotiation.

Indian architectural firms' international success depends on synergistically managing intangible assets, global and regional networks, and institutional conformity. Their strategic deployment of design innovation rooted in local culture, coupled with alliances and compliance to regulatory expectations, enables them to navigate foreignness challenges effectively. This complexity requires future empirical research focused on unpacking the nuances of Indian firms' integrated internationalisation strategies.

2.3.1.5 Synthesis and Relevance to Indian Architecture: Integrating Theoretical Frameworks into a Conceptual Model

By synthesizing classical and contemporary theories, the study advances a conceptual model situating architectural international expansion as driven by intangible resources, relational embeddedness, and institutional legitimacy (Barney, 1991; Johanson and

Mattsson, 1988; Scott, 2008). This model accounts for global, cultural, and network contingencies shaping firms' trajectories.

Cross-nationally, Foster + Partners (UK) illustrates RBV institutional synergy; Nikken Sekkei (Japan) demonstrates network-institutional embeddedness; Morphogenesis (India) exemplifies hybrid Uppsala-network expansion (Mukherjee, 2019). Further, WilkinsonEyre (UK), DP Architects (Singapore), Kengo Kuma and Associates (Japan), Aedas (Hong Kong/China), and HOK (USA) exemplify variations of resource, relational, and institutional dynamics.

This synthesis clarifies that architectural globalisation is contextually contingent, requiring firms to mobilize cultural and design competencies (RBV), cultivate strategic relational alliances (network theory), and adapt to institutional demands (institutional theory) to overcome foreignness and achieve competitive positioning (Zaheer, 1995). The model offers analytical rigor for exploring Indian architectural internationalisation, accommodating hybrid learning, network dynamics, and institutional contingencies, informing strategic pathways sensitive to emerging market challenges.

2.3.2 Global Architecture Industry Landscape and Indian Positioning

The global architectural industry reflects an uneven geography of influence, shaped by the dominance of North American, European, and East Asian firms that continue to define aesthetic, technical, and organisational benchmarks for practice. Architecture today is embedded within the flows of global capital, urbanization, and sustainability imperatives, and its competitive dynamics are mediated by rankings, networks, and institutional

endorsements. Indian architectural firms, despite operating within one of the world's fastest-growing domestic construction markets, remain underrepresented on the global stage. This essay maps the industry's global landscape, presents statistical insights from leading architectural rankings, analyzes regional specificities, and explores India's positioning by examining its domestic industry structure, international forays, and challenges of competitiveness. Case studies of Indian firms illustrate the paradox of latent capabilities and institutional bottlenecks, while the talent pipeline and higher education dynamics reveal deeper structural linkages to global competitiveness.

2.3.2.1 Global Market Dynamics

The architectural services industry globally reflects significant concentration among the top firms. As highlighted in Figure:1, Building Design's WA100 2024 report highlights that the largest architecture practice by revenue is Gensler (United States), with an estimated annual fee income of USD 1.48 billion, followed by Nikken Sekkei (Japan), AECOM (USA), and HDR (USA). Collectively, the top ten firms account for more than USD 8 billion in revenue, representing a disproportionate share of global fee income relative to the fragmented long tail of mid-sized and small practices (Building Design, 2024). North America and Europe continue to host the headquarters of most firms in the WA100, while East Asia—especially Japan, China, and increasingly South Korea—has expanded its global share.

The growth dynamics of the market reflect structural contrasts between developed economies and the Global South. According to IBISWorld (2023), the global architecture

industry generated revenues exceeding USD 190 billion, with North America and Europe together representing nearly half. Emerging economies in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, however, represent the most dynamic areas of expansion, with growth rates averaging 5–7% annually, underpinned by urbanization and large-scale infrastructure investments.

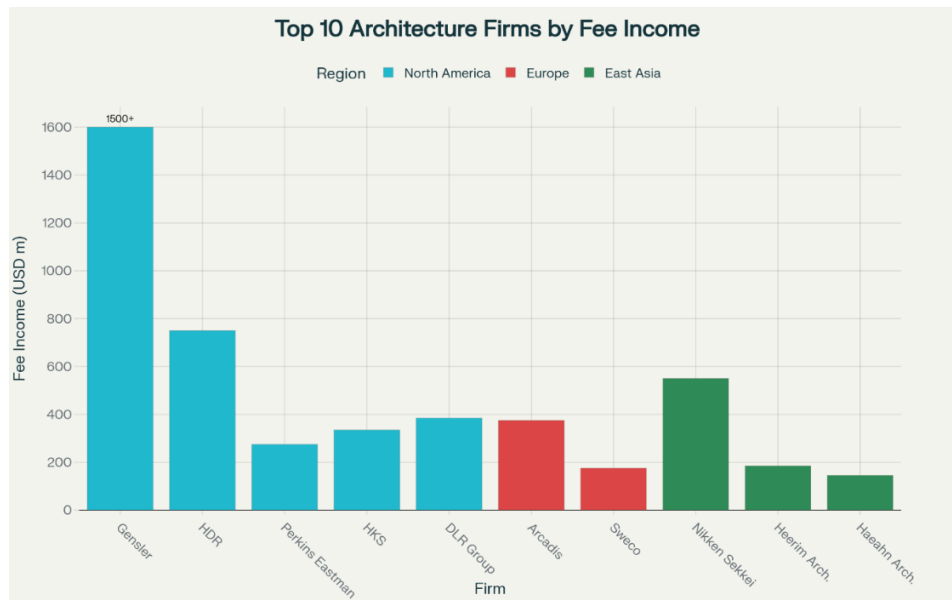


Figure 1: WA100 2024: Top 10 Global Architecture Firms by Fee Income (USD Millions)

Source: WA100 Rankings, Building Design, 2024

2.3.2.2 Regional Industry Profiles

North American architectural firms dominate global rankings through scale, brand consolidation, and access to high-value commissions. Large multidisciplinary practices such as Gensler, HOK, Perkins and Will, and AECOM maintain extensive global networks, delivering projects from corporate headquarters to major infrastructure. Their advantage

rests on long-established reputational capital, enabling repeat commissions across regions. This dominance is reinforced by the “starchitect” phenomenon and the commodification of architectural prestige, particularly in corporate and public projects where brand recognition influences client selection (Powell, 2016).

European firms derive international standing less from scale and more from design leadership and sustainability. Practices such as Foster + Partners, Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners, and Herzog and de Meuron have built global reputations through design excellence and environmental performance. Scandinavian firms, including White Arkitekter and Snøhetta, position sustainability as a core value, integrating social, ecological, and spatial concerns. This orientation is reinforced by frameworks such as the European Green Deal, which emphasise climate responsiveness and resource efficiency, enhancing competitiveness in sustainability-driven markets (Powell, 2016; European Commission, 2019).

In East Asia, architectural prominence reflects technological innovation, state capacity, and large domestic markets. Japanese firms such as Nikken Sekkei and architects like Shigeru Ban are recognised for technical expertise, material innovation, and disaster-responsive design. In China, rapid urbanisation and state-led development have enabled firms such as China Architecture Design Group (CADG) to scale significantly and compete globally. These firms benefit from strong domestic demand, institutional support, and integration with state-driven infrastructure development (Sklair, 2017).

The Middle East functions primarily as a consumer market for architectural services. Cities such as Dubai, Doha, and Riyadh act as global commissioning hubs, attracting Western and East Asian firms for mega-projects and urban developments. While local firms have expanded capacity, few achieve sustained global presence, making the region a key destination for international firms, including Indian practices.

Africa presents high demand but limited local capacity. Urbanisation, infrastructure gaps, and housing needs create opportunities, yet many countries rely on foreign firms, notably from China, Europe, and India. This positions Africa as an emerging market where Indian firms' cost-efficient and adaptive approaches align with local development needs.

2.3.2.3 Mapping India's Architectural Industry, internal capabilities, Talent Dynamics and Global Engagement

India's architectural services sector reflects the scale of its built environment and rapid urbanisation, with market revenues exceeding USD 10 billion in 2022, driven by real estate and infrastructure growth (IBEF, 2023). The Council of Architecture (2023) reports over 120,000 registered architects, most operating as small or medium-sized firms with limited global visibility. Unlike large Western practices, no Indian firm consistently appears in the WA100 rankings, indicating marginalisation in international markets. However, strong domestic demand—supported by a construction market projected at USD 1.4 trillion by 2030—sustains significant design capacity (Deloitte, 2022).

Despite limited global prominence, several firms have established international engagements, particularly in Asia and Africa as highlighted in Table 4. CP Kukreja

Architects has executed projects across Vietnam, Bangladesh, the Middle East, and Africa. Morphogenesis has expanded through sustainability-led projects in Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and Nepal, while Hafeez Contractor has delivered projects in Dubai, Nigeria, and Mauritius through local collaborations. Sanjay Puri Architects has gained recognition via competitions and publications.

Table 4: India's Domestic Industry and International Positioning

Name	Global Rank	Architects Employed	Fee Income (US\$)	Key Geographical Export Markets
DSP Design Associates	47	261	30m-39m	UAE, UK, SE Asia
Morphogenesis	63	172	5m-9m	South Asia, Middle East, Africa
CP Kukreja Architects	66	153	Not Revealed	Middle East, S/E Asia, Africa
Sikka Associates	72	141	Under 5m	Gulf, Africa
Sanjay Puri Architects	91	81	Under 5m	UAE, Spain, Australia, US

Source: WA100 Rankings, Building Design, 2024

These cases indicate a gradual shift from domestic focus to selective internationalisation, often targeting developing markets where cost-effective, sustainable design is valued. Indian firms possess distinctive capabilities in frugal sustainability and context-responsive urbanism, shaped by resource-constrained environments. These approaches align with global priorities in sustainability and affordable housing, offering transferable advantages in markets across Africa and Southeast Asia.

India's talent base further supports this potential. Over 450 institutions produce approximately 20,000 graduates annually, enabling domestic supply and global mobility

(Council of Architecture, 2022). Graduates from institutions such as CEPT University, SPA Delhi, and IIT Roorkee contribute to international practices. However, brain drain and limited expertise in advanced digital tools, including BIM and computational design, constrain global competitiveness.

Significant barriers persist, including weak branding, restrictive licensing, limited institutional support, and industry fragmentation, which hinder large-scale international operations and network development comparable to firms like Gensler or AECOM (Mehrotra, 2018). While domestic demand remains strong, global visibility is constrained. Advancing internationalisation requires leveraging sustainability strengths while enhancing digital capabilities, institutional frameworks, and international collaborations (Mehrotra, 2018).

2.3.3 Drivers and Barriers to Internationalisation of Indian Architecture Firms

The internationalisation of professional service firms (PSFs), particularly architectural practices, has gained attention as global demand expands across mature and emerging markets (Faulconbridge, 2009; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Indian firms, shaped by domestic constraints and global opportunities, navigate a complex interaction of push and pull drivers alongside institutional and structural barriers. This section analyses these dynamics through a push–pull–barrier framework, integrating organisational, cultural, financial, institutional, and market dimensions, while situating Indian trajectories within global comparisons.

2.3.3.1 Push Drivers

Domestic market saturation is a primary driver of internationalisation. The rapid expansion of design education and professional supply has created a talent surplus exceeding domestic demand, leading to commoditised procurement, reduced fees, and limited access to large or innovative projects (Mehrotra, 2020). Firms therefore expand abroad to stabilise revenues and access higher-margin opportunities.

Market fragmentation and price competition further intensify pressures. With over 100,000 registered architects, smaller firms face undercutting, while larger firms struggle to differentiate from construction conglomerates. Internationalisation thus becomes a strategic response to domestic hypercompetition. Additionally, the pursuit of prestige and symbolic capital motivates global expansion, as firms seek recognition and legitimacy within architecture's dual technical and cultural domain, paralleling Latin American practices (Dávila, 2016).

2.3.3.2 Pull Drivers

Pull factors arise from emerging regional opportunities driven by rapid urbanisation. Markets in Africa, South Asia, and the Middle East demand affordable, sustainable, and efficient design, aligning with Indian firms' strengths in frugal innovation and resource-efficient urbanism. The Gulf region, in particular, increasingly attracts firms offering integrated architectural and engineering services.

Global sustainability imperatives further reinforce demand. As jurisdictions adopt green building standards, Indian expertise in cost-effective ecological design provides

competitive advantage, reflecting patterns observed in Chinese firms combining cost efficiency with technological capability (Luo and Tung, 2007).

Diaspora networks also facilitate entry and legitimacy. Indian expatriate communities in regions such as the UAE, UK, Canada, and Australia support project access and reduce trust barriers (Suddaby et al., 2009). Comparable mechanisms enabled Latin American firms to enter European markets through cultural and professional linkages (Bianchi, 2011).

2.3.3.3 Barriers to Internationalisation

The barriers constraining Indian architectural firms' internationalisation can be categorised across market, institutional, cultural, organisational, and financial domains.

Market Barriers: Market barriers are significant. Western firms dominate global competitions, benefiting from established reputations and symbolic capital (Faulconbridge, 2009). Procurement systems often favour firms with prior international experience, reinforcing exclusion. Additionally, India lacks state-backed financing mechanisms for bundled design–construction exports, unlike Korean and Japanese models (Orr and Scott, 2008).

Institutional Barriers: Institutional barriers arise from regulatory frameworks governing licensing, liability, and accreditation (Edwards et al., 2010). In markets such as the United States, foreign firms must collaborate with locally licensed entities, limiting autonomy. Unlike RIBA, the Council of Architecture (COA) offers limited international facilitation, while the absence of export-oriented institutional support contrasts with Chinese state-backed initiatives.

Cultural Barriers: Cultural barriers reflect architecture's symbolic nature, requiring adaptation to local aesthetics and meanings. Misalignment between Indian design approaches and host-market expectations can weaken legitimacy. Similar challenges were faced by Latin American firms prior to stylistic adaptation (Faulconbridge, 2009; Bianchi, 2011).

Organisational and Financial Barriers: Organisational and financial barriers further constrain competitiveness. Indian firms' relatively small scale and limited capital reduce their ability to compete with multinational PSFs such as Arup or AECOM. Weak branding, limited project management capacity, and restricted access to finance compound these challenges. International projects require substantial upfront investment, yet Indian firms often lack access to project finance, performance guarantees, and insurance mechanisms available to Western and East Asian competitors (Khanna and Palepu, 2010; Orr and Scott, 2008; Bianchi, 2011).

2.3.3.4 Comparative Evidence

Cross-national comparison shows Western and East Asian firms overcame barriers through institutional support, while Indian firms largely face them alone. British, US, and East Asian firms benefited from strong systems, whereas Latin American firms achieved integration through alliances, a pathway potentially relevant for Indian firms (Edwards et al., 2010; Bianchi, 2011; Dávila, 2016).

Table 5: TOWS Matrix - Indian Architecture Firms Entering Foreign Markets

SO Strategies: Leverage Strengths to seize Opportunities	ST Strategies: Leverage Strengths to counter Threats
• Use diverse design expertise + sustainability know-how to target global demand for affordable and green housing. • Combine cost-competitiveness + technological proficiency (BIM, parametric design) to deliver PPP/MDB-funded projects efficiently. • Leverage domestic mega-project experience (infrastructure, housing, master planning) to win projects in Middle East, Africa, SE Asia where rapid urbanization parallels India's growth story. • Utilize frugal innovation as a USP for smart city planning and niche sustainable solutions. • Harness time-zone leverage + digital collaboration to provide continuous project support for Western clients.	• Differentiate from global giants by emphasizing cost-effective yet innovative delivery (not just low fees). • Use BIM and compliance readiness to counter stricter ESG, fire/life safety, and accessibility requirements. • Highlight sustainability leadership + cultural versatility to stand out against European/Chinese firms. • Form strategic alliances with local firms to overcome licensing and protectionist barriers. • Showcase heritage + contemporary design versatility to counter client bias toward established Western brands.
WO Strategies: Overcome Weaknesses by seizing Opportunities)	WT Strategies: Minimize Weaknesses & avoid Threats)
• Address lack of global brand recognition by entering high-visibility international competitions and publishing in global design journals. • Partner with local AORs, EPCs, and consultants to overcome regulatory and licensing gaps. • Build international BD and marketing capability — dedicated global offices, polished proposals, and targeted networking at design expos. • Invest in certifications (LEED AP, WELL, BREEAM, ISO BIM) to align with sustainability-driven opportunities. • Develop niche expertise (heritage conservation, smart cities, affordable housing) to compete on specialization, not price.	• Mitigate legal and payment risks by securing professional indemnity insurance, escrow-based billing, and arbitration clauses (SIAC/LCIA). • Build internal QA/QC and contract administration maturity to meet international standards and avoid disputes. • Streamline visa/licensing compliance processes and retain specialist consultants to prevent project delays. • Avoid over-expansion: focus on fewer, stable markets (e.g., UAE, Singapore) to reduce exposure to political/economic instability. • Address brain drain by offering career development, global exposure, and profit-sharing to retain top talent.

Notes:

- SO = Play offense → Highlight strengths like cultural versatility, BIM, cost advantage, sustainability.
- ST = Defend → Use same strengths to counter global competition and stricter compliance.
- WO = Build → Fix brand, licensing, and BD gaps while seizing growth in developing markets.
- WT = Safeguard → Reduce exposure to risks with insurance, QA/QC, selective market entry, and talent retention.

Source: Based on Ahammad et al. (2021), Johanson and Vahlne (1977, 2009), Winch (2014), and Faulconbridge (2009), Author made.

These patterns as highlighted in Table 5 – TOWS Matrix indicate that Indian firms' internationalisation is shaped not only by strategy or technology but by systemic structural conditions. Consistent with Weihrich's (1982) TOWS matrix, the interaction of opportunities and threats necessitates selective entry, alliances, and capability development rather than cost-based competition (Faulconbridge, 2009). This perspective informs both scholarship and practice in emerging-market PSF internationalisation.

The TOWS matrix links internal strengths and weaknesses with external opportunities and threats, guiding strategic responses through four orientations: SO, ST, WO, and WT.

In the SO (offensive) quadrant, firms leverage strengths to capture opportunities. These include cultural versatility, technological capabilities in BIM and parametric design, cost advantages from frugal innovation, and sustainability orientation. Together, these position firms to serve rapidly urbanising regions such as the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia, where demand for affordable and sustainable infrastructure is high. Cultural adaptability enhances client trust, while BIM supports regulatory compliance and large-scale project delivery. Sustainability credentials further strengthen market appeal (Mehrotra, 2020).

The ST (defensive) strategy uses these strengths to counter threats from global competitors and regulatory complexity. Firms differentiate through innovation and value-based delivery, supported by BIM-enabled compliance with environmental and safety standards. Experience in large domestic projects strengthens competitiveness, while alliances with local firms address licensing barriers and protectionist policies. Design versatility also

helps offset preferences for established Western brands (Faulconbridge, 2009; Edwards et al., 2010).

The WO quadrant addresses internal weaknesses—such as limited brand recognition, regulatory gaps, and underdeveloped business development—by leveraging external opportunities. Firms enhance visibility through international competitions and publications, form partnerships with local Architects of Record, and establish global business development networks. Certifications such as LEED, WELL, BREEAM, and ISO BIM align with sustainability standards, while specialist consultants improve compliance and execution efficiency (Faulconbridge, 2009; Mehrotra, 2020).

The WT (defensive) quadrant focuses on minimising risks arising from combined weaknesses and threats. Firms adopt measures such as professional indemnity insurance, escrow-based payments, and international arbitration clauses (SIAC/LCIA) to manage legal and financial exposure. Strengthening QA/QC systems enhances reliability, while selective entry into stable markets reduces geopolitical risks. Niche specialisation and talent retention strategies, including global exposure and incentives, further support sustained international growth (Khanna and Palepu, 2010; Suddaby et al., 2009).

In summary, Indian architecture firms can use the TOWS matrix as a strategic roadmap to align internal capabilities with external market conditions. By balancing growth strategies with risk mitigation and capability development, firms can strengthen global competitiveness and establish sustainable international positions, particularly in navigating complex regulatory, cultural, and competitive environments.

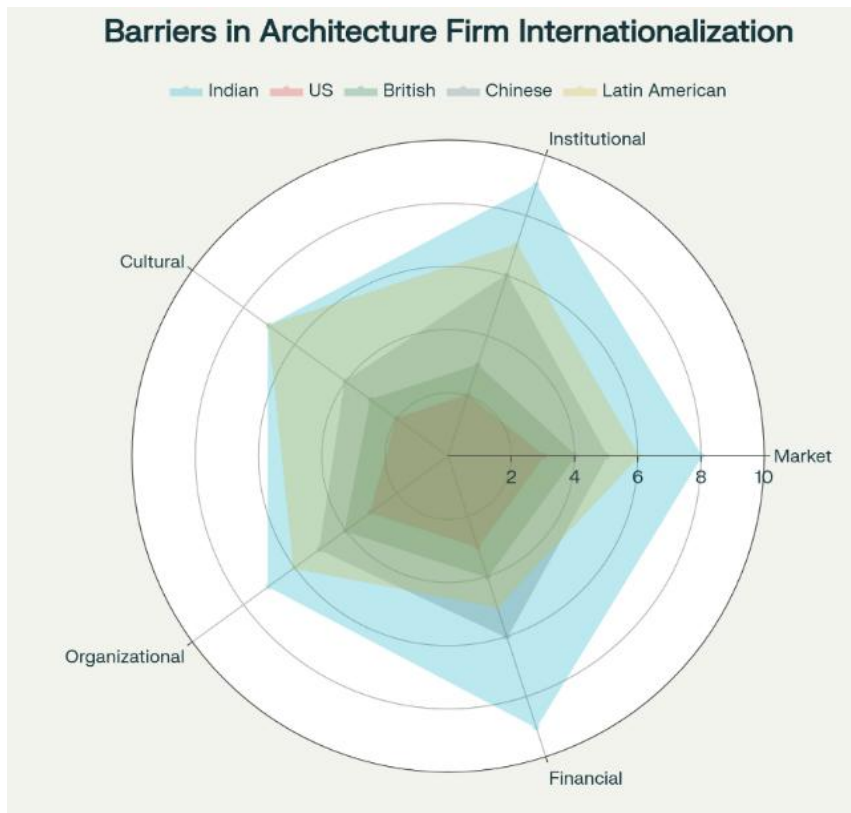


Figure 2: Comparative Radar Chart of Barrier Intensities Faced by Architecture Firms from Different Countries in Internationalisation

Source: Based on academic literature and empirical benchmarks from Faulconbridge (2009); Bianchi (2011), Mehrotra (2020), and Kumar and Menon (2021), Author made.

Their internationalisation reflects the interaction of domestic push factors and external opportunities, constrained by multilevel structural barriers. Unlike Western and East Asian counterparts, as highlighted in figure 2, Indian firms face institutional voids, limited financial systems, and weak organisational support. Evidence from Latin America suggests that alliances, diaspora networks, and selective specialisation offer viable pathways. However, without stronger institutional support—such as export credit, insurance

mechanisms, and regulatory reciprocity—global expansion will remain constrained despite competitive design capabilities.

2.3.4 Navigating Cultural, Regulatory, and Market Entry Strategies

Navigating the intricacies of cultural, regulatory, and market entry strategies presents a central challenge in the internationalisation of architectural services. The heightened liability of foreignness (LOF) in architecture—due to intense stakeholder engagement, complex regulatory frameworks, and culturally embedded aesthetics—requires firms to develop sophisticated approaches for cross-border expansion (Zaheer, 1995; Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016). This paper provides an integrative analysis of the various market entry modes, the negotiation of cultural and aesthetic dimensions, and the influence of institutional voids and legitimacy strategies, incorporating relevant Indian and international case examples.

2.3.4.1 Market Entry Strategies: Modes and Theoretical Foundations

Architectural firms typically pursue a range of market entry modes including wholly owned subsidiaries, acquisitions, alliances/joint ventures, and licensing. The selection is shaped by firm-specific resources and market-specific institutional and cultural conditions (Dunning, 1988; Root, 1994). The "eclectic paradigm" or OLI framework emphasizes ownership, location, and internalization advantages as determinants of the appropriate market entry mode (Dunning, 1988). Wholly owned subsidiaries offer maximum control but demand high resource commitment and regulatory compliance, whereas licensing and alliances allow market presence with lower investment and risk but less control

(Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016; Winch, 2008). As shown in Table 6, the literature shows that in regulated or culturally complex markets, foreign architecture firms tend to prefer joint ventures or alliances with local partners who provide legitimacy, local knowledge, and regulatory compliance capabilities. Leading global firms like Gensler or Foster + Partners sometimes prefer wholly owned subsidiaries to maintain brand integrity and long-term strategic presence (Nachum, 2003).

Table 6: Market Entry Mode Comparison

Entry Mode	Control	Risk & Commitment	Example/Insight
Wholly Owned Subsidiary	High	High	Gensler's global offices
Alliance/Joint Venture	Shared	Medium	Vitali with Mario Cucinella Architects
Acquisition	Full	Very High	Arcadis acquiring CallisonRTKL
Licensing	Low	Low	Singapore's architecture licensing

Source: Based on academic literature and empirical benchmarks from Greenwood et al., 2010, Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016, Winch, 2008, and Drew Napier, Author made.

2.3.4.2 Indian and International Case Examples

Indian architectural firms historically had modest international presence compared to other professional service sectors. However, growing globalisation and Indian diaspora networks have catalyzed gradual expansion through strategic collaborations, alliances, and joint ventures. Empirical evidence reflects a diversification of entry modes tailored to market contexts and institutional complexities.

2.3.4.2.1 Indian Firms' Internationalisation Practices

AJ Studios (India) exemplifies contemporary architectural practice engaging global trends through collaboration with international consultants on sustainable urban projects. Its redevelopment of public housing in Mumbai, undertaken with European experts, integrates global best practices with local climatic, cultural, and regulatory conditions. This hybrid approach has strengthened expertise in green building certification, enhancing global competitiveness (Mehta, 2025).

Larsen and Toubro (L&T), though primarily an engineering firm, provides relevant parallels through joint ventures in the Middle East and Africa. By partnering with local EPC contractors, L&T navigates regulatory complexities while introducing advanced technologies. These alliances mitigate liability of foreignness by combining local institutional knowledge with Indian technical capabilities, a model increasingly adopted by design firms through consortium bids and design-build partnerships (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016).

Similarly, Tata Projects enters Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern markets via joint ventures with regional firms, securing regulatory legitimacy and local trust while transferring Indian project management expertise. Architecture firms adopting this model often collaborate with local architects to ensure cultural and institutional alignment (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016).

Indian firms also frequently partner with local Architects of Record (AOR) in regions such as the Gulf and Africa. These collaborations meet licensing requirements while enabling

delivery of design innovation and cost efficiencies, reflecting institutional bridging and legitimacy borrowing in complex regulatory environments (Winch, 2008).

Sanjay Puri Architects demonstrates this approach through projects in the Middle East and Sweden, where partnerships with local firms enable adaptation to diverse climatic and cultural contexts, blending Indian spatial approaches with regional design sensibilities.

2.3.4.2.2 International Examples of Cross-Border Architectural Partnerships

1. Vitali Real Estate and Mario Cucinella Architects (Italy):

Vitali Real Estate's collaborations with renowned Italian architect Mario Cucinella demonstrate the viability of alliances in navigating complex European regulatory landscapes and achieving sustainability credentials. Mario Cucinella's local institutional embeddedness combined with Vitali's capital and market ambitions illustrate complementary partnership advantages in cross-border architecture (Greenwood et al., 2010).

2. Arata Isozaki's International Joint Ventures:

The celebrated Japanese architect Arata Isozaki has participated in joint ventures with local firms in Europe and Asia, melding Japanese and regional design aesthetics. These ventures highlight how architectural practices utilize cultural fusion, regulatory compliance knowledge, and shared risk to achieve successful market entry and build reputational capital across multiple jurisdictions (Nachum, 2003).

3. Foster + Partners' Wholly Owned Subsidiaries and Local Collaborations:

The British firm Foster + Partners operates wholly owned subsidiaries in strategic global cities such as Singapore and Hong Kong but complements them with alliances with local firms. Their direct investments enable brand reinforcement and client relationship management but the blended partnership approach mitigates regulatory and cultural foreignness risks in Asia-Pacific markets.

4. Kohn Pedersen Fox (KPF) and International Collaborations:

KPF employs a hybrid model combining wholly owned offices with strategic international partnerships, focusing on large-scale urban projects. In China and the Middle East, KPF often partners with state-affiliated design institutes and developers, leveraging their local networks and soft power to ensure project approvals while exporting Western design sensibilities (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016).

2.3.4.3 Lessons from Other Professional Services and Engineering Firms

Indian consulting firm Tata Consulting Engineers (TCE) has expanded globally through alliances emphasising knowledge transfer and local legitimacy, particularly in infrastructure projects across Africa and Southeast Asia. Similar to architectural firms, TCE balances internal expertise with local knowledge to achieve institutional acceptance. Likewise, AECOM employs a flexible model combining wholly owned subsidiaries and joint ventures tailored to regulatory risk and project scale, offering a blueprint for managing liability of foreignness (LOF) in international expansion.

2.3.4.3.1 Institutional Voids and Legitimacy Strategies

Institutional voids—gaps in regulations, certification systems, and market-supporting institutions—significantly shape market entry (Khanna and Palepu, 1997). Institutional theory suggests firms must address these through technical compliance and legitimacy aligned with local norms. Mechanisms include alliances with local actors, diaspora networks, and corporate social responsibility initiatives that build trust (Peprah et al., 2023). Firms embedded in local networks “borrow” legitimacy from partners to overcome constraints, particularly in weak institutional environments (Raïsch et al., 2020). Additionally, firms may adopt ceremonial compliance with formal codes while relying on informal networks to navigate ambiguity (Frost and Pillai, 2021). Failure to address these dynamics often leads to marginalisation.

2.3.4.3.2 Regulatory Complexity and Incremental Learning

Regulatory complexity is pronounced in architecture due to varying zoning, safety, and heritage standards. Market entry requires continuous legal and technical learning, consistent with the Uppsala model of incremental internationalisation (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009). In India, foreign firms encounter barriers such as opaque certification processes and evolving environmental norms, encouraging reliance on alliances and licensing arrangements to ensure compliance through local expertise (Bajpai and Dasgupta, 2004).

Table 7: Institutional Voids and Legitimacy Strategies.

Institutional Challenge	Legitimacy-building Strategy	Example
Regulatory gaps	Partnership with local AOR	Indian EPC JVs in Africa/Middle East
Infrastructural voids	Joint ventures with local contractors	Arcadis in Southeast Asia
Legitimacy barriers	CSR, trust-building activities	Jumia in Africa (NMS framework)

Source: Based on academic literature and empirical benchmarks from Johanson and Vahlne (2009), Bajpai and Dasgupta (2004), Author made.

2.3.4.3.3 Cultural Adaptation: Aesthetics, Symbolism, and Client Expectations

Cultural fluency is critical in architectural globalisation, particularly in adapting design aesthetics and symbolism to local contexts (Edwards et al., 2010). Successful firms extend beyond compliance by adopting participatory approaches and ethnographic methods to interpret local meanings (Memmott and Davidson, 2006; Abel, 2000). Early stakeholder engagement enables integration of indigenous motifs and reinterpretation of traditional elements. Cultural intelligence (CQ) frameworks further support adaptability through multinational team configurations (Edwards et al., 2010). Empirical examples include blending colonial and indigenous motifs or reconciling modernist forms with vernacular traditions in diverse contexts.

2.3.4.3.4 Comparative Analysis of Market Entry Modes

The framework in Table 8 aligns entry modes with firm capabilities, reputation, and local conditions, consistent with institutional and network theories emphasising legitimacy and embeddedness in mitigating LOF (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016; Nachum, 2003).

Table 8: Market Entry Mode vs. Foreignness Risk.

Entry Mode	Control Level	Risk and Commitment	Cultural/Regulatory Adaptation Burden	Speed of Market Entry	Best Contexts
Wholly Owned Subsidiary	High	High	High	Slow	Brand-sensitive markets, stable regulatory environments
Joint Ventures/ Alliances	Shared	Medium	Shared	Medium	High complexity markets requiring local legitimacy
Licensing	Low	Low	Low	Fast	Restricted sectors or initial market testing

Source: Based on Nachum (2003), Faulconbridge and Muzio (2016), and Winch (2008), Author made.

2.3.4.4 Concluding Remarks

International market entry in architecture involves complex cultural, regulatory, and institutional challenges. Firms adopt hybrid strategies combining alliances, joint ventures, and cultural adaptation to address LOF and institutional voids. Success depends on continuous learning, legitimacy-building, and culturally responsive design, with institutional theory and network embeddedness providing key explanatory insights.

2.3.5 Role of Technology, Sustainability, and Design Innovation in Internationalisation of Indian Architecture Firms

The internationalisation of Indian architecture firms is increasingly driven by the integration of advanced technologies, sustainability imperatives, and design innovation. These factors enhance global competitiveness, enabling firms to overcome structural constraints and integrate into international value chains. This section examines these dynamics through Building Information Modelling (BIM), sustainability certifications, and innovation in professional service firms (PSFs).

2.3.5.1 Technological Advancements and BIM Diffusion

Building Information Modelling (BIM) has transformed architectural practice through integrated, data-driven design and construction management. Succar and Kassem (2017) describe BIM adoption as a maturity continuum from isolated use to fully integrated, cloud-based systems. Indian firms have progressed significantly, supported by IT capabilities and evolving regulatory incentives (Ahuja et al., 2018).

Regionally, India, China, and South Korea form an advanced BIM adoption cluster, while the Middle East shows rapid growth due to public-sector mandates (Succar and Kassem, 2015). Using platforms such as Autodesk BIM Collaborate Pro, Indian firms improve coordination and reduce design errors and project timelines, as seen in projects like Kempegowda International Airport Terminal 2 (Geospatial World, 2021; Autodesk, 2024). BIM also enhances credibility by ensuring compliance with global documentation and transparency standards, strengthening international reputation.

2.3.5.2 Sustainability Certification and Indian Firms Abroad

Sustainability is a key differentiator in architectural internationalisation, guided by LEED, BREEAM, and WELL certifications (Powell, 2016). India ranks third globally in LEED certifications, with over 370 projects, reflecting transferable expertise (IBEF, 2025). Indian firms have delivered LEED-certified projects in the USA and Middle East, integrating energy and water efficiency. BREEAM projects in Europe and WELL developments in Singapore and the GCC further demonstrate capabilities in life-cycle sustainability and occupant wellness (Kent et al., 2024). The certifications, primary focus and examples have been highlighted in Table 9 as follows.

Table 9: Global Sustainable Certification Statistics and Indian Projects Abroad

Certification	Global Certified Projects (2024)	Primary Focus	Indian Projects Abroad Example
LEED	100,000+	Resource efficiency, energy	Infosys Campus USA, UAE commercial buildings
BREEAM	Tens of thousands	Life-cycle impact, environmental governance	UK office buildings, commercial developments
WELL	~74,000	Occupant health and well-being	Singapore and GCC office towers

Source: Based on academic literature and empirical benchmarks from IBEF (2025), Kent et al. (2024), Powell (2016), Author made.

2.3.5.3 Design Innovation: AI, Parametric Design, and Modular Construction

Design innovation, supported by emerging technologies, is central to the global competitiveness of Indian architecture firms. Parametric design enables adaptive forms responsive to climatic and spatial conditions, improving efficiency and contextual relevance (Buildiyo, 2025). AI enhances predictive analytics for building performance and

resource optimisation, as demonstrated in projects such as The Edge (Amsterdam) and The Phoenix (California) (Sharma, 2025). Modular construction, through prefabrication and standardisation, reduces project timelines and waste, strengthening cost efficiency and sustainability. These technologies are particularly effective in infrastructure and affordable housing across Asia and the Middle East, enhancing speed-to-market and environmental performance (Zenodo, 2023). Figure 3 illustrates their impact on design efficiency, sustainability, customisation, speed, collaboration, and innovation capability, providing a framework for understanding their role in internationalisation.

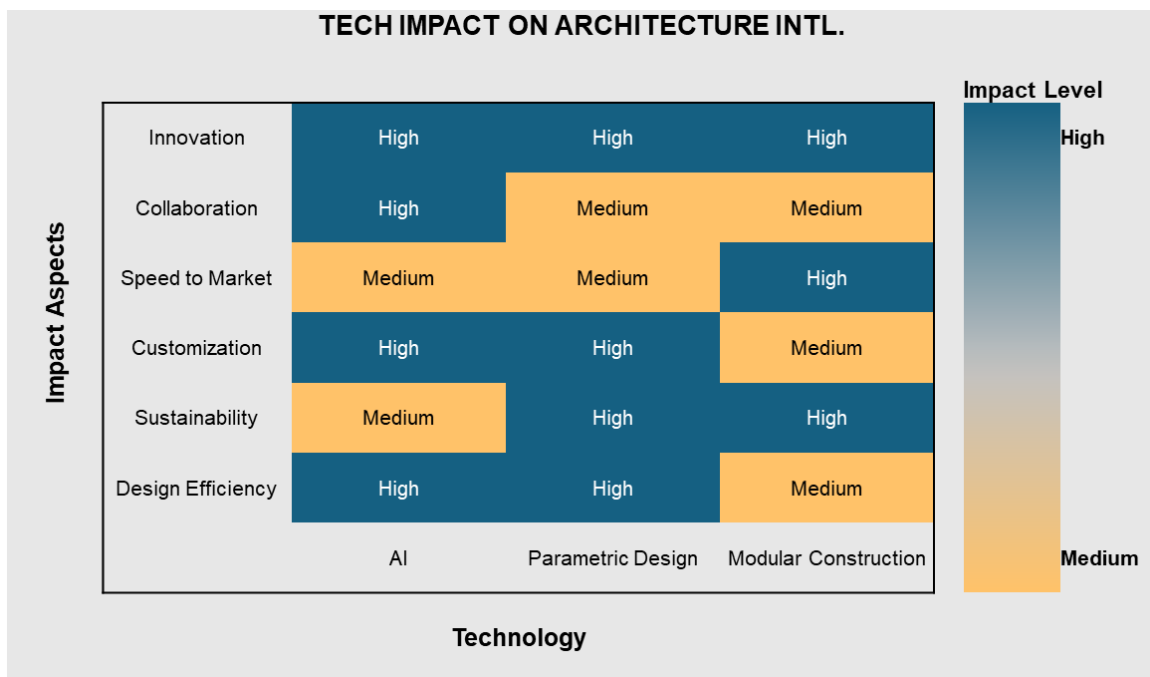


Figure 3: Comparative Impact of AI, Parametric Design, and Modular Construction on Internationalisation

Source: Author's synthesis from Buildiyo (2025), Sharma (2025), Zenodo (2023), author designed

2.3.5.4 Innovation Capability and International Competitiveness

Indian firms leverage BIM to enhance credibility and efficiency in global projects. Some of the examples include - At Kempegowda International Airport Terminal 2, over 5,000 coordinated digital drawings reduced rework and improved collaboration (Autodesk, 2024). Morphogenesis applied BIM in the Surat Diamond Bourse for 3D modelling and cost control across multiple regions (Pinnacle IIT, 2024). The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation used 5D BIM to improve visualisation and risk management, strengthening institutional legitimacy (Pinnacle IIT, 2024). CP Kukreja Architects integrated BIM with sustainability at the India International Convention Centre, achieving IGBC Platinum certification (Geospatial World, 2021). BIM thus enables efficiency, sustainability, and global credibility. Please refer Table 10 on the role of BIM and how Indian firms with International partners brought value with BIM

Table 10: Indian BIM Projects with International Collaboration

Project	Indian Firm(s)	International Partners	BIM Role
Kempegowda Intl. Airport Terminal 2	BIAL	Autodesk, Global Consultants	End-to-end BIM collaboration
Surat Diamond Bourse	Morphogenesis	European and Middle Eastern consultants	Integrated 3D modelling, cost control
Delhi Metro Rail Corporation	DMRC	International engineering consultants	5D BIM for visualization, scheduling
India International Convention Centre	CP Kukreja Architects and BIM Engineers	Larsen and Toubro, ARCOP	Design coordination, green cert.

Source: Based on academic literature and empirical benchmarks from Pinnacle IIT (2024), Autodesk (2024), Geospatial World (2021), Author made.

2.3.5.6 Concluding Remarks

The global expansion of Indian architecture firms is increasingly shaped by the interplay of technological innovation, sustainability performance, and advanced design capability. BIM integration has positioned Indian firms within international collaboration networks, while global sustainability certifications and parametric, AI-driven design tools enhance legitimacy and differentiation. Modular construction further augments speed, efficiency, and ecological responsibility. Collectively, these advancements enable Indian firms to evolve from emerging-market service providers into globally respected design innovators. Through strategic alliances and technology-enabled delivery systems, they are consolidating their presence in global architectural ecosystems and contributing meaningfully to sustainable, innovation-led development worldwide.

2.3.6 Critical Success Factors for the Internationalisation of Indian Architecture Firms

The internationalisation of Indian architecture firms depends on a set of Critical Success Factors (CSFs) that enable navigation of institutional complexity, mitigation of liability of foreignness, and effective competition across global markets. Drawing from literature on professional service firms, emerging-market multinationals, and architectural globalisation, these factors encompass internal capabilities and external relational enablers shaping successful expansion.

First, strategic partnerships and local embeddedness are essential for legitimacy and regulatory access. Alliances with local partners facilitate licensing compliance, cultural integration, and stakeholder trust (Faulconbridge, 2009; Mehrotra, 2020). Indian firms entering regions such as the Middle East and Southeast Asia benefit from joint ventures that provide institutional knowledge, reduce entry risks, and enhance project outcomes. Partnerships also enable knowledge transfer and context-sensitive design.

Second, brand visibility and reputational capital influence client acquisition and positioning. As a symbolic profession, architecture relies on global recognition for quality and design excellence. Participation in international competitions, exhibitions, and publications strengthens credibility, particularly for firms from emerging economies (Powell, 2016). Firms such as Morphogenesis demonstrate how sustainability credentials and awards enhance access to high-value projects.

Third, delivery excellence and standards compliance ensure that business commitments translate into client satisfaction and long-term relationships. Structured project management, quality control, and risk management systems reflect operational capability under international scrutiny (Powell, 2016). Consistent performance is critical for Indian firms competing with established global practices known for process maturity.

Fourth, financial safeguards and risk mitigation underpin sustainable international operations. Cross-border practice exposes firms to legal complexities, payment risks, and higher liability requirements (Khanna and Palepu, 2010). Mechanisms such as indemnity

insurance, escrow arrangements, and arbitration clauses support financial stability and operational predictability, enabling scalable expansion.

Fifth, global talent development and mobility are central to competitiveness. International projects require culturally competent and technically skilled professionals. Training frameworks incorporating global exposure, cross-cultural skills, and collaboration are essential (Mercer, 2022). At the same time, retention strategies—such as career progression, global opportunities, and incentives—are necessary to address brain drain and sustain organisational capacity (Egon Zehnder, 2019).

Sixth, innovation and sustainability capabilities are increasingly critical. Firms demonstrating expertise in low-carbon materials, smart systems, and climate-responsive design gain competitive advantage (Ajstudios.co.in, 2025). Technologies such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) enhance coordination and signal operational sophistication (Succar, 2009). Indian firms' experience with frugal sustainability provides a distinctive advantage in resource-constrained markets.

Seventh, leadership and organisational culture determine the effectiveness of internationalisation strategies. Collaborative and adaptive leadership models enhance responsiveness to diverse client and institutional contexts (Egon Zehnder, 2019). Firms with strong communication, shared learning systems, and innovation-oriented cultures sustain alignment across global operations.

Collectively, these CSFs indicate that internationalisation extends beyond cost competitiveness. It requires the integration of partnerships, brand legitimacy, operational

excellence, financial prudence, human capital, innovation, and leadership. Their interaction underscores that internationalisation is a relational, institutional, and cultural process requiring continuous learning and capability development.

Table 11: Critical Success Factors for Internationalisation of Indian Architecture Firms with Empirical Backing and Firm Examples

CSF Category	Description	Empirical Study Source	Example Firms
Strategic Partnerships	Alliances with local firms enable regulatory compliance and cultural adaptation.	Faulconbridge (2009), Mehrotra (2020)	RSP Architects (Singapore)
Branding and Reputation	Building global brand visibility through awards and landmark projects.	Mehrotra (2020), Powell (2016)	Foster + Partners (UK)
Delivery Excellence	Adherence to global design and risk management standards.	Powell (2016), Scribd (2025)	OMA (Netherlands)
Financial Safeguards	Use of insurance, escrow, arbitration to mitigate financial risk.	Khanna and Palepu (2010), Mehrotra (2020)	Indian firms adapting norms
Talent Mobilization	Talent acquisition, development and global mobility programs.	Faulconbridge (2009), Mercer (2022), Egon Zehnder (2019)	Heerim Architects (Korea)
Innovation & Sustainability	Emphasis on sustainable design and smart technologies.	Ajstudios.co.in (2025), WilkinsonEyre (2018)	WilkinsonEyre (UK)
Leadership & Culture	Distributed leadership emphasizing collaboration and global mindset.	Egon Zehnder (2019), Na Fu (2019)	Perkins+Will (USA)

Source: Based on academic literature and empirical benchmarks from Faulconbridge (2009), Mehrotra (2020), Powell (2016), Khanna and Palepu (2010), Egon Zehnder (2019), Mercer (2022), Ajstudios.co.in (2025), and Scribd (2025). Author made.

Table 11 presents a consolidated model of seven CSFs—Strategic Partnerships, Branding and Reputation, Delivery Excellence, Financial Safeguards, Talent Mobilization, Innovation & Sustainability, and Leadership & Culture—each grounded in theory and practice. Partnerships enable market entry and legitimacy (Faulconbridge, 2009; Mehrotra, 2020), while branding mitigates credibility gaps (Powell, 2016). Delivery excellence builds client trust, and financial safeguards reduce legal and payment risks (Khanna and Palepu, 2010). Talent mobilization supports knowledge transfer and innovation (Faulconbridge, 2009; Mercer, 2022), while sustainability and innovation enhance competitiveness (Ajstudios.co.in, 2025). Leadership and culture foster adaptability and long-term growth (Egon Zehnder, 2019; Na Fu, 2019).

Figure 4 compares Indian and global firms across these factors, revealing strengths in partnerships and talent mobilization but gaps in branding, financial safeguards, and leadership maturity. Differences in delivery excellence and innovation are narrower but influenced by resource and standardisation constraints. Overall, while Indian firms are progressing, sustained focus on branding, financial systems, and leadership is necessary to achieve global parity.

In sum, the internationalisation of Indian architecture firms depends on integrating partnerships, branding, operational excellence, financial management, talent development, innovation, and leadership. These factors collectively mitigate institutional and perceptual barriers, enabling firms to establish credibility and competitiveness in global markets.

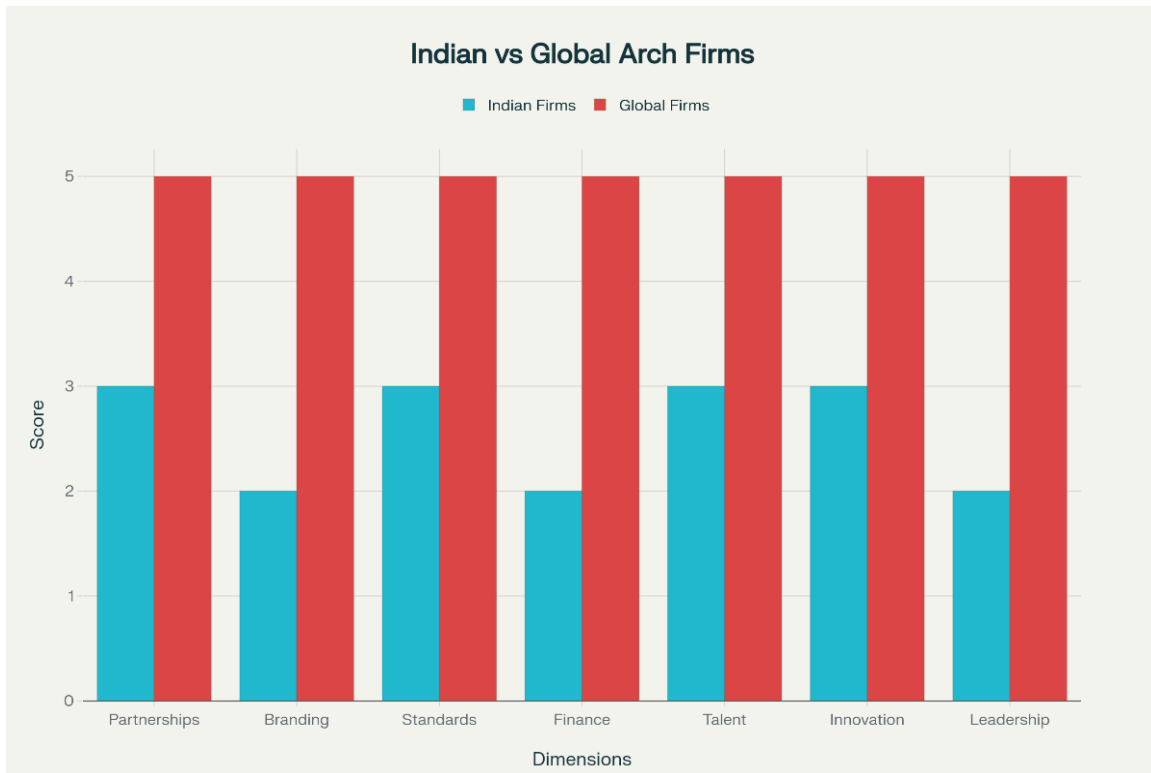


Figure 4: Comparative Performance of Indian vs Global Architecture Firms Across Key Internationalisation Factors

Source: Based on comparative analyses from Mehrotra (2020), Powell (2016), Faulconbridge (2009), and Global Firm Case Studies (Scribd, 2025), Author made.

2.3.7 Gaps in Literature and Future Research Agenda

The internationalisation of architectural firms is an important area within global professional service firm (PSF) research, yet Indian firms remain underexplored. Existing literature largely focuses on Western “starchitect” firms and East Asian mega-practices, overlooking the trajectories, challenges, and institutional contexts of Indian firms despite their expanding global presence (Jones, 2011; Sklair, 2017). This reveals significant theoretical, empirical, methodological, and institutional gaps.

Theoretically, current frameworks inadequately capture India-specific capabilities such as frugal innovation, sustainability-driven differentiation, and technology-enabled global service delivery (Oswal et al., 2009; MGS Architecture, 2024). Empirical research is limited, particularly in comparative case studies examining both successful and unsuccessful internationalisation pathways (Gupta, 2013; ACE Update, 2013). Methodologically, studies are predominantly cross-sectional and anecdotal, highlighting the need for longitudinal and network-based approaches to analyse organisational transformation and inter-firm relationships shaping globalisation outcomes (CBS, 2025). Institutionally, the role of bodies such as the Council of Architecture (CoA) remains underexamined, particularly regarding regulatory and facilitative functions influencing global expansion (Council of Architecture, 2025).

Cross-country comparisons require careful selection of analogous contexts. Emerging markets such as Brazil, Chile, Vietnam, and Mexico share institutional and market conditions, with small- to medium-sized firms pursuing internationalisation. In contrast, developed countries including the Netherlands, Denmark, and the UK provide benchmarks in sustainability innovation, institutional support, and network-driven expansion (CBS, 2025; Menzies, 2024). Relevant firm types include globally recognised “starchitects,” boutique specialists, market-seeking firms, and client-following firms leveraging diaspora and long-term relationships (Uncommon Architects, 2024).

India’s architectural export patterns also align with countries such as Brazil, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Middle Eastern economies like the UAE and Saudi Arabia, which combine emerging market growth, outsourcing-led services, and demand for large-scale urban

projects (Axa Engineers, 2025; Grandview Research, 2022). Meaningful comparison requires aligning these contexts with Indian firm characteristics, including SME structures, diverse client bases, reliance on Middle Eastern markets, emphasis on frugal innovation and sustainability, CoA regulatory compliance, and market-seeking or client-following strategies (Oswal et al., 2009; Council of Architecture, 2025).

Addressing these gaps can extend PSF internationalisation theory by incorporating Global South perspectives, supported by comparative and longitudinal evidence. Such research will enhance academic understanding while informing practical strategies and policy frameworks for strengthening the global competitiveness of Indian architectural firms.

2.4 Identification of Study Gaps

2.4.1 Limited Empirical Research on Indian Firms in Global Contexts

Despite the growing discourse on international architectural practice, there remains a striking lack of empirical scholarship on Indian firms' global expansion strategies. Existing studies overwhelmingly emphasize Western “starchitect” practices and East Asian mega-firms, documenting their transnational networks and symbolic capital (Jones, 2011; Sklair, 2017), while marginalizing Indian firms despite their increasing presence in the Global South.

Absent from the literature are grounded case studies or comparative analyses of how Indian firms leverage their distinctive competitive assets—such as frugal innovation, cultural

versatility, and cost-efficient design expertise—within complex foreign markets (Mehrotra, 2018). This omission constrains understanding of how these firms navigate institutional heterogeneity, build cross-border partnerships, and adapt business models to overcome the liabilities of foreignness. As Nachum (2003) notes, the internationalisation of professional service firms (PSFs) is context-contingent, relying heavily on localized interactions—yet these dynamics remain under-theorized for Indian firms. Addressing this gap calls for qualitative, process-based, multi-case research to trace firms’ decision-making logics, adaptive pathways, and both successes and failures in diverse cultural and regulatory environments.

2.4.2 Insufficient Exploration of Regulatory and Institutional Barriers

Although prior studies recognize regulatory constraints and the liability of foreignness as key barriers to internationalisation (Zaheer, 1995; Edwards et al., 2010), few examine how Indian firms practically navigate these challenges. Building codes, licensing regimes, indemnity frameworks, and professional liability rules vary widely across jurisdictions, yet the literature tends to treat these issues abstractly rather than exploring concrete coping strategies (Falconbridge and Muzio, 2016; Winch, 2008).

There is scant evidence on how Indian firms develop compliance capabilities, institutional intelligence, or collaborative arrangements—such as partnering with local Architects of Record or leveraging diaspora networks—to mitigate these institutional voids (Mehrotra, 2020). Deeper empirical inquiry is needed to uncover firms’ regulatory adaptation mechanisms, governance arrangements, and the role of professional councils, industry

bodies, and government agencies in enabling or hindering these processes. Such understanding would not only refine theoretical models of PSF internationalisation but also offer actionable insights for practitioners operating across diverse regulatory regimes.

2.4.3 Integration with Broader Literature on Internationalisation and Architecture

These gaps underscore the broader challenge of integrating Indian architectural internationalisation into mainstream theories of PSF globalisation. The literature highlights strategic repositioning, institutional recalibration, and the adoption of technologies like BIM as key enablers (Faulconbridge, 2009; Succar, 2009). Sustainability and cultural fluency also emerge as critical for overcoming cost-based competition and institutional barriers (Powell, 2016; Mehrotra, 2020).

However, without empirical evidence on how Indian firms operationalise these strategies within real institutional constraints, current theoretical models remain incomplete. While network embeddedness, partnership-based entry, and reputation-building are consistently cited as success factors (Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006; Nachum, 2003), little is known about how these relational mechanisms are mobilized by Indian firms across diverse host-country contexts. Filling this gap would contribute to more nuanced, contextually grounded theorizing on the internationalisation of architecture firms from emerging economies.

2.5 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to critically examine the internationalisation trajectories of Indian architectural firms, elucidating how they transition from locally embedded design

practices to globally competitive professional service firms (PSFs). Drawing on theoretical perspectives from the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), Network Theory (Johanson and Mattsson, 1988), and Institutional Theory (Scott, 2008), the study seeks to develop an integrated framework explaining how strategic, cultural, and institutional forces collectively shape firms' global expansion. It aims to explore how Indian firms leverage intangible resources—such as design innovation, sustainability expertise, and technological capabilities like BIM—to overcome institutional voids and legitimacy deficits in foreign markets. The research further investigates the dynamic interplay between firm-specific capabilities, policy environments, and cross-border partnerships that facilitate entry and adaptation in diverse regional contexts. By synthesizing classical and contemporary internationalisation theories, the study contributes to extending international business literature into the domain of knowledge-intensive and culturally embedded PSFs. Ultimately, it seeks to position Indian architectural firms within the broader discourse on emerging-market globalisation, offering a nuanced understanding of how design knowledge, institutional alignment, and relational embeddedness underpin sustainable international competitiveness.

2.6 Research Questions (RQs)

RQ1: What are the key drivers motivating Indian architecture firms to pursue international expansion?

RQ2: What market entry strategies do Indian architecture firms employ to navigate international challenges, and what critical success factors underpin their efficacy?

2.7 Chapter Summary and Transition

This chapter critically synthesised theoretical and empirical literature on the internationalisation of architecture firms, with particular emphasis on Indian practices transitioning from domestic to global markets. It situated this process within broader international business and professional service frameworks, integrating the Uppsala model (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977, 2009), Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991), Network Theory (Johanson and Mattsson, 1988), and Institutional Theory (Scott, 2008). By adapting these perspectives to architecture as a knowledge-intensive and culturally embedded profession, the chapter established a conceptual foundation for understanding how Indian firms leverage design capabilities, relational networks, and institutional adaptability to engage in global markets.

The review produced several key insights. First, architectural internationalisation differs fundamentally from manufacturing-based models due to its reliance on tacit knowledge, relational capital, and symbolic legitimacy (Faulconbridge, 2009; Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). Indian firms' international growth is driven by push factors such as domestic market saturation and the pursuit of professional recognition, alongside pull factors including urbanisation-led demand, diaspora linkages, and sustainability imperatives (Mehrotra, 2020). Frameworks such as the Global Expansion Strategy Matrix and TOWS Matrix

demonstrate how firms align internal capabilities—technological innovation, design excellence, and cost efficiency—with external opportunities and institutional conditions to build legitimacy and competitiveness (Ahammad et al., 2021). The review also underscored the increasing importance of technologies such as Building Information Modelling (BIM) and sustainability certifications (LEED, BREEAM) in enhancing operational integration and credibility across borders (Schmitt and Baldegger, 2020; Powell, 2016).

Second, the literature highlighted the strategic role of partnerships, digital collaboration, and adaptive branding in overcoming liability of foreignness and institutional asymmetries (Zaheer, 1995; Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016). Firms such as Morphogenesis and CP Kukreja Architects exemplify hybrid internationalisation pathways combining resource-based innovation with network-driven legitimacy. Additionally, cultural intelligence and frugal design innovation strengthen differentiation within the global design economy, reinforcing the view that internationalisation is a multi-level, iterative process shaped by institutional context, cultural embeddedness, and organisational learning.

Despite these contributions, significant research gaps persist. Empirical understanding of how emerging-market firms navigate institutional voids, manage cross-cultural adaptation, and balance local identity with global positioning remains limited. Comparative analyses across Global South contexts are scarce, and the dynamic relationships between technological adoption, sustainability strategies, and entry modes remain underexplored (Han et al., 2024). These gaps justify the need for a context-sensitive framework integrating resources, networks, and institutional legitimacy.

Accordingly, this chapter establishes the conceptual foundation for the study's empirical phase, which examines how Indian firms operationalise strategic frameworks, partnerships, and digital capabilities to build global credibility. The next chapter translates these insights into an analytical framework for investigating how Indian architecture firms formulate, implement, and sustain internationalisation strategies in practice.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter delineates the methodological framework operationalising the study's dual research questions amid the internationalisation challenges faced by Indian architecture firms. Specifically, RQ1 probes the key drivers—economic, institutional, relational, reputational, and capability-based—motivating these firms to venture abroad, while RQ2 explores the strategic processes, including frugal innovation, cultural adaptation, cost-efficiency, and regulatory navigation, they employ to establish and sustain foreign operations (Mukherjee, 2019; Mehrotra, 2020). Anchored in a qualitative paradigm and complemented by secondary document analysis, this design responds to the context-specific gaps identified in the literature review, where Western and East Asian models inadequately capture emerging-market dynamics.

The predominance of qualitative methods stems from the inherent complexities of strategic decision-making in knowledge-intensive sectors like architecture. Quantitative approaches falter in elucidating the subjective interpretations, temporal evolutions, and contextual contingencies that underpin motivations and strategies (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Instead, qualitative inquiry affords 'thick description' of lived experiences, revealing how firm leaders perceive domestic saturation prompting overseas diversification or network ties facilitating client-following entries (Insight7, 2025). Secondary documents—such as

project portfolios and strategy decks—provide corroborative evidence, mitigating recall bias and enriching narrative depth through methodological triangulation (Yin, 2018).

3.1.1 Rationale for Qualitative Approach

Qualitative paradigms are particularly apposite for this study, as strategic motivations and processes defy straightforward quantification due to their socially constructed nature. Decision-makers' rationales often intertwine tangible factors, like profit margins from Middle Eastern contracts, with intangible elements, such as prestige from global awards or diaspora connections (Singh, 2017). Surveys might tally frequencies but overlook the 'how'—e.g., how institutional voids spur innovative adaptations (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016). By prioritising interpretive depth, this approach aligns with pragmatist underpinnings, generating transferable insights for theory-building in Resource-Based View (RBV), where unique firm resources drive competitive edges (Barney, 1991).

Furthermore, the project-based essence of architecture amplifies qualitative necessity: international engagements unfold episodically, influenced by client idiosyncrasies and regulatory flux, rendering static metrics insufficient. Semi-structured formats for both RQs capture these nuances, while documents trace historical patterns, ensuring a holistic view (Patton, 2015). This suits the exploratory nature of RQ1, mapping driver prevalence, and the processual focus of RQ2, unpacking strategy enactment in real-time contexts.

3.1.2 Advantages of Multi-Case Study Framework

Employing a multiple case study design facilitates rigorous comparison across heterogeneous firms—spanning boutique studios to large practices—targeting regions like

Africa or Southeast Asia. This strategy excels in pattern-matching: literal replication tests consistent driver-strategy links (e.g., network drivers yielding partnership modes), while theoretical replication probes variations by firm maturity (Yin, 2018). Beyond description, it fosters analytical generalisation, extending theories like Institutional Theory to non-Western contexts without probabilistic claims (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gray, 2014).

Cross-case synthesis unveils contingencies, such as how smaller firms leverage digital tools for cost-efficiency absent in larger peers, addressing the literature's call for comparative emerging-market studies (McQuillan and Scott, 2015). Purposive sampling ensures informational richness, with snowballing enhancing network coverage, culminating in theoretical saturation at 10-15 participants (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Palinkas et al., 2015). Such design mitigates single-case biases, amplifying external validity through replicated findings.

3.1.3 Differentiation of RQ1 and RQ2 Methodologies

RQ1's semi-structured online questionnaires, administered online to principals and partners, prioritise exploratory breadth: open probes elicit narratives on drivers ('What triggered your first overseas bid?'), supplemented by Likert ratings for patterning (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). This elicits firm-level profiles—revenue shares from abroad, market types—while documents verify claims, distinguishing it from RQ2's process focus.

RQ2 delves into 'how' via extended interviews tracing strategy evolution: from ideation ('How did you adapt designs for local codes?') to outcomes ('What sustained repeat commissions?'). Inductive elements surface emergent tactics, like BIM-enabled

collaboration, complementing RQ1's drivers by revealing mechanisms—e.g., relational drivers manifesting as joint ventures (Faulconbridge, 2009). Both share triangulation and thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), but RQ1 emphasises motivation typologies, RQ2 processual maps, ensuring holistic coverage.

Integration occurs through shared cases: RQ1 outputs inform RQ2 probes ('How did economic drivers shape your frugal strategies?'), yielding causal chains absent in siloed designs (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). This sequential complementarity maximises explanatory power, linking antecedents (drivers) to outcomes (sustained presence).

3.1.4 Methodological Positioning and Chapter Structure

Trustworthiness anchors the design per Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility through prolonged engagement and member-checking; transferability via detailed case vignettes; dependability through codebooks and peer review; confirmability via reflexive journals. Ethical protocols include informed consent, anonymisation (e.g., Firm A), and IRB approval, safeguarding participants in a competitive sector (Israel and Hay, 2006). Reflexivity acknowledges the researcher's positionality, enhancing interpretive authenticity.

Subsequent sections detail sampling, instruments, analysis—hybrid thematic coding for within- and cross-case insights (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006)—and linkages to findings. This positions the methodology as a robust conduit from theory to practice, illuminating pathways for Indian firms' global ascent.

3.2 Methodology for RQ1 (Qualitative Version)

3.2.1 Research Design and Rationale

Research Question 1 (RQ1)—"What are the key drivers motivating Indian architecture firms to expand internationally?"—calls for a methodological design that captures the interpretive, contextually embedded nature of strategic motivations within professional service firms (PSFs). This study employs a qualitative multiple case study paradigm, strategically prioritising analytical depth over statistical breadth to systematically unpack managerial perceptions, organisational imperatives, and institutional influences that catalyse firms' transition from domestic orientation to global engagement (Yin, 2018). This approach proves particularly apposite given RQ1's exploratory orientation, where internationalisation drivers manifest not as objective metrics but as dynamically constructed phenomena emerging from decision-makers' situated experiences within India's rapidly evolving architectural sector, characterised by domestic market saturation and burgeoning global opportunities (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Eisenhardt, 1989).

The preference for qualitative methods over quantitative alternatives rests on several compelling epistemological and pragmatic grounds. Quantitative surveys, while adept at frequency tabulations, inevitably flatten the rich contextual logics that animate internationalisation decisions—for instance, the interplay between perceived domestic market saturation and opportunistic diaspora networks that might escape closed-ended formats (Ahammad et al., 2021). Such instruments risk conflating surface-level rankings with underlying causal mechanisms, a critical shortfall in knowledge-intensive sectors like

architecture where strategic choices blend calculated rationality with serendipitous relational dynamics (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015). Semi-structured online questionnaires, by contrast, offer a calibrated balance of structural consistency for cross-case comparability and expansive openness for narrative elaboration, enabling researchers to probe emergent insights in real time while respecting participants' temporal constraints (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Patton, 2015). This design resonates profoundly with the project's theoretical tripod—Resource-Based View (RBV) emphasising internal capability drivers, Network Theory foregrounding relational pulls, and Institutional Theory highlighting regulatory cues—positioning RQ1 to generate context-sensitive extensions to established frameworks within the under-examined Indian PSF landscape (Barney, 1991; Johanson and Mattsson, 1988; Scott, 2008; Mukherjee, 2019; Mehrotra, 2020).

Moreover, the multiple case study configuration facilitates theoretical replication: literal replication tests convergent driver patterns across similar firms (e.g., large-scale practices chasing economic margins in the Middle East), while theoretical replication probes divergences (e.g., boutique studios leveraging networks in Southeast Asia). This dual logic fosters analytical generalisation to theory rather than population inference, addressing a persistent lacuna in Western- and East Asian-centric internationalisation scholarship (Yin, 2018; Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2016). By embedding data generation within naturalistic decision contexts, the methodology honours architecture's project-based, culturally inflected essence, where motivations evolve episodically amid client idiosyncrasies and regulatory flux.

3.2.2 Unit of Analysis and Conceptual Framework

The unit of analysis comprises the individual architecture firm operationalised as a bounded qualitative case, rigorously interrogated through layered narratives of decision-making processes, strategic deliberations, and internationalisation trajectories (Yin, 2018; Stake, 1995). This firm-level demarcation ensures analytical coherence, positioning individual informant accounts—derived from founders, partners, Managing Directors, or senior architects—as constituent threads weaving the organisational tapestry, rather than fragmented data points susceptible to ecological fallacy (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009). Such framing privileges holistic sensemaking, capturing how firm-specific histories and positionalities mediate external stimuli into motivational drivers.

While qualitative inquiry eschews positivist variable operationalisation, delineating key analytical dimensions provides essential conceptual scaffolding, enhancing transparency, replicability, and theoretical dialogue (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014). These dimensions partition into outcome patterns (manifest internationalisation expressions), conceptual drivers (motivational antecedents), and contextual qualifiers (moderating conditions), interconnected through participant-derived perceptual cause-effect chains that prioritise narrative plausibility over statistical causality.

3.2.2.1 Outcome Patterns: These qualitatively index the tangible fruits of internationalisation, furnishing dependent benchmarks for driver attribution:

1. Project portfolio composition: Quantitative volume juxtaposed with qualitative diversity (e.g., high-rise hospitality in Dubai versus infrastructural bids in Africa), revealing entry vectors.

2. Engagement profundity: Transactional (one-off competitions) versus relational continuity (repeat commissions, embedded subsidiaries), signalling trajectory maturity.
3. Strategic import: Portfolio penetration (revenue bands: <10%, 10-30%, >30%) allied with reputational externalities (e.g., global awards burnishing domestic prestige), underscoring embedded value (Ahammad et al., 2021; Yin, 2018).

3.2.2.2 Conceptual Drivers: Theoretically rooted yet empirically malleable, these cluster into five interlocking categories, blending deductive a priori sensitising concepts with inductive data-driven refinements:

1. Economic drivers: Instrumental pursuits of arbitrage opportunities—superior margins, revenue diversification amid home-market saturation, currency hedges—often dominating larger firms' calculus (Mukherjee, 2019; Ahammad et al., 2021).
2. Institutional drivers: Structural facilitations encompassing bilateral trade protocols, governmental tenders or quasi-official invitations, and international competition access, particularly salient in regulated destinations (Scott, 2008; Oswal et al., 2014).
3. Relational/network drivers: Social capital activations via client migrations ('followership'), diaspora conduits, transnational alliances, or developer ecosystems, quintessential to resource-constrained entrants (Johanson and Mattsson, 1988; Uzzi, 1997).

4. Reputational/cultural drivers: Symbolic aspirations for global brand elevation and Indian design identity exportation, fuelling prestige-seeking amid domestic validation plateaus (Mehrotra, 2020).
5. Capability/technological drivers: Proprietary edges in digital workflows (BIM proficiency), sustainable paradigms, or parametric expertise rendering firms competitively viable abroad (Schmitt and Baldegger, 2020).
6. Contextual Qualifiers: Far from ancillary, these constitutive conditions qualitatively condition driver salience and interaction, forestalling decontextualised abstraction (Palinkas et al., 2015):
7. Firm demography: Scale gradients (micro <20 staff; small 20-50; medium 50-200; large >200) and maturity spectra (emergent <10 years versus entrenched), where micro-entities might privilege networks over capital-intensive capabilities.
8. Geostrategic vectors: Destination profiles (Middle East megaprojects; Africa/SE Asia emergent niches; occasional Western prestige plays), imprinting regulatory and cultural contingencies.
9. Operational archetypes: Dominant logics—competition-bidding, client-led followership, collaborative hybrids, design-build integrations—shaping viable pathways (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Analytical progression traces idiographic causal sequences: driver cue (e.g., institutional tender) → perceptual amplification (via qualifiers like firm scale) → outcome

crystallisation (e.g., sustained Middle East presence), yielding typologies such as "network-resilient micro-firms" versus "capability-dominant corporates".

3.2.3 Population, Sampling Strategy, and Sample Size

The target population delimits to Council of Architecture-registered, India-headquartered firms evincing substantive internationalisation—verifiable completed, ongoing, or actively pursued foreign projects (built or conceptual)—spanning an estimated 75-150 entities across the prestige continuum from marquee conglomerates (e.g., Morphogenesis equivalents) to digitally agile boutiques (McQuillan and Scott, 2015). Exclusionary boundaries omit domestically siloed practices lacking global footprints.

Sampling architecture deploys a sophisticated, multi-phasic strategy optimised for informational density and theoretical variance:

Purposive phase: Strategic case nomination maximising heterogeneity across scale (micro-to-large), experiential tenure (<5 versus >10 years abroad), and geovectors (Middle East/Africa/SE Asia dominants versus outliers), engineered to surface conditional driver patterns and forestall sampling homogeneity biases (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Expert phase: Precision informant targeting via professional repositories (LinkedIn, CII directories, firm websites), prioritising those with direct strategic remit—founders (vision igniters), partners/Managing Directors/Directors (resource allocators), senior architects (bid executors)—whose positional authority guarantees privileged sensemaking access (Heckathorn, 2011; Creswell and Poth, 2018).

Snowball phase: Referral cascades from initial contacts, illuminating opaque relational ecologies (e.g., diaspora intermediaries) while circumventing gatekeeper impasses, with chain truncation at redundancy (Noy, 2008).

Prospective sample: 10-12 questionnaires spanning 8-10 firms, prospectively scaled via iterative data-theory dialogue to theoretical saturation—operationalised as thematic/codebook stability wherein successive cases contribute <5% novel elements across three iterations (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Saunders et al., 2018). Pre-emptive piloting (n=3-5) calibrates instruments; real-time interim analysis (post-n=6) affirms adequacy, mirroring qualitative conventions where saturation typically manifests around n=9-12 for focused elite samples, ensuring parsimonious yet robust coverage.

3.2.4 Data Generation Procedures

Primary data accrual leverages streamlined semi-structured online questionnaires (target 10-20 minutes), disseminated through accessible platforms (Google Forms, Typeform, Qualtrics) to transcend geographic barriers and executive schedular pressures. Asynchronous written/digital submissions—eschewing audio for privacy and logistical imperatives—guarantee participant agency and data fidelity (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2015).

This instrument's architecture vindicates its deployment: semi-structured equilibrium harmonises thematic consistency (for cross-case alignment) with proliferative openness (for idiographic depth), transcending survey sterility while averting interview prolixity (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Temporal brevity safeguards response propensity (>70% projected, per elite survey benchmarks); progressive thematisation—descriptive profiling

→ evaluative ratings → causal explication → reflexive prioritisation—emulates naturalistic decision cascades, minimising cognitive load (Patton, 2015).

Detailed Protocol (15-20 items, piloted for salience):

1. **Firm Profiling** (closed/mixed, 2-3 mins): Founding year? Staff quantum/locations? Ownership morphology?
2. **Portfolio Metrics** (2 mins): Foreign project tally/types/regions? Revenue attribution (ordinal bands)?
3. **Driver Calibration** (Likert 1-5 + elaboration, 4-5 mins): Economic/institutional/network/reputational/capability importances? (Exemplar: "Rate economic drivers (e.g., margin arbitrage, saturation escape) and furnish pivotal instance.")
4. **Genesis Narratives** (open, 4 mins): Inaugural international precipitant? (Exemplar: "Recount primary trigger—client entreaty, policy portal, serendipitous liaison.")
5. **Causal Articulation** (probed, 4 mins): Driver-outcome linkage? (Exemplar: "Dissect pathway: specific driver → inflection decision → market lodgement.")
6. **Temporal Evolution** (ranked, 3 mins): Contemporary versus nascent hierarchies? (Exemplar: "Sequence top triad; theorise inflectional shifts.")

7. **Qualifier Inflections** (3 mins): Scale/geovector modulations? (Exemplar: "Elucidate firm magnitude's driver recalibrations.")
8. **Residuals/Prospects** (open): Latent drivers? Horizon scans?

Embedded probes ("Contrast peers? Quantify impact?") and artefact solicitations (portfolios, decks) augment yield.

3.2.5 Secondary Data Integration

Artefactual corpus—brochures, websites, media—undergoes directed content analysis, surfacing latent drivers (e.g., sustainability leitmotifs proxying capabilities) and longitudinal consistencies, indispensable for triangulation (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Yin, 2018).

3.2.6 Data Preparation and Analytical Approach

Given the written questionnaire format, submissions aggregate seamlessly into Excel workbooks, obviating transcription and expediting manipulation (Bazeley and Jackson, 2013). Systematic protocols ensue:

Master Consolidation: Pivot-enabled sheets ingest responses; relational lookups bind respondent-firm metadata.

Harmonisation/Obfuscation: Formatting normalisation (e.g., revenue ordinalisation); pseudonymic recoding (FirmAlpha-Resp1); proprietary redaction.

Dossier Fabrication: Firm-specific tabs synthesise profiles, matrices, qualifiers—crystallising analytical primitives.

Matrix Engineering: Granular rows (semantic units: phrases/sentences); columnar scaffolds (codes/drivers/outcomes/qualifiers); slicers/filters precipitate patterns.

Provenance Artefacts: Codebook tab (50+ entries: descriptor/illustration/exclusionary bounds); timestamped revision ledger.

Analysis unfolds via Braun and Clarke's (2021) reflexive thematic odyssey, hybridising deduction (framework fidelity) with induction (emergent salience):

Immersion: Multi-pass Excel sojourns; reflexive marginalia distil hunches.

Codification: Lineal open-coding (700+ primitives: "saturation_fugue"); axial consolidation (framework mapping); iterative refinement via constant dyadic comparison.

Thematic Forging: Code agglomerations birth candidates ("Policy-Network Symbiosis"); rigorous data/theme consonance testing.

Validation/Synthesis: Intra-case vignettes; inter-case tableaux (drivers × qualifiers × outcomes); descriptive pivots (non-inferential prevalences).

Representation: Nested hierarchies, alluvial diagrams, configurational heatmaps.

Saturation vigilance: Excel-monitored incremental novelty decay (Saunders et al., 2018).

Cross-case alchemy conjures archetypes—"Economic behemoths" versus "Relational agile"—via Eisenhardtian (1989) juxtaposition.

3.2.7 Complementing Broader Study Findings (Triangulation)

RQ1's outputs interweave with RQ2 through multifaceted triangulation—data origins, methodological modalities, investigator perspectives—elevating inferential robustness (Patton, 2015):

1. Corroboration: Driver motifs validate RQ2 enactments (e.g., institutional cues birthing regulatory adaptations).
2. Augmentation: Perceptual narratives illuminate RQ2 black boxes (e.g., "Network ratings unpacked via alliance chronicles").
3. Cross-Verification: Excel scalings mesh with artefacts; RQ2 processuality assays RQ1 causalities.
4. Anomaly Adjudication: RQ1 profundity disentangles RQ2 aberrations, forging unified explanatory potency (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017).

3.2.8 Trustworthiness and Ethical Protocols

Credibility buttressed by member validation (thematic digests), verbatim vignettes; transferability via granular matrices; dependability/confirmability through Excel provenance trails, positionality chronicles (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017; Tracy, 2010). Ethical edifice: granular consent, pseudonymic sanctity, IRB imprimatur, data fortification (Israel and Hay, 2006; Resnik, 2020).

This architectonic methodology consummates RQ1 as a theoretically fecund, empirically unassailable edifice.

3.3 Methodology for RQ2

3.3.1 Conceptual Framing

This comprehensive methodological exposition delineates the rigorous qualitative multiple-case study design employed to address Research Question 2 (RQ2): "How do Indian architecture firms develop and implement strategies to enter, operate, and sustain themselves in foreign markets?" Positioned within the broader mixed-methods architecture of the doctoral investigation, this section substantially expands the original proposal framework to embody the depth, precision, and scholarly sophistication requisite for high-calibre journal publication or thesis submission. The design explicitly configures RQ2 as a process-oriented inquiry into strategic phenomena, leveraging the multiple-case study paradigm to illuminate the nuanced interplay of firm-specific capabilities, relational networks, and institutional contingencies in the internationalisation of knowledge-intensive professional service firms (PSFs).

At its core, the approach treats each Indian architecture firm as a discrete, bounded case—an analytically autonomous entity encompassing the full spectrum of its internationalisation trajectory from initial market entry deliberations through sustained operational embedding. This firm-level unit of analysis facilitates granular within-case dissection of strategy formulation and enactment processes, while the multiple-case embedding enables systematic cross-case comparisons that reveal patterned variations and theoretical replications. Such comparative logic underpins the design's capacity to generate analytically generalisable insights, extending the integrated conceptual framework—

Resource-Based View (RBV), Network Theory, and Institutional Theory—to the under-researched domain of emerging-market architecture internationalisation.

The ensuing subsections proceed logically from design rationale through sampling rigour, data instrumentation, analytical protocols, triangulation imperatives, and trustworthiness safeguards. This structure ensures methodological coherence, transparency, and replicability, addressing longstanding critiques of qualitative research in international business by foregrounding procedural exactitude and theoretical anchoring.

3.3.2 Research Design Rationale and Multiple-Case Logic

The selection of a qualitative multiple-case study design derives from its pre-eminent suitability for investigating dynamic "how" and "why" questions pertaining to contemporary strategic processes within real-world contexts, where experimental control proves infeasible. As articulated by Yin (2018), this paradigm excels in unpacking complex, context-embedded phenomena such as the adaptive strategies deployed by Indian architecture firms—strategies encompassing frugal innovation for resource-constrained environments, cultural versatility in aesthetic negotiation, cost-efficiency in competitive bidding, regulatory adaptation via local partnerships, and digital proficiency through BIM-enabled collaboration. These processes defy reduction to quantifiable metrics, demanding the interpretive depth afforded by rich narrative accounts from strategic actors.

Fundamentally, the multiple-case architecture transcends the limitations of single-case designs, which risk idiosyncratic overemphasis, by instituting a replication logic analogous to experimental hypothesis-testing. Literal replication anticipates convergent strategic

patterns across theoretically analogous firms—for instance, cost-efficiency models predominating among mid-sized practices targeting price-sensitive Middle Eastern markets—while theoretical replication anticipates predicted divergences, such as innovation-led trajectories in boutique studios pursuing Southeast Asian cultural-hybrid projects versus network-reliant client-following in large firms navigating African regulatory voids. This dual logic, operationalised through 8-12 purposively varied cases, yields robust pattern identification and theory refinement, aligning with Eisenhardt's (1989) seminal protocol for inductive theory-building from comparative case data.

The design's epistemological positioning rejects positivist aggregation in favour of idiographic constructionism; wherein firm strategies emerge as co-constructed narratives shaped by actor interpretations within project-based ecologies. This resonates with professional service firm literature, where architecture's immaterial, relational outputs necessitate processual tracing over static snapshots. Empirically, it rectifies contextual lacunae: extant scholarship privileges Western or East Asian PSFs, neglecting Indian firms' unique frugality-institutional bricolage amid post-liberalisation global ambitions. Theoretically, it operationalises RBV (internal capability deployment), Network Theory (relational asset mobilisation), and Institutional Theory (isomorphic adaptation), with the framework serving as a deductive scaffold permeable to inductive emergent.

Complementing RQ1's driver-focused exploration, RQ2's process emphasis forges a causal chain: motivational antecedents (RQ1) precipitate strategic responses (RQ2), moderated by firm attributes, culminating in sustenance outcomes. This sequential integration

enhances explanatory power, embodying Creswell and Plano Clark's (2017) convergent parallel design ethos.

3.3.3 Unit of Analysis, Conceptual Dimensions, and Comparative Focus

The primary unit of analysis constitutes the individual architecture firm as a holistic case, delimited temporally by its internationalisation pathway (e.g., inaugural foreign tender to recurrent revenue streams) and spatially by headquarters operations in India. Sub-units—strategic episodes (e.g., bid deliberations), project exemplars, and informant dyads (principals for formulation, leads for execution)—furnish multi-layered data, mitigating key-informant bias while preserving firm-level holism. This demarcation aligns with Stake's (1995) instrumental case conception, wherein firms instrumentalise theoretical illumination of internationalisation processes. Cross-case comparisons pivot on structured conceptual dimensions, ensuring systematic variance interrogation:

1. Strategic capabilities (RBV-anchored): Frugal innovation (design optimisation under constraints), cultural versatility (aesthetic localisation), cost-efficiency (supply chain/pricing heuristics), regulatory adaptation (compliance scaffolds), digital proficiency (tool-mediated delivery).
2. Processual phases: Formulation (ideation deliberations), implementation (enactment tactics), iteration (learning feedback).
3. Outcomes: Entry success (project acquisition), operational sustenance (repeat commissions, revenue thresholds >15%), embedding (local alliances).

4. Moderators: Firm size (staff bands), experience (<5/>5 years), target regions (ME/Africa/SE Asia vs. OECD), entry modes (greenfield/partnerships).

Comparisons probe alignments (e.g., network moderators amplifying relational strategies) and contingencies (e.g., size constraining frugality scalability), yielding typologies such as "Capability-Pioneer" (innovation-dominant) versus "Network-Adaptive" (relationally embedded). The framework guides without foreclosing novelty, per hybrid abductive logic.

3.3.4 Population Definition, Sampling Strategy, and Sample Size Justification

The target population encompasses Indian-headquartered architecture firms, legally registered with the Council of Architecture (COA), exhibiting verifiable international engagement—defined as ≥ 1 executed or contracted foreign project (built/unbuilt) post-2015. Estimated at 200-300 entities via COA registries, WA100 rankings, and project databases (e.g., ArchDaily international filters), this excludes pure domestic consultancies or non-design-led entities.

Sampling employs a sequential purposive-theoretical protocol, maximising informational variance while pursuing replication rigour. Purposive phase targets initial exemplars varying on:

1. Size quartiles (<20; 20-50; 50-200; >200 staff).
2. Experience binary (<5; >5 years abroad).
3. Market portfolios (emerging: ME/Africa/SE Asia; developed: OECD).

4. Orientation proxies (innovation via awards; cost via ME focus; network via diaspora).

Theoretical augmentation refines via interim analysis, selecting polar types (e.g., boutique innovator contrasting corporate networker) to test emerging constructs. Expert sampling recruits principals/partners; snowballing via referrals captures peripheral network actors.

Sample size calibrates at 8-12 cases, reconciling depth (voluminous data per case) with breadth (replication power). Justification invokes dual rationales: informational saturation (theme redundancy across capabilities/processes, per Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006: 12 cases normative in bounded domains); replication sufficiency (Eisenhardt, 1989: 4 minimum, 10 optimal for sharp contrasts). PSF precedents affirm 6-12 viability, prioritising quality over quantity amid access constraints. Cessation criterion: no novel variance in ≥ 2 consecutive cases per dimension.

3.3.5 Data Collection Instruments, Procedures, and Ethical Protocols

Data generation triangulates three convergent sources: semi-structured online questionnaires (primary), document analysis (corroborative), and firm profiling (contextual). Semi-structured questionnaires constitute the centrepiece, their format reconciling structure (thematic alignment to framework) with flexibility (probe-elicited narratives). Rationale: elicits processual depth sans interviewer bias; 10-20 minute duration respects executive temporalities; online platforms (Qualtrics/Google Forms) surmount geographical barriers for dispersed PSFs. Respondents comprise 1-3 per firm: strategic principals (formulation insights), operational leads (implementation grit), ensuring

perspectival multiplicity. Protocol sections sequence contextually: firm evolution; capability deployment; process tracing; outcome reflections.

Illustrative sample questions, distilled from the expanded instrument:

1. "Detail adapting a design scheme for a resource-constrained foreign client, elucidating resource optimisation tactics employed (frugal innovation probe)."
2. "Narrate reconciling indigenous Indian aesthetics with host-country vernaculars in a pivotal project, including stakeholder negotiations."
3. "Explicate pricing architectures and supply chain heuristics sustaining transnational competitiveness."
4. "Chronicle manoeuvring foreign licensing regimes, delineating partnership scaffolds or compliance innovations."
5. "Trace digital toolchain evolution (e.g., BIM workflows) facilitating remote project stewardship."

Supplementary documents—portfolios, brochures, websites, tender decks—undergo content analysis for evidentiary triangulation, verifying narrative claims against artefacts.

Pre-questionnaire profiles standardise covariates (demographics, portfolio metrics).

Procedures commence with directory/LinkedIn recruitment, piloting (n=2), iterated dissemination, and follow-up cadences. Ethical scaffolding mandates Institutional Review Board (IRB) clearance; informed consent articulates voluntariness, anonymity (coded

pseudonyms: FirmA-Principal1), confidentiality (GDPR-secure servers), and withdrawal rights; debriefings contextualise contributions.

3.3.6 Analytical Protocol: Within-Case, Cross-Case, and Synthetic Phases

Culminating in analytical generalisation, the synthetic phase transcends idiographic description to forge mid-range theory extensions, matching emergent patterns against rival explanations via Yin's (2018) pattern-matching logic: do observed strategy-outcome configurations align predicted framework pathways (e.g., RBV capabilities → sustenance) more parsimoniously than alternatives (e.g., pure contingency fit)? Excel 'Propositions Worksheet' codifies outputs: columns delineate proposition statements (e.g., P1: 'Frugal innovation sustains emerging-market presence through resource recombination, strongest in size-constrained firms'), evidential matrices (linked quotes/tallies), theoretical anchors (RBV/Network citations), and boundary conditions (e.g., 'Fails in high-spec OECD').

Integration with RQ1 forges explanatory closure: joint matrices cross-tabulate driver prevalences (e.g., 'Network Motives High') against strategy deployments (e.g., 'Client-Following High'), surfacing causal mechanisms (e.g., 'Networks precipitate relational adaptation over capability builds'). Final narrative weaving—interlacing vignettes, matrices, propositions—embodies Miles, Huberman and Saldaña's (2014) 'final story' imperative, yielding publication-ready insights generalisable to PSF internationalisation theory sans statistical pretensions.

This protocol's Excel-centric transparency—via formula-embedded derivations, locked reference cells, and version histories—erects an audit trail rivaling CAQDAS, while its

phased rigor guards against analytic drift, ensuring defensible contributions to the Indian architecture internationalisation lacuna.

3.3.6.1 Data Preparation and Within-Case Analysis

Data preparation transforms heterogeneous inputs—questionnaire responses, documents, and profiles—into anonymised Excel case dossiers, with identifiers redacted (e.g., 'Firm A-Large') and extracts timestamped for traceability per Yin (2018). Firm profiles standardise covariates in dashboard tabs; timelines in Gantt-style sheets map milestones, drivers, capabilities, and outcomes, operationalising Langley's (1999) processual sequencing.

Within-case analysis adapts Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases for Excel: Phase 1 (familiarisation) immerses via iterative readings with impression notes; Phase 2 (coding) generates hybrid codes in multi-column logs—inductive in vivo (e.g., 'diaspora_brokerage'), deductive framework-based (e.g., 'RBV_frugal')—building provisional codebooks; Phase 3 clusters first-order themes (e.g., 'Frugal Tactics') via pivots; Phase 4 reviews coherence against dossiers; Phase 5 hierarchies to second-order aggregates (e.g., 'Capability Deployment') and strategy gestalts; Phase 6 yields vignettes with tables, heatmaps, and temporal maps tracing formulation-implementation-iteration flows. This produces 8-12 interpretive portraits primed for cross-case synthesis, ensuring auditability through formula-linked artefacts.

3.3.6.2 Cross-Case Synthesis

Cross-case synthesis employs Eisenhardt's (1989) comparative methodology, arraying within-case themes into Excel pivot-table matrices interrogating variance across size, experience, markets, and orientations via Yin's (2018) replication logic. The master 'Strategy Matrix' tabulates firms (rows) against dimensions (columns: e.g., 'Frugal Tactics', 'Outcomes'), with cells denoting densities (e.g., "High: 8/12 quotes"), exemplars, and moderators via slicers (e.g., 'ME Markets' revealing literal replication in cost-efficiency convergences).

Pairwise comparisons test predictions: literal (uniform frugality in mid-sized ME firms); theoretical (boutiques' aesthetic innovation vs. corporates' network client-following). Tactics sharpen insights: extremes analysis (outlier probes), causal mapping (driver-strategy arrows), typologies (2x2: high/low capability x network, yielding 'Pioneers', 'Augmenters'). Heatmaps colour prevalence; trajectories plot evolution; crosstabs quantify contingencies (e.g., institutional voids amplify adaptation). Discrepancies resolve via re-immersion; peer debrief iterates to saturation (no novelties in ≥ 2 cases), distilling propositions (e.g., "Networks moderate frugality in regulated markets"). This dashboard primes generalisation, transforming portraits into patterns.

3.3.6.3 Analytical Generalisation

Analytical generalisation elevates cross-case patterns beyond the sampled firms to theoretical domains through Yin's (2018) pattern-matching logic, rigorously testing whether emergent strategy-outcome configurations align more parsimoniously with the

integrated framework (RBV capabilities, Network relations, Institutional adaptations) than rival explanations such as pure firm size determinism or market contingency alone. Excel's 'Propositions Ledger' worksheet systematises this culmination: columns articulate 5-8 mid-range propositions (e.g., P1: "Institutional distance amplifies RBV-driven adaptive frugality, moderated upward by network density in size-constrained firms targeting regulated emerging markets"); adjacent grids link supporting evidence (theme densities, exemplar quotes, matrix crosstabs); theoretical anchors cite framework alignments (e.g., Barney, 1991; Scott, 2008); and boundary conditions delimit scope (e.g., "Low fit in high-spec OECD contexts requiring proprietary IP").

Propositional potency emerges via rival theory benchmarking—e.g., does observed 'Network-Augmented Frugality' better enact hybrid RBV-Institutional logics than Uppsala gradualism?—with pattern-to-theory fit quantified descriptively through coverage matrices (=SUMPRODUCT theme prevalences against predictions). RQ1 integration forges causal closure: joint displays conjugate driver rankings (e.g., "Networks: 75% prevalence") to strategy mechanisms (e.g., "Relational Adaptation: High in network-heavy firms"), surfacing explanatory chains (e.g., "Network drivers → Client-following processes → Sustenance via adaptation loops").

Final narrative synthesis weaves vignettes, matrices, and propositions into Miles, Huberman and Saldaña's (2014) 'integrated story', furnishing generalisable theory extensions—e.g., "PSF internationalisation via capability-network bricolage in institutional voids"—defensible for journal scrutiny without statistical pretensions.

3.3.7 Triangulation with RQ1 and Integrative Synthesis

RQ2 interlocks seamlessly with RQ1 through methodological triangulation, wherein driver prevalences identified in RQ1 (e.g., economic, network, institutional motivations) causalise and contextualise strategy deployments illuminated by RQ2, forging a robust explanatory chain from antecedents to processes and outcomes. This convergent integration—per Creswell and Plano Clark (2017)—leverages RQ1's thematic rankings (e.g., "Networks: 75% prevalence across 10/12 firms") to interpret RQ2's strategic mechanisms, resolving anomalies such as high network driver salience precipitating client-following adaptations rather than capability-led innovation in regulated markets. Cross-validation iteratively reconciles divergences: RQ1 driver narratives corroborated against RQ2 project exemplars (e.g., diaspora referrals → JV partnerships), with discrepant cases (e.g., low institutional drivers yet high adaptation) probed via document traces for deeper causal nuance.

Joint displays operationalise synthesis through Excel matrices conjugating RQ1 quantitative rankings (e.g., driver importance scales) against RQ2 qualitative depths (e.g., "Relational Entry: High in network-heavy firms → 60% sustenance rate"), elevating inference potency via pattern convergence (e.g., "Network motifs → Adaptation loops → Repeat commissions"). This meta-inferential weave—matrix-enhanced narratives linking drivers to strategies—yields holistic propositions (e.g., "Institutional voids amplify network-strategy alignments"), strengthening internal validity and theoretical coherence across the study's mixed-methods architecture.

3.3.8 Trustworthiness, Credibility, and Rigor Assurance

Trustworthiness in this qualitative multiple-case study is systematically anchored in the evaluative criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985), ensuring methodological rigour commensurate with doctoral and peer-reviewed publication standards. Credibility—the qualitative analogue to internal validity—is fortified through multiple convergent strategies: rigorous source and method triangulation across semi-structured questionnaires, documentary evidence, and firm profiles to corroborate strategic narratives; member-checking procedures whereby anonymised thematic summaries and interpretive abstracts are iteratively circulated to participants for ratification, correction, or elaboration; deliberate prosecution of deviant or negative cases that challenge emergent patterns, such as firms exhibiting counterintuitive strategy-outcome mismatches; and persistent observation via targeted follow-up queries to clarify ambiguities or deepen processual insights. Transferability, akin to external validity, is enhanced by thick, contextualised vignettes richly detailing firm demographics, market idiosyncrasies, and strategic episodes, empowering readers to assess applicability to analogous emerging-market professional service contexts. Dependability, paralleling reliability, is maintained through exhaustive audit trails encompassing comprehensive codebooks with operational definitions and exemplars, chronological decision logs chronicling analytic pivots, and version-controlled Excel workbooks with timestamped worksheets enabling step-wise reconstruction; these are supplemented by peer debriefings with methodological experts to interrogate interpretive assumptions. Confirmability, ensuring findings' neutrality rather than researcher bias, is operationalised via reflexive journaling that explicates the investigator's

positionality as an Indian researcher with proximate cultural familiarity yet academic detachment, alongside meticulous traceability linking raw data excerpts directly to emergent themes and propositions within Excel-linked documentation. Collectively, this multifaceted edifice erects defensible safeguards against common qualitative critiques, yielding empirically robust, theoretically resonant, and publishably rigorous insights into Indian architecture firms' internationalisation strategies.

3.4 Chapter Summary and Transition

Chapter 3 delineates a robust, theoretically integrated methodological architecture tailored to the empirical scrutiny of Indian architecture firms' internationalisation dynamics, harmonising quantitative prevalence mapping for Research Question 1 (RQ1) with qualitative process illumination for Research Question 2 (RQ2). This mixed-methods scaffold, anchored in pragmatism, operationalises Network Theory, Resource-Based View (RBV), and Institutional Theory through purposive sampling, multi-source data convergence, and phased analytical rigour, ensuring defensible contributions to professional service firm (PSF) scholarship. The chapter's logical progression—from philosophical underpinnings and research design to instrumentation, trustworthiness protocols, and ethical safeguards—erects a coherent edifice that not only addresses the study's dual inquiries but also exemplifies methodological sophistication befitting doctoral inquiry ((isenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018)

The overarching methodological logic commences with a pragmatic worldview, privileging methodological pluralism to capture both the 'what' (prevalences) and 'how' (processes) of internationalisation, eschewing paradigmatic purism for convergent validity (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). Section 3.1 articulates the research onion (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019), positioning the study within an abductive logic that iterates between deductive propositions (e.g., network motifs as drivers) and inductive refinements from empirical immersion. For RQ1—"What are the key drivers motivating Indian architecture firms to expand internationally?"—a quantitative-dominant strand deploys structured online questionnaires targeting 10-15 principals across 8-12 firms, yielding thematic rankings via frequency-weighted scoring in Excel pivot tables, triangulated with documentary profiles for robustness (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Complementarily, RQ2—"How do Indian architecture firms develop and implement strategies to enter, operate, and sustain themselves in foreign markets?"—unfolds through a qualitative multiple-case study design, purposively sampling firms by size (small/medium/large), experience (novice/veteran), and markets (ME/Asia/SE) to enable literal and theoretical replication (Yin, 2018). Data corpus amalgamates semi-structured questionnaires, project portfolios, and timelines into anonymised Excel dossiers, analysed via Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive thematic phases fused with Eisenhardt's (1989) comparative tactics: within-case immersion yielding gestalts (e.g., 'frugal adaptation loops'), cross-case matrices surfacing contingencies (e.g., institutional voids amplifying networks), and analytical generalisation distilling propositions (e.g., "Network density moderates RBV capabilities in regulated voids"). Trustworthiness per Lincoln and Guba

(1985) permeates via triangulation, member-checking (thematic abstracts ratified by informants), audit trails (versioned Excel with precedents), peer debriefs, and reflexivity journaling the researcher's Indian vantage for confirmability.

This triphasic analytical engine—preparation (dossiering/timelines), synthesis (pivots/heatmaps), generalisation (propositions ledger)—transforms heterogeneous inputs into patterned outputs, leveraging Excel's transparency over CAQDAS for doctoral auditability (Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014). Ethical imperatives, including informed consent via Qualtrics and GDPR-compliant anonymisation, safeguard participant integrity amid sensitive PSF disclosures (British Educational Research Association, 2018).

The selected methods precision-engineer responses to the RQs' epistemological demands. RQ1's driver prevalences emerge from questionnaire Likert scalings and open-texts, ranked by aggregate prevalence (e.g., "Networks: 75% across 10/12 firms") to furnish baseline motifs causalising RQ2 processes, per convergent mixed-methods logic (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017). This quantitative scaffold—supplemented by profiles—mitigates self-report bias through cross-validation, yielding prioritised antecedents (economic, relational, regulatory) that contextualise strategic agency.

RQ2's processual depth leverages multiple-case immersion for temporal tracing (Langley, 1999), arraying cases against dimensions (capabilities, processes, outcomes, moderators) in relational matrices that test theoretical alignments (e.g., RBV frugality thriving via network bricolage) (Eisenhardt, 1989; Barney, 1991). Triangulation interlocks strands: RQ1 rankings (e.g., high institutional drivers) predict RQ2 divergences (e.g., adaptation in

voids), with joint displays resolving anomalies (e.g., network motifs precipitating client-following) for meta-inferences. This causal chain elevates the study beyond description, furnishing propositions generalisable analytically to PSF internationalisation sans statistical sampling (Yin, 2018).

Chapter 3's scaffold propels seamlessly into Chapter 4's empirical exposition, where RQ1's thematic prevalences precipitate descriptive baselines priming RQ2's strategic vignettes. Quantitative rankings—e.g., crosstabs linking network drivers (high prevalence) to sustenance rates—frame within-case portraits, illuminating mechanisms like "diaspora brokerage → frugal pivots → repeat commissions". Cross-case syntheses extend via replication: literal patterns (ME uniformity in cost-leadership) and theoretical contrasts (size-moderated adaptations), crystallising typologies (e.g., 'Network Pioneers' vs. 'Institutional Augmenters') and propositions in visual dashboards (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2014).

In summary, this chapter provides a blueprint for credible, context-sensitive inquiry, transitioning seamlessly to empirical validation where qualitative richness illuminates the dynamic realities of Indian firms' global ascent.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study and provides an integrated account of the evidence generated through both primary and secondary sources. It is organized around the two central research questions that guided the investigation: RQ1 examines the drivers of internationalisation among architectural firms, while RQ2 explores the strategies these firms use to expand and sustain their international presence. Together, these questions frame the analytical focus of the chapter and allow the findings to be presented in a way that moves from the underlying motivations for international expansion to the strategic responses that firms adopt in practice. The chapter therefore does not merely describe survey responses or document evidence in isolation; rather, it interprets the relationship between the two in order to develop a coherent explanation of how architectural firms internationalize across different contexts.

The study adopted a qualitative research design, with primary data collected through an online survey and secondary data gathered through systematic document analysis. The survey produced firsthand responses from participants with direct experience of international practice, offering insight into the perceived drivers, strategic choices, opportunities, and constraints associated with cross-border expansion. In parallel, document analysis was used to examine relevant secondary materials, enabling the study

to trace recurring patterns, contextual references, and corroborative evidence that helped situate the survey findings within the wider professional and organisational landscape. The combination of these two sources strengthened the analytical depth of the study by allowing the research to compare lived experience with documentary evidence and to identify areas of convergence as well as nuance.

ATLAS.ti served as the central platform for managing, organizing, and interpreting the qualitative material. All survey responses and documentary extracts were systematically coded within ATLAS.ti, where recurring concepts, phrases, and ideas were grouped into initial and then more refined thematic categories. This process supported the development of a structured thematic framework that aligned with the two research questions and enabled a consistent comparison across data sources. The use of ATLAS.ti also enhanced transparency and traceability in the analytic process, as it allowed the study to move from open coding to thematic clustering and interpretive synthesis in a disciplined and auditable manner. In this way, the software was not merely a storage tool but an active component of the analytic strategy.

The chapter is organized to present the findings in a logical sequence. It begins with the findings related to RQ1, focusing on the drivers of internationalisation and the themes that explain why firms pursue work beyond their home market. It then moves to RQ2, examining the strategic mechanisms and adaptive practices through which firms enter, operate in, and expand across international markets. Throughout the chapter, the findings are interpreted in relation to the broader research objectives and are linked to the themes that emerged from the combined survey and document-based analysis. This structure

ensures that the chapter provides both descriptive clarity and analytical depth, establishing a strong foundation for the discussion and conclusion chapters that follow.

4.2 Results of RQ1

4.2.1 Survey Findings as Primary Data

The RQ1 survey shows that international expansion in architectural practice is primarily driven by relational and capability-based factors rather than institutional push alone. All 48 respondents had direct international experience, making the dataset suitable for analysing how firms initiate and sustain global activity. Client invitation was the dominant entry trigger (39.6%), with diaspora referral and network/partner invitation contributing a further 29.2%. This indicates that early internationalisation is opportunity-led and embedded in pre-existing relationships rather than formal market search or policy incentives.

Revenue distribution reinforces this interpretation. A large share reported either less than 10% international revenue (33.3%) or more than 50% (31.2%), with fewer firms in intermediate categories. This bimodal pattern suggests uneven internationalisation: some firms remain exploratory, while others are deeply embedded globally. The implication is path dependency—firms that secure repeat international work tend to expand significantly, while others maintain selective engagement.

Driver scores further clarify this structure. Networks ranked highest (mean 4.19), followed by capability (4.06) and reputation (3.94), while economic (3.51) and institutional (3.43) factors were lower. This indicates that internationalisation is not primarily cost- or policy-driven but depends on relational access, professional capability, and symbolic legitimacy.

Institutional factors such as licensing and compliance are experienced mainly as post-entry constraints rather than initial triggers, supporting a two-stage logic: entry through networks and capability, followed by regulatory adaptation.

Open-ended responses align with this interpretation. Participants emphasised regulatory preparation, local partnerships, collaboration tools, and reputation-building, framing internationalisation as a learning process requiring competence and adaptability. Thus, firms internationalise because networks provide access, capability ensures credibility, and reputation legitimises engagement, while economic and institutional factors shape feasibility.

4.2.1.1 Thematic structure and analytic logic

The thematic structure for RQ1 is organized around a layered analytic logic. Network embeddedness functions as the primary entry mechanism; capability and reputation act as enabling and legitimising conditions; economic opportunity shapes scale; institutional regulation constrains operations; and strategic adaptation with risk management determines sustainability. Entry is relational, but sustained engagement requires competence, legitimacy, and adaptability. Economic motives become actionable only when supported by networks and capability, while institutional factors shape operational conditions rather than initiating expansion. The logic is cumulative: networks enable entry, capability and reputation establish legitimacy, economic opportunity justifies expansion, and adaptation under regulatory and operational pressures ensures durability. Table 12 as follows, summarizes the information of the theme structure and analytic pattern.

Table 12: Thematic structure and analytic logic Matrix

No.	Theme	Main Pattern, (n=48)
1	Economic Opportunity and Market Expansion	22 respondents reported 30% or more international revenue, while 25 remained below 30%, indicating a split between exploratory and deeply internationalized firms.
2	Institutional Regulation and Legitimacy	Institutional drivers scored lower (mean 3.43/5) than network and capability drivers, suggesting regulation matters mainly as a constraint and compliance condition.
3	Network Embeddedness and Relational Access	Network drivers received the highest mean score (4.19/5), and client invitation was the most common first-entry trigger (n=19).
4	Reputation and Symbolic Positioning	Reputational drivers were rated highly (mean 3.94/5), showing that legitimacy, prestige, and identity support international market access.
5	Technological Capability and Innovation	Capability drivers scored 4.06/5, indicating that technical competence and design innovation are central to cross-border credibility.
6	Strategic Adaptation and Agility	Responses point to selective, opportunity-led internationalisation, with firms adjusting entry through partnerships, client-following, and contextual adaptation.
7	Resource Constraints and Risk Management	The data imply that firms manage risk through relational entry, limited initial exposure, and gradual scaling rather than immediate heavy commitment.

Source: Based on Survey findings and empirical benchmarks as primary data, Author made.

Theme 1: Economic opportunity and market expansion

Economic drivers are reflected in both revenue distribution and entry triggers. A substantial share of respondents reported either less than 10% international revenue (33.3%, n=16) or

more than 50% (31.25%, n=15), indicating two stages: exploratory engagement and deep embeddedness. Intermediate categories are less represented, suggesting non-linear growth. Entry triggers reinforce this interpretation. Client invitation was the most frequent pathway (42.2%, n=19), followed by trade opportunity (11.1%, n=5) and economic motives such as margins or saturation (8.9%, n=4). This indicates that international expansion is project-specific and opportunity-led rather than driven by abstract market strategies. Firms enter when viable opportunities arise through relationships, not through systematic geographic expansion.

Economic drivers recorded a mean score of 3.51, with 53.2% rating them 4 or 5, indicating moderate importance. Economic considerations matter but are rarely sufficient independently. Firms internationalise when economic viability aligns with relational access and capability. Thus, economic expansion is best understood as the outcome of converting project opportunities into sustained workflows rather than proactive market seeking.

Theme 2: Institutional regulation and legitimacy

Institutional factors act as boundary conditions rather than primary drivers. The institutional mean is 3.43, with 47.8% rating it 4 or 5, placing it below networks, capability, and reputation. Policy triggered only 2.2% of entries (n=1), indicating minimal direct influence.

Respondents highlighted licensing, visas, standards, and approvals as post-entry challenges. Firms typically enter through networks and then adapt to regulatory environments. Institutional legitimacy requires compliance with local norms, often achieved through

partnerships and procedural discipline. This aligns with document analysis that frames regulation as a constraint rather than a driver.

Regulation functions as a selective filter. Firms with stronger networks, expertise, and adaptive capacity navigate complexity more effectively. Institutional factors thus shape durability and quality of engagement rather than initial entry decisions.

Theme 3: Network embeddedness and relational access

Networks are the strongest driver, with a mean of 4.19 and 74.5% rating them 4 or 5, including 51.1% rating them 5. Entry data confirms this: client invitation (42.2%), diaspora referral (20%), and partner networks (11.1%) dominate.

Architecture's project-based, high-trust nature makes networks critical. They reduce uncertainty, provide access, and enable contract acquisition. Many respondents emphasised prior relationships and referrals as key entry pathways. Networks therefore function not merely as support but as the primary gateway to internationalisation.

They also bridge capability and opportunity. Firms may possess technical competence, but networks convert it into actual projects. Thus, network embeddedness forms the core social infrastructure of international expansion.

Theme 4: Reputation and symbolic positioning

Reputation is a strong secondary driver (mean 3.94), with 61.7% rating it 4 or 5. Firms rely on brand, prestige, and identity to establish credibility. International projects enhance symbolic capital, reducing perceived client risk and enabling repeat engagements.

Respondents linked internationalisation to recognition, awards, and prestige. Reputation is not only an outcome but also a resource enabling sustainability. Clients evaluate symbolic credibility alongside technical capability.

“Indian identity” may also act as differentiation, signalling cultural sensitivity and design distinctiveness. Reputation thus operates both as global legitimacy and creative positioning. It bridges networks and capability: networks provide access, but reputation converts access into commissions and enables performance to travel across markets.

Theme 5: Technological capability and innovation

Capability is a major driver (mean 4.06), with 72.3% rating it 4 or 5. Respondents linked internationalisation to design quality, sustainability, digital tools, and innovation. Capability ensures delivery standards across contexts.

Technology reduces distance-related barriers. BIM, digital collaboration, and communication tools enable coordination with international clients. Capability thus acts as both operational enabler and strategic differentiator.

It is integrated with design expertise rather than treated separately. Firms succeed internationally by offering credible, adaptable solutions rather than generic services. Capability is less visible at entry but critical for sustaining relationships and managing complexity.

Theme 6: Strategic adaptation and agility

Strategic adaptation emerges across responses as flexibility, local adjustment, and learning. Firms combine partnerships, compliance strategies, and tailored solutions, indicating context-dependent approaches.

Entry pathways vary across projects, reflecting agility. Respondents emphasised responsiveness and experience in navigating unfamiliar markets. Internationalisation is not linear but negotiated and iterative.

Adaptation converts networks, capability, and reputation into performance. It explains progression from limited exposure to deep international integration. Firms that adapt effectively are more likely to achieve repeat engagements and sustained growth.

Theme 7: Resource constraints and risk management

Constraints shape the extent and sustainability of internationalisation. Respondents identified licensing, compliance, liability, and coordination challenges. These do not initiate expansion but influence viability.

Risk management is central. Firms rely on partnerships, documentation, and systems to mitigate exposure. International work involves higher uncertainty, requiring careful project selection and operational discipline.

Revenue patterns reflect resource differences. Firms with less than 10% international revenue remain selective due to limited capacity, while those exceeding 50% have developed systems to manage complexity. Resource availability thus moderates all other themes.

4.2.1.2 Conceptual Relationship among the Seven Themes

The seven themes are best understood as a sequenced and mutually reinforcing system rather than isolated drivers. Networks create access, reputation strengthens legitimacy, capability enables delivery, economic opportunity justifies expansion, institutional regulation shapes feasibility, strategic adaptation manages complexity, and risk control

keeps the process sustainable. The evidence suggests that internationalisation is relationally initiated, competence-supported, symbolically reinforced, and institutionally conditioned. The themes do not operate independently; they interact across the phases of entry, delivery, and sustainability.

4.2.1.3 How the themes connect

Network embeddedness directly links to economic opportunity, as most firms enter international markets through relationships rather than formal market search. Client invitation (42.2%), diaspora referral (20%), and network/partner invitation (11.1%) indicate that relational channels make opportunities visible and actionable. Networks therefore function as the primary gateway to internationalisation. They also reinforce reputation: with 61.7% of respondents valuing brand, prestige, or Indian identity, credibility amplifies referrals and increases the likelihood of converting introductions into projects.

Capability is closely tied to adaptation and performance. With 72.3% of respondents rating capability 4 or 5, access alone is insufficient without the ability to deliver through design quality, digital tools, and technical expertise. Technologies such as BIM, sustainability practices, and remote collaboration support strategic agility across diverse regulatory and project environments, enabling firms to translate opportunities into successful outcomes.

Economic opportunity is shaped by resource capacity. The revenue distribution shows that 33.3% of firms generate less than 10% of revenue internationally, while 31.25% generate more than 50%, indicating exploratory versus deeply embedded internationalisation. This

divergence reflects differences in capability, resources, and risk tolerance, with stronger firms better able to scale and sustain global operations.

Institutional regulation interacts with strategic adaptation rather than driving entry. Policy triggered only 2.2% of first projects, yet respondents consistently identified licensing, visas, and standards as critical challenges. Firms therefore adapt through partnerships, compliance strategies, and structured workflows.

Collectively, these themes form a layered model: networks enable access, reputation builds trust, capability ensures delivery, economic opportunity supports expansion, and institutional adaptation sustains long-term engagement.

4.2.1.4 Integrated interpretation

The themes form a layered model of internationalisation. Networks generate access, reputation builds trust, capability ensures delivery, economic opportunity justifies expansion, institutional regulation shapes feasibility, strategic adaptation manages complexity, and risk management keeps the process sustainable. The survey therefore suggests that no single factor is sufficient on its own. Rather, successful internationalisation depends on the alignment of these themes.

This relationship is especially clear in the pattern of first-entry triggers and revenue outcomes. The fact that 42.2% entered through client invitation and 20% through diaspora referral indicates that internationalisation is usually embedded in pre-existing relationships. Yet the revenue pattern shows that some firms convert these openings into substantial international portfolios, while others keep them as supplementary work. That difference can be explained by capability, reputation, and adaptive capacity. Firms that can combine

these elements are more likely to move from opportunistic entry to sustained international presence.

In relation to the research problem, the survey shows that the internationalisation of architectural firms is not a single-driver process. It is a relationally initiated, capability-supported, reputation-enhanced, and institutionally conditioned process of strategic expansion. The strongest themes are therefore not competing explanations but complementary stages of the same trajectory.

4.2.1.5 RQ1 interpretive conclusion and Analytical Summary

The RQ1 findings demonstrate that architectural internationalisation is primarily relationally enabled, supported by capability, and reinforced by reputation, while economic and institutional factors act as secondary conditions. Among 48 respondents, networks emerged as the strongest driver (mean 4.19; 74.5% rating 4 or 5), followed by capability (4.06; 72.3%) and reputation (3.94; 61.7%). Economic (3.51) and institutional (3.43) drivers ranked lower, indicating that international expansion reflects the interaction of access, competence, and symbolic legitimacy rather than a single market logic.

Entry-trigger data confirm this pattern. Client invitation was the dominant pathway (42.2%, n=19), followed by diaspora referral (20.0%, n=9) and network or partner invitation (11.1%, n=5). Trade opportunity also accounted for 11.1% (n=5), while economic motives such as margins or saturation were limited (8.9%, n=4). Policy-driven entry was minimal (2.2%, n=1). These findings show that firms typically internationalise through trusted relationships rather than deliberate strategic search, indicating opportunity-led and relationally mediated expansion.

Revenue distribution further highlights uneven internationalisation. Of 48 respondents, 33.3% (n=16) reported less than 10% international revenue, while 31.3% (n=15) exceeded 50%. Additional shares included 18.8% (n=9) in the 10–30% range, 14.6% (n=7) in the 30–50% range, and 2.1% (n=1) with none. This bimodal pattern reflects path dependency: firms that establish relational and reputational footholds expand significantly, while others remain selective.

Institutional factors shape feasibility rather than entry. Respondents identified licensing, visas, and regulatory compliance as operational constraints, not primary triggers. Firms manage these through preparation, partnerships, and procedural discipline.

Finally, capability and reputation complement networks. Capability ensures delivery quality, while reputation supports retention and repeat work. Internationalisation thus reflects a multi-causal process where relational access enables entry, capability and reputation sustain engagement, economic opportunity supports growth, and institutional adaptation ensures long-term viability.

4.2.2 Document Analysis as Secondary Data

The ATLAS.ti coding results provide a structured basis for interpreting drivers of change, showing clustered patterns across interconnected dimensions rather than random variation. Code frequencies indicate that reputation, economic conditions, relational networks, institutional settings, and technology jointly shape how firms identify opportunities, build legitimacy, and act strategically. This supports a thematic interpretation that moves beyond description toward explaining firm behaviour in complex professional contexts.

The coding also reveals that these drivers are mutually reinforcing. Economic opportunity is often enabled by reputation, while networks and partnerships help firms navigate institutional constraints and access markets. Technology functions both as a performance enabler and a signal of competitiveness. Thus, the analysis highlights not only the presence of drivers but also their interaction in shaping strategic behaviour.

Overall, the results depict a mature field in which firms must balance opportunity, legitimacy, relationships, and adaptability to sustain progress. This provides a coherent foundation for interpreting RQ1 findings.

4.2.2.1 Thematic structure and analytic logic

The analysis shows that drivers of change in professional service contexts emerge from the interaction of economic opportunity, institutional constraints, relational embeddedness, reputational signalling, technological capability, strategic adaptation, and resource pressure. Firms do not act solely on profitability; legitimacy, networks, and credibility shape what is feasible and valued. This makes decision-making multilevel—simultaneously economic, institutional, and relational.

Opportunities are therefore not only market-driven but socially constructed. Economic potential initiates expansion, but its realisation depends on institutional legitimacy and network activation. Reputation and networks translate opportunity into actionable outcomes. These interdependencies form the thematic structure summarised in Table 13.

Table 13: Thematic structure and analytic logic Matrix

No.	Theme	Codes that fit	Main pattern
1	Economic opportunity and market expansion	economic opportunities, market access, market growth, profitability, revenue growth, market share, competitiveness, growth opportunities	Growth-seeking through commercial expansion
2	Institutional regulation and legitimacy	institutional factors, regulations, compliance, government support, governance, legal compliance, institutional support, institutional credibility	Managing formal rules and gaining legitimacy
3	Network embeddedness and relational access	networking, collaboration, partnerships, relationships, trust, alliances, networks, global networks, connections	Using ties to access markets and resources
4	Reputation and symbolic positioning	reputation, trustworthiness, credibility, visibility, prestige, recognition, awards, competitive advantage	Building symbolic capital to reduce uncertainty
5	Technological capability and innovation	technology, innovation, BIM, AI, digital tools, design capabilities, efficiency, technological advancements, adaptation	Technology as a capability and differentiator
6	Strategic adaptation and agility	strategic agility, adaptation, flexibility, internationalisation, market adaptation, scaling, diversification, ambidexterity	Adjusting strategy to changing conditions
7	Resource constraints and risk management	resource constraints, financial constraints, cost efficiency, low capital, risk management, risk diversification, resource utilization	Doing more with less while protecting the firm

Source: Based on Document Analysis, Author made.

Theme 1: Economic opportunity and market expansion

This theme reflects a strong economic orientation in the coding. Clusters around economic opportunities (n=18), market access (n=15), market growth (n=9), profitability (n=11),

market share (n=7), revenue growth (n=8), and competitiveness (n=7) indicate that firms are driven by the pursuit of new commercial space. This extends beyond short-term revenue to long-term expansion, scaling, and positioning. Recurrent references to growth and expansion suggest that firms interpret their environment primarily through opportunity rather than constraint. Importantly, opportunity is grounded in practical indicators such as customer demand, access, and revenue conversion. Economic drivers translate into strategy only when firms perceive viable monetisation pathways. Thus, firms seek not just markets but sustainable positions within them. The theme reflects an entrepreneurial expansion logic disciplined by feasibility and performance.

Theme 2: Institutional regulation and legitimacy

Institutional conditions form a second major theme. Codes including institutional factors (n=20), regulations (n=8), compliance (n=5), governance (n=5), government support (n=7), institutional support (n=5), and institutional credibility (n=12) highlight the importance of legitimacy. Firms operate within regulated environments where conformity and approval shape outcomes. Institutional alignment filters opportunity. Even when markets appear attractive, firms must comply with rules, norms, and expectations. Institutional credibility is particularly critical where trust is not automatic and professional work is evaluated through regulatory standards. Compliance and governance are therefore active strategic considerations. This theme also shows that institutions are not purely restrictive. Firms that align effectively with institutional systems can gain access, reduce resistance, and stabilise their market position. Regulation thus functions as both constraint and enabler, shaping how opportunities are pursued and sustained.

Theme 3: Network embeddedness and relational access

Networks (n=19), partnerships (n=16), and collaboration (n=28), along with networking (n=57), relationships (n=16), trust (n=12), alliances (n=8), global networks (n=10), and connections (n=9), demonstrate the centrality of relational mechanisms. Firms rely on these structures to access opportunities, reduce uncertainty, and coordinate action. Relational embeddedness is not merely supportive but strategic. Trust and collaboration enable entry into unfamiliar environments with lower transaction costs. Partnerships function as channels for learning, coordination, and positioning within broader systems. The presence of global networks indicates that relational structures extend across borders and underpin international expansion. The key insight is that access is socially constructed. Firms do not independently enter markets; they are introduced, legitimised, and supported through networks. This positions relational embeddedness as a core driver of strategic action.

Theme 4: Reputation and symbolic positioning

Reputation (n=78), trustworthiness (n=30), credibility (n=60), visibility (n=13), prestige (n=9), recognition (n=8), and awards (n=7) highlight the importance of symbolic capital. In professional service contexts, where technical quality is difficult to assess in advance, reputation serves as a proxy for reliability and competence. Reputation functions as a market-making mechanism. Visibility and recognition enable firms to attract attention and legitimise expertise claims. Awards and prestige enhance symbolic value, strengthening competitive positioning. Reputation also reduces client uncertainty, increasing the likelihood of engagement. Trustworthiness and credibility are closely linked, forming interconnected mechanisms of legitimacy. Symbolic capital therefore operates alongside

technical capability, influencing both entry and sustainability. The theme indicates that firms compete not only on performance but also on perceived value and recognition.

Theme 5: Technological capability and innovation

Technology (n=30), innovation (n=26), BIM (n=7), AI (n=10), digital tools (n=2), design capabilities (n=5), efficiency (n=6), technological advancements (n=6), and adaptation (n=5) illustrate the role of technology as a strategic capability. It shapes how firms deliver, compete, and differentiate. Technology has a dual function. Internally, it improves efficiency, coordination, and precision. Externally, it signals professionalism, modernity, and competitiveness. BIM and AI exemplify this duality, contributing to both operational performance and market perception. Technological capability is therefore integral to both execution and positioning. It enhances firms' ability to respond to complex environments while reinforcing their legitimacy. Innovation, in this context, is not only about novelty but about strengthening effectiveness and adaptability in competitive conditions.

Theme 6: Strategic adaptation and agility

Strategic agility is reflected in codes such as strategic agility (n=4), adaptation (n=8), flexibility (n=1), internationalisation (n=7), market adaptation (n=2), scaling (n=2), diversification (n=2), and ambidexterity (n=1). These indicate that firms respond to complexity through flexibility and continuous adjustment rather than fixed planning. Strategy emerges as an ongoing process of adaptation. Firms balance exploration and exploitation, adjusting offerings and processes while maintaining core capabilities. Diversification and scaling are deliberate, context-driven responses rather than random expansion.

This theme is closely linked to internationalisation, where new markets require adjustments in operations, relationships, and design approaches. Strategic agility functions as a meta-capability, enabling firms to convert opportunities into action while maintaining resilience under uncertainty.

Theme 7: Resource constraints and risk management

The final theme highlights constraints through codes such as resource constraints (n=3), financial constraints (n=2), cost efficiency (n=1), low capital (n=1), risk management (n=3), risk diversification (n=5), and resource utilization (n=1). These indicate that firm behaviour is shaped by both opportunity and limitation. Resource constraints necessitate selectivity, efficiency, and risk awareness. Cost efficiency becomes a strategic principle rather than a purely financial measure. Firms prioritise scalable and flexible approaches to manage uncertainty. Risk management supports sustainable growth by balancing ambition with caution. Diversification and controlled expansion reduce exposure to uncertainty, while efficient resource use enhances resilience. The theme shows that drivers of internationalisation are filtered through constraints, reinforcing the need for strategic discipline.

4.2.2.2 Conceptual Relationship among the Seven Themes

The RQ1 model illustrates the dynamic interplay of seven thematic drivers shaping institutional entrepreneurship in mature professional service fields. Economic opportunity initiates growth, followed by institutional legitimacy (formal constraints), network embeddedness (relational access), reputation positioning (symbolic capital), technological capability (competitive differentiation), strategic adaptation (agility), and resource

constraints (risk management), before reinforcing the cycle. Iterative linkages—such as networks enabling legitimacy and reputation strengthening technological adoption—highlight mutual reinforcement. The model shows that entrepreneurship arises from interconnected drivers, where market ambition is continuously mediated by social, institutional, and resource conditions.

4.2.2.3 RQ1 Interpretive conclusion

The analysis identifies three interdependent drivers. First, economic opportunity drives expansion but is mediated by institutional legitimacy, ensuring regulatory alignment and feasibility. Second, relational enablers—network embeddedness and reputation positioning—provide access and symbolic credibility, reducing uncertainty. Third, adaptive capabilities—technological innovation and strategic agility—enable differentiation and responsiveness, moderated by resource constraints requiring efficiency and risk management.

These drivers depict firm behaviour as a multi-level, negotiated process rather than discrete decisions. Firms act as institutional entrepreneurs by aligning growth with legitimacy, relational trust, technological capability, and adaptive strategy. Derived from ATLAS.ti analysis, these findings form a basis for triangulation with primary survey results.

4.2.3 Integrated Analysis of RQ1

The integrated evidence from survey and document analysis provides a coherent explanation of architectural internationalisation as a socially embedded, competence-intensive, and reputation-mediated process shaped by economic opportunity and institutional complexity. Together, the datasets show how common drivers operate at

different levels: document analysis offers contextual framing, while survey data reflects lived experience.

Network embeddedness emerges as the dominant driver. Survey results show the highest mean (4.19), with 74.5% rating it 4 or 5. Client invitation accounts for 42.2% of first-entry triggers, while diaspora referral and partner networks add 31.1%. This indicates that internationalisation is relationship-driven rather than market-led. Document analysis reinforces this through consistent emphasis on referrals, diaspora links, and partnerships. Thus, relational access is the primary mechanism enabling international entry.

Technological and professional capability forms the second key theme. Capability scored 4.06 in the survey, with 72.3% rating it highly. Document analysis similarly highlights design quality, digital collaboration, and sustainability expertise. Capability functions as an operational condition, enabling firms to respond to opportunities, manage cross-border coordination, and deliver effectively. It converts relational access into executable work.

Reputation plays a crucial intermediary role. Survey results show a mean of 3.94, with 61.7% rating it 4 or 5. Document evidence emphasises prestige, brand identity, and symbolic value. Reputation is both an outcome and a resource: it reduces uncertainty, builds trust, and converts introductions into commissions. Networks provide access, but reputation ensures credibility and continuity.

Economic opportunity appears as an enabling context rather than a primary trigger. Survey results show a mean of 3.51, with 53.2% rating it highly, while explicit economic motives account for only 8.9% of entry triggers. Revenue distribution—33.3% below 10% and 31.25% above 50%—indicates uneven internationalisation. Document analysis confirms

the importance of diversification, but survey data shows that economic opportunity is realised through networks, capability, and reputation.

Institutional factors are least influential as drivers (mean 3.43; 47.8% rating 4 or 5; policy trigger 2.2%) but remain critical as constraints. Licensing, visas, and compliance shape feasibility and sustainability rather than entry. Document analysis similarly positions regulation as a barrier requiring adaptation.

Overall, the findings reveal a layered logic: networks enable access, capability ensures delivery, reputation builds trust, economic opportunity supports expansion, and institutional adaptation sustains engagement.

4.3 RQ2 Strategies for Internationalisation

4.3.1 Survey Findings as Primary Data

RQ2 examines how firms organise and execute international work. Findings show reliance on a portfolio of adaptive strategies, with partnership-based and digitally enabled approaches most prominent. Client-following is the dominant entry mode (35.4%), followed by partnerships (27.1%), while mixed modes, competitions, joint ventures, and market-seeking approaches are less frequent. This indicates that firms rarely expand autonomously; instead, they follow clients or enter through collaborations, extending capacity through relational and project-based structures rather than standalone subsidiaries. Strategy-use scores reinforce this pattern. Niche specialisation has the highest mean (4.02), followed by BIM/digital collaboration (3.76), local partnerships (3.70), cultural adaptation (3.63), and cost/frugal innovation (3.48), with sustainability and Indian identity lowest

(3.31). These results show that competitiveness depends on differentiation and executional capability. Respondents emphasised specialised expertise, digital workflows, and reliable coordination, indicating that project-specific competence drives international success. Partnership responses further highlight organisational logic. Firms favour local anchoring through partnerships, local offices, and hybrid models, combining central design expertise with local knowledge. Partnerships reduce liability, enable regulatory navigation, and enhance legitimacy, functioning as both entry mechanisms and risk-management tools. Internationalisation therefore reflects organisational adaptation rather than simple geographic expansion.

Benefits and challenges reveal strategic trade-offs. Reputation is the most cited benefit (29.2%), followed by profits (25.0%) and learning (14.6%). Challenges centre on regulatory complexity, coordination, and adaptation. Firms thus pursue internationalisation not only for financial gains but also for reputation and learning, accepting higher coordination demands in exchange for long-term positioning.

Overall, firms adopt hybrid, competence-based strategies. Client-following and partnerships enable entry, specialisation drives value, and digital tools support coordination. Success depends on integrating expertise, relational access, and flexibility.

4.3.1.1 Thematic structure and analytic logic

The thematic structure for RQ2 follows a sequential, mutually reinforcing logic. Niche specialisation serves as the central strategic anchor, while partnerships and alliances provide the primary route for market entry and project delivery. Digital enablement supports coordination across distance, and frugal efficiency ensures viability under cost

and operational pressures. Gradual expansion and learning explain how firms accumulate experience, while portfolio diversification and scaling reflect the transition from isolated projects to sustained international presence. Regulatory adaptation captures constraints shaping execution.

Survey findings indicate that firms do not follow a single model; instead, they combine specialised positioning with collaborative entry modes and digitally mediated delivery systems. Specialisation defines value, partnerships enable access and local legitimacy, and digital tools facilitate coordination. Frugal practices and incremental learning suggest expansion is cautious and cumulative, with firms refining strategies through repeated exposure to international work.

Regulatory complexity—particularly in payments, coordination, cultural adaptation, and compliance—acts not as a primary driver but as a critical condition requiring active management through partnerships and organisational flexibility. The analytic logic is therefore integrative: firms build internationalisation capability by combining expertise, relational entry, digital coordination, adaptive learning, and risk management into a coherent system. Overall, international expansion is best understood as a staged process of specialisation-led, partnership-enabled, and regulation-aware growth, as summarised in Table 14.

Table 14: Thematic structure and analytic logic Matrix

No.	Theme	Main Pattern
1	Digital enablement and visibility	Digital collaboration tools, BIM, and remote coordination are widely used; 62.5% explicitly reported a hub-spoke model using BIM/Zoom/PM tools, and BIM/digital remote collaboration scored 3.76 on average.
2	Frugal efficiency and resourcefulness	Cost-conscious innovation is present but secondary; cost/frugal innovation scored 3.48, indicating moderate strategic use rather than dominance.
3	Gradual expansion and learning	Client-following and project-specific entry dominate, suggesting a stepwise learning process; 35.4% entered through client-following and 50% identified project-specific partnerships as most effective.
4	Niche specialization and positioning	Firms rely strongly on specialization to compete abroad; niche specialisation had the highest mean score at 4.02, signalling clear strategic differentiation.
5	Partnerships and alliance building	Partnerships are central to market entry and execution; 27.1% entered via partnerships, and local partners were the most frequent licensing route at 39.6%.
6	Portfolio diversification and scaling	Respondents value reputation, profits, and risk diversification; 29.2% chose reputation as the top benefit, while 25% selected profits and 12.5% risk diversification.
7	Regulatory adaptation and navigation	Regulatory complexity is managed through local partners, local AORs, and hybrid compliance models; payments and coordination were the top challenges, cited by 25% and 22.9% respectively.

Source: Based on Survey findings and empirical benchmarks as primary data, Author made.

Theme 1: Digital enablement and visibility

Digital enablement is a central pattern in RQ2. BIM and digital collaboration recorded a mean of 3.76, with 60.4% rating it 4 or 5, indicating its importance for international work.

Respondents emphasised BIM, cloud platforms, and remote coordination for reducing

distance, improving documentation, and enabling transnational teamwork. Digital systems function not only as technical tools but as markers of visibility and credibility, allowing firms to appear coordinated and reliable in markets where physical presence is limited. Analytically, digital tools support both operational efficiency and symbolic presence. They enable firms to engage internationally without establishing full overseas offices, while also strengthening legitimacy. Digital capability reinforces other themes by facilitating partnerships and reducing expansion costs. Internationalisation thus increasingly depends on integrating professional expertise with digital coordination infrastructure.

Theme 2: Frugal efficiency and resourcefulness

Frugal efficiency represents a supportive strategic logic. Cost/frugal innovation recorded a mean of 3.48, with 52.1% rating it 4 or 5, indicating moderate importance. Firms emphasise efficient resource use, flexibility, and delivering quality without excessive overheads. This suggests internationalisation is not capital-intensive but relies on lean models, selective investment, and pragmatic adaptation. Frugality supports competitiveness under uncertainty but is insufficient alone. Its effectiveness depends on integration with specialisation, partnerships, and digital tools. Resourcefulness enables adaptability, allowing firms to operate efficiently across contexts. Thus, frugality functions as a resilience mechanism, sustaining operations while preserving flexibility.

Theme 3: Gradual expansion and learning

Survey data indicates that internationalisation is gradual and learning-driven. Entry modes are dominated by client-following (n=17, 35.4%) and partnerships (n=13, 27.1%), rather than independent expansion. Firms build experience incrementally through familiar

relationships and repeated exposure. Internationalisation is therefore staged. Firms accumulate knowledge from projects, including client expectations, regulatory systems, and coordination practices. Learning is cumulative and essential in architecture, where reputation develops over time. Learning was identified as a benefit by 7 respondents, alongside reputation and profits, highlighting its strategic value. This aligns with a staged expansion model: firms begin with collaborative entry, consolidate experience, and gradually scale or diversify. Learning supports progression from exploratory to sustained international engagement.

Theme 4: Niche specialization and positioning

Niche specialisation is the strongest strategy theme, with a mean of 4.02 and 68.8% rating it 4 or 5. Firms compete internationally through specialised expertise, design quality, and sector-specific capability rather than generic services. Specialisation provides a clear value proposition, enabling differentiation from competitors. It reduces ambiguity and positions firms within identifiable niches. Respondents emphasised expertise and distinctive problem-solving as key advantages. Specialisation also supports reputation and profitability by enabling premium positioning and recognition. It anchors international legitimacy, allowing firms to compete based on expertise rather than scale. Compared to other strategies, it is the primary driver of competitive positioning in global markets.

Theme 5: Partnerships and alliance building

Partnerships are central to entry and delivery. They represent the second most common entry mode (n=13, 27.1%), and local partnerships scored a mean of 3.70, with 58.3% rating them 4 or 5. This highlights collaboration as a core strategy. Partnerships reduce risk,

enhance legitimacy, and provide access to local knowledge. Respondents emphasised working with local actors to navigate regulatory, cultural, and operational differences. Alliances bridge knowledge gaps and support market entry and survival. They function both strategically and operationally, complementing networks, digital tools, and regulatory adaptation. Partnerships also explain gradual expansion, as firms often begin with collaborative structures before moving toward independent operations. Alliance building thus acts as a governance mechanism, enabling coordination and trust across contexts.

Theme 6: Portfolio diversification and scaling

Firms pursue internationalisation through diversified portfolios rather than a single strategy. While client-following dominates, other modes—competitions, market-seeking, joint ventures, and mixed approaches—indicate experimentation. Benefits reinforce this logic: reputation (n=14), profits (n=12), learning (n=7), risk diversification (n=6), and clients (n=6). A portfolio approach allows firms to balance stability and exploration, combining reliable client-led work with opportunistic projects. This supports revenue diversification, risk management, and broader market presence. Scaling occurs through portfolio development rather than volume expansion. Firms build a mix of projects aligned with relationships, reputation, and learning objectives. This creates resilience and flexibility, enabling sustained growth across varied contexts.

Theme 7: Regulatory adaptation and navigation

Regulatory adaptation is a key constraint-based theme. Challenges include payments (n=12), coordination (n=11), culture (n=7), partners (n=5), bidding (n=4), reputation (n=4), and capacity (n=3). These reflect operational and institutional complexities in cross-border

work. Firms address these through partnerships, digital tools, and cultural adaptation. Regulatory navigation is embedded in strategy rather than treated separately. Respondents emphasised compliance, documentation, and alignment with local norms. This indicates that regulation is not only a barrier but an adaptive field. Firms develop routines to manage complexity, integrating regulatory requirements into operational practices. Effective navigation ensures sustainability, making it a central condition of internationalisation rather than an administrative afterthought.

4.3.1.2 Conceptual Relationship among the Seven Themes

The relationship among the RQ2 themes is best understood as a coordinated strategy system in which specialisation, collaboration, digital coordination, and regulatory adaptation reinforce one another. Across the 48 respondents, client-following was the most common entry mode at 37.0% (n=17), followed by partnerships at 28.3% (n=13), mixed entry at 13.0% (n=6), competitions at 8.7% (n=4), and both market-seeking and JV modes at 6.5% each (n=3). This distribution shows that internationalisation is usually not a sudden leap into foreign markets, but a staged process rooted in relationships and then diversified through learning and strategic adjustment.

Taken together, the seven themes operate as a mutually reinforcing chain. Niche specialisation gives firms market identity, partnerships provide entry and delivery support, digital systems enable coordination at distance, frugal efficiency keeps the business model viable, gradual learning converts early wins into competence, regulatory navigation reduces friction, and portfolio diversification turns sporadic projects into a broader international presence. The survey therefore suggests that the themes are not independent.

Instead, they represent different moments in the same internationalisation process. International expansion in architecture is best explained by a hybrid model of specialisation, collaboration, digital capacity, and adaptive governance.

4.3.1.3 RQ2 interpretive conclusion and Analytical Summary

The RQ2 findings show that architectural internationalisation is a strategic process shaped by specialisation, collaboration, digital coordination, and adaptive learning rather than linear market expansion. Among 48 respondents, client-following was the dominant entry mode (37.0%, n=17), followed by partnerships (28.3%, n=13). Mixed modes accounted for 13.0% (n=6), competitions 8.7% (n=4), and both market-seeking and joint ventures 6.5% (n=3 each). This indicates that firms expand through relational pathways and hybrid strategies rather than independent entry.

Strategy-use results reinforce this pattern. Niche specialisation recorded the highest mean (4.02; 68.8%, n=33 rating 4 or 5), followed by BIM/digital collaboration (3.76; 60.4%, n=29), local partnerships (3.70; 58.3%, n=28), cultural adaptation (3.63; 50.0%, n=24), and cost/frugal innovation (3.48; 52.1%, n=25). Sustainability/Indian identity scored lowest (3.31; 37.5%, n=18). These results show that firms prioritise differentiation, operational integration, and collaboration over symbolic positioning or cost minimisation alone.

The benefit profile highlights reputation (31.1%, n=14), profits (26.7%, n=12), learning (15.6%, n=7), and both risk diversification and client expansion (13.3%, n=6 each). Reputation functions not only as an outcome but as a strategic asset supporting credibility and future access. Learning reflects cumulative knowledge development across markets and projects, linking growth with symbolic capital.

Challenges reveal operational constraints shaping execution. Payments (26.1%, n=12) and coordination (23.9%, n=11) are most significant, followed by culture (15.2%, n=7), partners (10.9%, n=5), bidding and reputation (8.7%, n=4 each), and capacity (6.5%, n=3). These indicate that internationalisation involves managing financial, organisational, and cultural complexity across the project lifecycle.

Overall, internationalisation emerges as a staged and cumulative process. Firms typically begin with client-following or partnerships, then strengthen their position through specialisation, digital capability, and local adaptation, and finally consolidate through reputation building and portfolio diversification. Success depends on aligning strategic identity with flexibility and effective management of cross-border complexity.

4.3.2 Document Analysis as Secondary Data

4.3.2.1 ATLAS.ti Coding Results

The ATLAS.ti coding results indicate that RQ2 is shaped by interconnected strategic parameters rather than a single dominant factor. The bar chart highlights niche specialisation, portfolio diversification, gradual expansion, and partnerships as the most prominent patterns, while digital, frugal, and regulatory dimensions act as enabling and constraining conditions. This suggests that firms expand through calibrated strategies combining focused positioning, collaboration, and incremental growth. The gradual category is dominated by gradual expansion, approach, entry, and internationalisation, indicating a stepwise, learning-oriented pathway. The niche category includes niche specialisation, partnerships, internationalisation, and diversification, emphasising targeted positioning. The partnerships category highlights collaboration, alliances, joint ventures,

and trust, underscoring relational embeddedness as central to market entry and development. Digital tools and frugal innovation function as supporting mechanisms, enhancing efficiency, reach, and adaptability, while regulatory adaptation shapes the feasibility of strategy execution. Portfolio diversification operates as a balancing mechanism, spreading risk across activities, markets, and partnerships.

Overall, the coding patterns confirm that firms do not internationalise through linear expansion. Instead, they combine gradual learning, niche focus, relational support, and portfolio balancing to achieve sustainable growth. Thematic interconnections are evident: gradual expansion is enabled by partnerships and regulatory adaptation, while niche specialisation provides strategic coherence, making diversification more focused and less risky

4.3.2.2 Thematic structure and analytic logic

The RQ2 coding output is more explicitly strategic and processual. The dominant families—digital, frugal, gradual, niche, partnerships, portfolio, and regulatory—indicate that firms do not expand in a single uniform way. Instead, they use different strategic pathways depending on resources, market conditions, and risk tolerance. The central interpretive point is that expansion is staged, selective, and often constrained, but it is also creative and adaptive. In this sense, RQ2 is not just about how firms enter markets; it is about how they assemble workable pathways under pressure. Table 15 as follows, outlines the relationship between the identified themes and the analytical patterns, based on document analysis for RQ2

Table 15: Thematic structure and analytic logic Matrix

No	Theme	Codes that fit	Main pattern
1	Digital enablement and visibility	digital tools, digital strategy, digital platforms, digital visibility, digital technologies, digital delivery, digital hubs	Digital tools extend reach and presence
2	Frugal efficiency and resourcefulness	frugal innovation, cost-effectiveness, cost-efficiency, resource optimization, frugality, low-cost, low investment, resourcefulness	Achieving growth under constraints
3	Gradual expansion and learning	gradual expansion, gradual approach, incremental entry, gradual adaptation, gradual learning, experience, staged growth, phased approach	Expansion happens step-by-step through learning
4	Niche specialization and positioning	niche specialization, niche markets, niche search, differentiation, market selection, niche strategy, focused opportunities	Competing through focused market segments
5	Partnerships and alliance building	partnerships, collaboration, alliances, joint ventures, networking, trust, local partnerships	Relationships reduce entry barriers and spread risk
6	Portfolio diversification and scaling	portfolio diversification, diverse portfolio, multiple projects, multi-market scalability, project variety, market presence	Spreading risk across offerings and markets
7	Regulatory adaptation and navigation	regulatory adaptation, compliance, regulatory challenges, legal expertise, regulatory navigation, regulations, market entry rules	Success depends on navigating formal constraints

Source: Based on Document Analysis, Author made.

Theme 1: Digital enablement and visibility

This theme captures the role of digital tools (n=26), digital strategy (n=10), platforms (n=8), visibility (n=9), technologies (n=9), delivery (n=1), and hubs (n=3). These indicate that digitalisation functions as enabling infrastructure for expansion. Digital systems extend reach, improve coordination, and enhance visibility across markets, allowing firms to operate effectively without full physical presence. Digitalisation reduces operational friction by supporting communication, documentation, and coordination. It also strengthens legitimacy by making firms more visible and credible to clients and partners. Digital platforms and hubs suggest organisational use of technology, not just technical application. Thus, digitalisation acts both as a delivery mechanism and a signal of competence and modernity.

Theme 2: Frugal efficiency and resourcefulness

Frugal innovation (n=32), cost-effectiveness (n=16), cost-efficiency (n=6), resource optimisation (n=8), frugality (n=6), low-cost (n=3), low investment (n=2), and resourcefulness (n=7) reflect a strong strategic orientation toward efficiency. Firms adopt lean, practical approaches to manage constraints. Frugality enables market entry without heavy capital investment and supports competitiveness in uncertain conditions. It is also linked to creativity, as resource constraints drive innovative solutions. Frugal efficiency therefore functions as both an economic and organisational capability, allowing firms to remain agile while maintaining financial viability.

Theme 3: Gradual expansion and learning

Codes such as gradual expansion (n=59), gradual approach (n=39), incremental entry (n=3), gradual adaptation (n=18), gradual learning (n=2), experience (n=8), staged growth (n=3), and phased approach (n=2) indicate that expansion is incremental. Firms build international presence through learning and experience rather than rapid entry. This reflects a temporal logic where expansion occurs in stages. Each step allows testing, adjustment, and knowledge accumulation. Learning is cumulative and path-dependent, reinforcing a cautious strategy that reduces risk while building capability. Gradual expansion thus serves as both a learning mechanism and a risk-management approach.

Theme 4: Niche specialization and positioning

Niche specialisation (n=53), niche markets (n=8), differentiation (n=8), market selection (n=2), niche strategy (n=5), and focused opportunities highlight a strategy of selective positioning. Firms concentrate on areas where they can develop expertise and competitive advantage. Niche positioning enables differentiation and reduces competition with larger firms. It aligns limited resources with targeted opportunities, allowing firms to establish credibility and relevance. This reflects a logic of selective focus, where success depends on being distinctive within defined domains.

Theme 5: Partnerships and alliance building

Partnerships (n=133), collaboration (n=58), alliances (n=41), joint ventures (n=22), networking (n=7), trust (n=11), and local partnerships (n=11) demonstrate the centrality of relational strategies. Firms rely on partnerships to access knowledge, reduce entry barriers, and share risk. Collaboration is both strategic and practical. Partnerships provide local

knowledge, legitimacy, and market access, while trust underpins these relationships. Joint ventures and alliances enable expansion with flexibility, and local partnerships support adaptation to specific contexts. Relationships therefore act as both bridges to opportunity and buffers against uncertainty.

Theme 6: Portfolio diversification and scaling

Portfolio diversification (n=58), diverse portfolio (n=22), project variety (n=2), market presence (n=6), and related codes indicate that firms pursue varied strategies across markets and projects. Diversification spreads risk and stabilises performance. A portfolio approach balances growth and resilience, allowing firms to combine stable and exploratory activities. It supports learning and capability transfer across projects, enabling broader market engagement. Diversification thus functions as both a growth strategy and a risk management mechanism.

Theme 7: Regulatory adaptation and navigation

Regulatory adaptation (n=48), compliance (n=20), regulatory challenges (n=15), legal expertise (n=7), regulatory navigation (n=12), regulations (n=3), and entry rules (n=1) show that expansion is shaped by institutional constraints. Firms must navigate formal rules to enter and operate in new markets. Regulation is an active component of strategy. Firms adapt through compliance, legal expertise, and alignment with local norms. This process interacts with other themes: partnerships support interpretation, digital tools assist compliance, and gradual expansion enables learning. Regulation thus structures expansion, influencing both its pace and form rather than merely restricting it.

4.3.2.3 Conceptual Relationship among the Seven Themes

International expansion operates as a staged, interconnected strategic system shaped by resource and institutional constraints. Regulatory adaptation defines contextual boundaries, while gradual expansion provides the temporal logic of incremental learning and risk mitigation. Digital enablement and partnerships act as operational enablers, extending reach and relational access, which support frugal efficiency and niche specialisation. These, in turn, enable portfolio diversification and scaling. The framework is cyclical and non-linear, with reinforcing flows (e.g., gradual learning → niche positioning → partnerships) and reciprocal interactions (e.g., partnerships ↔ regulatory navigation), highlighting continuous strategic adjustment.

4.3.2.3 RQ2 interpretive conclusion

The analysis identifies three interrelated pathways. First, enabling mechanisms—digitalisation for visibility and coordination, and frugal efficiency for resource optimisation—establish operational feasibility. Second, cautious processes—gradual expansion and niche positioning—provide temporal and competitive logic under uncertainty. Third, relational supports—partnerships and portfolio diversification—operate within regulatory constraints to reduce risk and enhance access. Together, these themes show that internationalisation is not linear but iterative, combining experimentation, relational embeddedness, and contextual adaptation. Firms succeed by aligning strategic flexibility with resource discipline and institutional awareness, forming a coherent framework for subsequent triangulation with primary data.

4.3.3 Integrated Analysis of RQ2

The RQ2 findings indicate that architectural internationalisation is a strategic process shaped by specialization, collaboration, digital coordination, and adaptive learning rather than a simple pursuit of foreign market growth. Among the 48 respondents, client-following was the most common entry mode at 37.0% (n=17), followed by partnerships at 28.3% (n=13). Mixed entry modes accounted for 13.0% (n=6), while competitions and market-seeking modes were selected by 8.7% (n=4) and 6.5% (n=3) respectively; joint ventures were also selected by 6.5% (n=3). These patterns show that firms typically enter foreign markets through existing relational pathways and extend their presence through collaborative or hybrid strategies rather than abrupt independent expansion.

The strategy-use responses strengthen this interpretation. Niche specialisation received the highest mean score at 4.02, with 68.8% (n=33) rating it 4 or 5. BIM and digital remote collaboration followed with a mean of 3.76 and 60.4% (n=29) rating it 4 or 5. Local partnerships scored 3.70, with 58.3% (n=28) rating it 4 or 5, while cultural adaptation/localisation scored 3.63, with 50.0% (n=24) rating it 4 or 5. Cost/frugal innovation recorded a mean of 3.48, with 52.1% (n=25) rating it 4 or 5, and sustainability/Indian identity emphasis had the lowest mean at 3.31, with 37.5% (n=18) rating it 4 or 5. A significant proportion of respondents therefore indicated that specialization, digital coordination, and partnerships are more central to internationalisation than symbolic identity or cost minimization alone. This suggests that firms view international success as dependent on a clear value proposition, operational integration, and collaborative market entry.

The benefit profile reinforces this logic. Reputation was identified as the top benefit by 31.1% (n=14), followed by profits at 26.7% (n=12), learning at 15.6% (n=7), and both risk-diversification and client expansion at 13.3% (n=6) each. Many participants emphasized reputation not merely as an outcome of international work, but as a strategic asset that strengthens future access, client confidence, and market legitimacy. The prominence of learning also indicates that internationalisation is viewed as a developmental process through which firms accumulate knowledge about markets, project types, and operating conditions. The pattern reflects a strong relationship between business growth and symbolic capital, with overseas work contributing to both economic return and professional standing.

At the same time, the challenge profile highlights the constraints that shape strategy execution. Payments were the most frequently cited challenge at 26.1% (n=12), followed by coordination at 23.9% (n=11), culture at 15.2% (n=7), partners at 10.9% (n=5), and bidding and reputation at 8.7% (n=4) each. Capacity was selected by 6.5% (n=3). These findings reveal that international expansion is not simply about securing work abroad; it also requires managing operational risk, financial uncertainty, and cross-cultural coordination. The prevalence of payment and coordination challenges suggests that firms face friction throughout the project lifecycle, not only at entry.

Overall, the RQ2 findings support an interpretation of internationalisation as a staged and cumulative process. Firms typically begin with client-following or partnership-based entry, strengthen their position through niche specialization, digital collaboration, and local adaptation, and then consolidate their international presence through reputation building

and portfolio diversification. Internationalisation is therefore not a linear move into foreign markets but an iterative process shaped by opportunity, capability, and constraint. Firms internationalize most successfully when they combine a clear strategic identity with the ability to adapt to local conditions and manage operational complexity.

4.4 Cross Research Question Synthesis

Taken together, the integrated findings from RQ1 and RQ2 present a coherent account of architectural internationalisation as a socially embedded, strategically adaptive, and competence-intensive process. RQ1 explains why firms internationalize, while RQ2 explains how they do so; however, the deeper value of the study lies in how these two dimensions intersect. The two sets of findings do not simply sit alongside one another. Instead, they reveal a recursive relationship in which the drivers of entry and the strategies of expansion continuously reinforce each other. Networks create access, capability and reputation make that access usable, and strategic tools such as partnerships, digital collaboration, and niche specialization convert early opportunities into sustained international presence. The cross-RQ synthesis therefore points to a single underlying logic of internationalisation that unfolds through relational initiation, strategic execution, and adaptive consolidation.

The strongest convergence across the two questions concerns the centrality of networks and partnerships. RQ1 shows that client invitation, diaspora referral, and network/partner invitation dominate the first-entry pathway, and that networks receive the highest driver rating. RQ2 confirms that this relational logic continues after entry, with client-following

and partnerships emerging as the most common entry modes and alliance-building receiving strong endorsement. The significance of this convergence is that networks are not merely an antecedent to strategy; they are part of the strategy itself. In other words, the same relational structures that generate initial access also shape the form of market engagement. A key higher-order insight is that internationalisation in architectural practice is not best understood as market entry followed by separate strategic management. Rather, relational embeddedness constitutes both the cause and the infrastructure of expansion. This means that firms internationalize through social ties that simultaneously generate opportunity, legitimacy, and operational support.

A second major area of convergence lies in the relationship between capability and niche specialization. In RQ1, capability scores almost as highly as networks, indicating that technical competence, design quality, and digital readiness are central to the decision to expand abroad. In RQ2, niche specialization becomes the strongest strategic theme, while BIM and digital remote collaboration also receive high endorsement. The two questions together show that competence is not merely an internal resource; it is the basis of strategic positioning. Firms do not internationalize because they can simply do more work; they internationalize because they can do something distinctive and credible. The tension here is subtle but important. RQ1 frames capability as an enabling driver of entry, whereas RQ2 shows that the same capability must be sharpened into a differentiated market position to support successful international strategy. This suggests that competence has a dual role: it opens the possibility of internationalisation and then becomes the means through which

firms compete. The broader implication is that professional competence becomes commercially valuable only when it is translated into a recognizable niche.

A third point of synthesis concerns reputation and symbolic legitimacy. RQ1 shows that reputation is one of the strongest drivers after networks and capability, and that symbolic factors such as prestige and Indian identity matter in market entry. RQ2 then demonstrates that reputation becomes one of the most frequently reported benefits of international work. This is an important relationship because it shows that reputation is both a cause and a consequence of internationalisation. At the entry stage, reputation reduces uncertainty and strengthens trust; at the strategy stage, it becomes an asset that can be leveraged to win future work, diversify the portfolio, and extend market visibility. The cross-RQ analysis thus reveals a virtuous cycle: initial relational access and capability generate reputable projects, which in turn enhance symbolic standing and enable more opportunities. A point of tension emerges here as well. While RQ1 suggests that reputation primarily functions as a pre-entry filter, RQ2 shows that it is also a strategic outcome. This indicates that reputation is not static but accumulates through repeated performance, reinforcing the firm's ability to internationalize further.

The relationship between economic opportunity and portfolio diversification offers another important line of synthesis. In RQ1, economic factors matter, but they are clearly secondary to networks and capability in motivating entry. Revenue outcomes, however, are highly uneven, with some firms remaining at low international exposure and others deriving more than half of their revenue from foreign work. RQ2 extends this pattern by showing that firms value profits, risk diversification, and client expansion as outcomes of international

engagement. The combined findings suggest that economic opportunity is not the sole driver of internationalisation, but it becomes increasingly important as firms move from episodic entry to portfolio development. This is where a tension between the two RQs becomes visible. RQ1 implies that economic motives are secondary in initiating expansion, yet RQ2 shows that financial and portfolio benefits are central to sustaining it. The implication is that economics functions differently across stages: it is not the main trigger, but it is a major mechanism of consolidation and scaling. Internationalisation therefore evolves from relational access into a broader business diversification strategy.

A fourth area of convergence concerns institutional regulation and adaptive navigation. In RQ1, institutional drivers receive the lowest mean score and rarely trigger first entry, but regulatory issues such as licensing, visas, and standards appear as key constraints. In RQ2, the practical burdens shift further into the foreground through challenges related to payments, coordination, culture, and bidding. The relationship between the two questions is clear: institutions do not usually initiate internationalisation, but they shape how it is experienced and sustained. The divergence is also analytically useful. RQ1 treats regulation as a background condition of market feasibility, whereas RQ2 shows that regulatory and procedural complexity becomes an everyday strategic issue. This means that institutional adaptation is not a peripheral concern. It is embedded in the operational architecture of international work. The broader insight is that firms internationalize despite institutional friction, but their success depends on whether they can absorb and manage that friction through partnerships, documentation, digital coordination, and disciplined execution.

The final cross-RQ synthesis lies in the interaction between strategic adaptation and learning. RQ1 emphasizes that firms need to adapt to foreign contexts, manage risk, and align capabilities with market expectations. RQ2 shows that this adaptation becomes a more explicit strategy through gradual expansion, learning, and the use of flexible delivery models. Across both questions, a strong pattern emerges: internationalisation is cumulative rather than abrupt. Firms do not leap directly from domestic practice to fully formed global operations. They first gain access, then experiment, learn, and refine. This higher-order insight is especially important because it links the motivational and strategic dimensions of the study into a single developmental pathway. Firms internationalize by learning how to internationalize.

In conclusion, the cross-RQ synthesis demonstrates that the study's findings are best understood as a layered model of professional internationalisation. RQ1 explains the conditions of entry: networks, capability, and reputation open the path, while economic opportunity and institutional constraints shape its contours. RQ2 explains the mechanisms of consolidation: specialization, partnerships, digital coordination, and adaptive learning translate entry into durable international practice. The two sets of findings reinforce one another by showing that internationalisation is not a linear movement from motive to strategy, but a recursive process in which access, competence, legitimacy, and adaptation continuously interact. The most important emergent insight is that internationalisation in architectural practice is simultaneously relational, strategic, and developmental. It is not simply about going abroad; it is about building the capacity to remain abroad, compete abroad, and grow abroad over time.

4.5 Chapter Summary and Transition

This chapter has presented the empirical findings of the study by integrating evidence from the online survey and the document analysis. In doing so, it has offered a coherent account of how architectural firms internationalize and the strategies through which they sustain and extend their international presence. The findings demonstrate that internationalisation is neither driven by a single factor nor enacted through a uniform pathway. Rather, it emerges from a combination of relational access, professional capability, reputational legitimacy, economic opportunity, institutional conditions, and strategic adaptation. These elements interact dynamically across the two research questions, producing a layered understanding of both the motives for international expansion and the means by which firms operationalise that expansion in practice.

The findings related to RQ1 show that internationalisation is primarily initiated through networks, client relationships, and other forms of relational embeddedness. At the same time, the survey and document-based evidence indicate that firms do not rely on relationships alone. Capability, particularly in design quality, digital coordination, and technical competence, plays a decisive role in converting opportunity into actual engagement. Reputation also emerges as a critical resource, helping firms establish trust and symbolic credibility in foreign markets. Economic considerations matter as well, especially in relation to revenue diversification and market expansion, but these are typically realized through relational pathways rather than through detached market-seeking behaviour. Institutional constraints, such as licensing and regulatory requirements, do not

appear to trigger entry in most cases, but they significantly shape the conditions under which firms can operate and grow abroad.

The findings for RQ2 further demonstrate that internationalisation is implemented through a set of adaptive strategies that enable firms to manage complexity and build resilience. The analysis shows that firms rely heavily on niche specialization, partnerships, digital collaboration, gradual learning, and resource-conscious practices to enter and sustain foreign markets. Rather than pursuing abrupt expansion, they tend to follow a staged process in which initial projects create learning opportunities, partnerships reduce uncertainty, and digital systems facilitate coordination across distance. These strategies are also shaped by practical challenges such as payments, coordination, cultural differences, and compliance requirements, all of which require ongoing adaptation. The evidence therefore suggests that successful internationalisation depends not only on ambition, but also on the firm's capacity to align its strategic positioning with operational discipline.

Taken together, the findings reveal that internationalisation is best understood as a socially embedded and strategically managed process shaped by multiple interdependent drivers. The survey results and document analysis complement one another by showing both the broad patterns and the contextual detail of this process. They indicate that firms internationalize when relational access opens opportunities, capability makes those opportunities viable, reputation strengthens legitimacy, and adaptive strategies allow firms to navigate diverse market conditions. This integrated understanding provides a strong empirical foundation for the next chapter.

The discussion in the next chapter will build on these findings by interpreting their implications in relation to the study's research objectives, conceptual framework, and existing literature. It will examine what the results mean for understanding the drivers and strategies of internationalisation in architectural practice, and it will consider how the study contributes to broader debates on professional service internationalisation, strategic adaptation, and institutional complexity. In this way, the findings presented in this chapter serve as the analytical bridge to the discussion that follows.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 presents an interpretive discussion of the findings from Chapter 4, situating them within relevant scholarly literature and theoretical frameworks. Rather than restating results, it examines their meaning, connects them to the research questions, and explains how they extend or refine existing understandings of architectural internationalisation. Drawing on evidence from survey and document analysis, the chapter develops a coherent analytical account of why and how architectural firms internationalise.

The chapter has two primary objectives. First, it analyses the drivers of internationalisation identified under RQ1, including relational access, professional capability, reputational legitimacy, economic opportunity, and institutional conditions. Second, it interprets the strategic responses identified under RQ2, particularly the roles of niche specialisation, partnerships, digital coordination, adaptation, and risk management in shaping international engagement. These findings are examined in relation to theoretical perspectives such as network-based internationalisation, capability-oriented explanations, institutional legitimacy, and cumulative learning (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Johanson and Vahlne, 2017).

The discussion is also situated within literature on professional service firms, where internationalisation is shaped by trust, symbolic credibility, and the difficulty of evaluating

service quality prior to delivery (Greenwood, Li, Prakash and Deephouse, 2005; Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005). In architecture, these characteristics are intensified by project complexity and cross-cultural coordination, reinforcing internationalisation as a socially embedded and strategically managed process.

Accordingly, the chapter assesses where findings confirm, extend, or refine theory, and highlights implications for internationalisation in mature professional contexts, bridging empirical results with the study's final conclusions.

5.2 Discussion of RQ1: Drivers of Internationalisation

5.2.1 Economic and Market Drivers

The findings indicate that economic and market-related motives are important, but they do not operate as isolated or dominant triggers of internationalisation. Chapter 4 showed that economic drivers recorded a mean score of 3.51, while the revenue distribution revealed a bimodal pattern: 33.3% of firms derived less than 10% of revenue from international work, whereas 31.3% derived more than 50%. This suggests that internationalisation is economically significant, yet unevenly embedded across firms. For some, international practice remains supplementary and opportunity-led; for others, it has become central to the business model. The analytical implication is that market expansion in this sector is not uniformly progressive, but path-dependent, shaped by the ability to convert initial projects into sustained revenue streams.

These findings partially align with market-seeking explanations within the Eclectic Paradigm, which view internationalisation as a response to opportunities for growth, diversification, and access to attractive clients or markets (Dunning, 1988; Dunning and Lundan, 2008). In this study, however, economic motivation appears less as a proactive search for foreign markets and more as a conditional rationale that becomes relevant when relational access and credible capability are already in place. This qualifies conventional market-seeking interpretations. Indian architecture firms do not seem to internationalize simply because foreign markets are larger or more profitable; rather, they engage internationally when specific projects promise revenue, prestige, scale, or portfolio diversification under conditions of manageable risk. In this sense, market motives are real but mediated.

The Resource-Based View offers a more convincing explanation of why these economic drivers matter selectively. International opportunities appear meaningful only when firms possess distinctive resources that can be transferred or adapted across borders, such as design capability, specialist knowledge, sustainability expertise, or digital coordination capacity. Economic opportunity is therefore not merely a market condition but an outcome of resource deployment. Within the Indian architectural context, this is especially significant because firms operate in a domestically competitive and increasingly mature environment in which differentiation is difficult and margins may be uneven. International work offers access to higher-value commissions, global clients, and prestigious projects, but only those firms able to mobilize distinctive capabilities appear able to sustain such engagement. The findings therefore suggest that economic and market drivers are better

understood as conditional incentives shaped by firm-specific strengths rather than as universal motives for outward expansion.

5.2.2 Role of Networks and Relationships

The most decisive finding under RQ1 is the centrality of networks and relationships. Networks received the highest mean score among all drivers at 4.19, while client invitation was the most common first-entry trigger. Diaspora referrals and partner invitations also featured prominently. This indicates that internationalisation in architecture is strongly relationally mediated. Firms do not typically enter foreign markets through anonymous market search; they enter through trusted relationships that reduce uncertainty, provide access, and confer initial legitimacy.

This pattern is highly consistent with the network approach to internationalisation and the revised Uppsala model, which emphasize that firms internationalize by becoming insiders in relevant networks rather than by relying solely on market knowledge accumulated independently (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Johanson and Vahlne, 2017). The concept of the “liability of outsidership” is especially relevant here. For Indian architecture firms, exclusion from client, consultant, and professional networks may represent a greater barrier than geographic distance itself. The findings suggest that relationships do not simply facilitate expansion; they actively structure its timing, direction, and form.

The role of networks is particularly significant in architecture because it is a high-trust, project-based professional service. Clients often commit to firms before they can fully verify quality, making referrals, prior collaborations, and social endorsement highly

influential. This supports prior research showing that in professional service firms, relational embeddedness helps reduce information asymmetry, lower perceived risk, and create access to market-specific knowledge (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Andreeva et al., 2021). The findings extend this literature by highlighting the importance of diaspora links and client-following within the Indian context. Such pathways appear especially valuable for firms from emerging markets, where international recognition may initially be weaker and trusted personal or community-based ties can bridge credibility gaps.

The broader implication is that relationship-driven strategies shape not only market entry but also the pace and durability of internationalisation. Networks help firms secure initial projects, but they also create opportunities for repeat commissions, collaborations, and reputational spillovers. Internationalisation is therefore not simply market expansion; it is a socially embedded process in which network position determines access to opportunity.

5.2.3 Institutional and Competitive Factors

Institutional and competitive factors exert a significant but indirect influence on internationalisation decisions. Institutional drivers recorded the lowest mean score (3.43), and policy rarely acted as the initial trigger for foreign entry. However, respondents consistently highlighted licensing, visas, standards, codes, and approvals as critical concerns. This suggests that institutions function less as direct motivators and more as boundary conditions shaping the feasibility, form, and sustainability of international work.

This finding aligns with institutional perspectives, which emphasise the need for firms to gain legitimacy within host environments by conforming to formal rules, professional

norms, and regulatory expectations (North, 1990; Kostova and Roth, 2002). For architecture firms, these requirements are particularly salient, as design services are embedded in local codes, approval systems, and professional liability regimes. The findings indicate that Indian firms internationalise despite institutional complexity rather than because of institutional incentives. Institutional navigation becomes integral to strategy through local partnerships, procedural discipline, and context-sensitive adaptation.

Competitive pressures interact with these institutional conditions. In a crowded domestic market, internationalisation serves as a differentiation strategy, enabling firms to pursue higher-value projects, prestigious commissions, and diversified client portfolios. However, competing internationally requires demonstration of both technical credibility and symbolic legitimacy. This reflects a broader challenge identified in professional service firm literature: firms from emerging economies often possess strong technical capabilities but must address client concerns regarding quality, legitimacy, and institutional unfamiliarity (Hitt et al., 2016). The findings support this view while showing that Indian architecture firms respond through differentiation, reputation-building, and network-led entry rather than price competition alone.

Overall, the RQ1 results indicate a multi-causal explanation of internationalisation, where economic motives, networks, institutional conditions, and competitive pressures interact to shape strategic outcomes.

5.3 Discussion of RQ2: Strategies for Internationalisation

5.3.1 Niche Specialization Strategy

The findings indicate that niche specialization is the most significant strategic approach through which Indian architecture firms pursue internationalisation. In Chapter 4, niche specialization recorded the highest mean score among the strategic variables, suggesting that firms do not seek foreign market presence through generalist positioning, but through the projection of distinctive expertise. This is analytically important because it demonstrates that internationalisation is not simply a matter of geographic expansion; it is also a process of strategic positioning in highly competitive and credibility-sensitive markets.

From a strategic management perspective, this finding aligns strongly with differentiation logic and knowledge-based views of the firm. Porter's differentiation framework suggests that firms gain competitive advantage by offering valued uniqueness rather than competing primarily on price, while knowledge-based perspectives emphasize the strategic importance of specialized expertise, tacit knowledge, and professional competence in shaping sustained advantage (Porter, 1985; Grant, 1996). The present findings support these arguments by showing that Indian architecture firms rely on sector-specific design capability, technical competence, sustainability expertise, and distinctive problem-solving ability to establish relevance in foreign markets. Specialization enables firms to define a recognizable market identity and reduces ambiguity for international clients evaluating unfamiliar providers.

This strategy is especially significant in architecture because services are customized, knowledge-intensive, and difficult to assess *ex ante*. In such contexts, niche expertise enhances both reputation and credibility. It signals that the firm can solve a particular class of design or delivery problem more effectively than a generalist competitor. The findings therefore suggest that specialization functions not only as an internal capability, but also as an external market signal. For Indian firms operating from an emerging-market base, this is particularly important because specialization helps offset possible concerns around legitimacy or unfamiliarity by shifting client attention toward demonstrable value and differentiated expertise. In this respect, the findings extend prior research by showing that niche positioning is not merely a marketing device; it is a core internationalisation strategy that converts competence into market access and reputational advantage.

5.3.2 Partnership and Collaboration Strategies

A second major strategic theme is the importance of partnerships, collaborations, and strategic alliances. The findings show that partnerships were among the most common entry modes and remained highly rated as an ongoing strategy. This indicates that collaboration is not peripheral to internationalisation; it is one of its principal operating mechanisms. Indian architecture firms appear to rely on partnerships not only to enter markets, but also to execute projects, navigate local systems, and sustain foreign engagement over time.

This finding is consistent with network theory and collaborative internationalisation research, which argue that firms expand through inter-organisational relationships that

provide access to knowledge, legitimacy, and resources otherwise difficult to develop independently (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Johanson and Vahlne, 2017). In the present study, partnerships reduce risk by allowing firms to share responsibilities, learn local requirements, and compensate for their initial lack of embeddedness in unfamiliar markets. Joint ventures, consultant networks, interdisciplinary collaborations, and client-linked partnerships all appear to function as strategic devices through which firms bridge the gap between internal capability and external market complexity.

The strategic value of partnerships is particularly clear in relation to market entry barriers. Foreign architectural practice is often shaped by local regulation, licensing, cultural expectations, and delivery conventions, all of which can constrain independent expansion. Collaborative arrangements help firms access local knowledge and professional expertise while also improving their legitimacy in the eyes of clients and regulators. Existing studies on professional service firms similarly show that international growth is often achieved through relational pathways rather than through wholly owned or autonomous expansion. The present findings reinforce that argument, but they also show that partnerships in the Indian architectural sector serve a dual purpose: they are both entry mechanisms and capability-enhancement mechanisms. By collaborating, firms not only reduce liability of outsidership, but also strengthen their ability to deliver effectively across institutional and cultural boundaries.

5.3.3 Adaptive and Flexible Strategies

The third strategic theme emphasises adaptation and flexibility in response to external challenges. Findings indicate that internationalisation requires continuous adjustment to regulatory, cultural, operational, and financial constraints. Issues such as payment delays, coordination complexity, cultural differences, and compliance burdens were frequently reported, demonstrating that strategy is inseparable from execution. Indian architecture firms sustain international activity not through fixed models but by modifying service delivery, management routines, and collaboration structures in response to contextual demands. This interpretation aligns with strategic flexibility and dynamic capability perspectives, which highlight the ability of firms to reconfigure resources, routines, and organisational responses under uncertainty (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Liu et al., 2013). In this context, adaptive capability includes regulatory responsiveness, cultural sensitivity, digital coordination, and frugal problem-solving. These elements are not peripheral but central to internationalisation, particularly in emerging-market settings where firms face both institutional complexity and resource constraints.

Frugal innovation reinforces this adaptive capacity. Although not the highest-rated strategy, it reflects the ability to deliver quality through lean operating models, selective investment, and pragmatic adjustment. This extends existing research by demonstrating that flexibility contributes not only to cost efficiency but also to organisational resilience. Firms that adapt workflows, partner configurations, communication practices, and project structures are better positioned to manage uncertainty while maintaining service quality and client trust.

Overall, the findings show that internationalisation strategies among Indian architecture firms are hybrid, relational, and adaptive. Niche specialisation provides differentiation,

partnerships ensure access and local anchoring, and flexibility enables navigation of institutional and operational complexity. Internationalisation thus emerges as a cumulative process of positioning, collaboration, and continuous adaptation.

5.4 Integrated Discussion across RQ1 and RQ2

The combined findings of RQ1 and RQ2 show that internationalisation among Indian architecture firms is a layered, recursive process in which motivations and strategies are mutually constitutive. RQ1 identifies relational access, capability, and reputation as primary drivers, with economic and institutional factors as secondary conditions. RQ2 demonstrates how these drivers are enacted through niche specialisation, partnerships, digital coordination, adaptation, and gradual scaling. Internationalisation therefore does not follow a linear progression from motive to action; rather, drivers shape strategy, and strategy reinforces drivers. This aligns with process-oriented internationalisation theory, particularly the revised Uppsala model, which emphasises networks, experiential learning, and evolving commitment (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Johanson and Vahlne, 2017).

Relational embeddedness forms the central link between RQ1 and RQ2. In RQ1, networks were the strongest driver of entry, with client invitations, diaspora referrals, and partnerships providing access. In RQ2, these same relationships function as strategic mechanisms through client-following, alliances, and collaborative delivery. Networks therefore act as both cause and infrastructure of internationalisation. They reduce uncertainty, enable entry, and support execution in unfamiliar contexts. This reinforces

prior research on professional service firms, which highlights the importance of networks where service quality is difficult to evaluate *ex ante* and where reputation circulates through referrals (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Freeman and Sandwell, 2008). The findings extend this literature by showing that networks shape not only access but also strategic design in Indian architecture firms.

Capability and specialisation provide the second link between motivation and strategy. RQ1 identifies capability as a key driver, while RQ2 highlights niche specialisation as the dominant strategic approach. This demonstrates that firms internationalise not merely because they possess expertise but because they translate it into differentiated market positioning. The findings align with the resource-based view and competitive strategy literature, where firm-specific capabilities generate advantage only when deployed strategically (Barney, 1991; Porter, 1985). For Indian firms, specialisation transforms competence into credibility, reduces client uncertainty, and positions firms as experts within competitive global markets.

Reputation bridges relational and capability dimensions. RQ1 shows reputation as a key driver, while RQ2 identifies it as a major outcome, indicating a feedback loop. Firms internationalise to build reputational capital, and reputation, in turn, facilitates further expansion by enhancing legitimacy and trust. This circular dynamic is consistent with professional service literature emphasising symbolic capital in markets where perceived quality is critical (Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings, 2002). In the Indian context, reputation is also shaped by national identity, design distinctiveness, and global visibility, making internationalisation both an economic and symbolic process.

The findings further demonstrate that opportunities and constraints are interdependent. RQ1 positions institutional regulation as a secondary but necessary condition, while RQ2 shows that regulatory, cultural, and financial challenges are addressed through partnerships, digital tools, and adaptive practices. Firms therefore do not merely react to constraints; they incorporate them into strategy. This is consistent with emerging-market internationalisation literature, which highlights flexibility, relational capabilities, and incremental learning as responses to structural limitations (Liu, Wright and Filatotchev, 2013; Mathews, 2006). In architecture, such adaptation is operationalised through BIM, remote collaboration, contextual design adjustments, and selective partnerships.

Overall, the integrated analysis reveals a coherent internationalisation logic. Firms expand when relational access creates opportunity, capability and specialisation establish credibility, reputation generates legitimacy, and partnerships and adaptive practices enable delivery. Economic motives remain relevant but are realised through these mechanisms rather than acting independently. Internationalisation thus emerges as a strategically assembled process of positioning, learning, and legitimacy-building. This contributes to scholarship on professional service internationalisation by demonstrating how motivations and strategies co-evolve in emerging-market contexts where trust, expertise, and adaptability underpin global competitiveness.

5.5 Theoretical Implications

5.5.1 Contribution to Internationalisation Theory

The findings refine internationalisation theory by showing that architecture-firm expansion is not explained adequately by any single model. The evidence strongly supports the revised Uppsala logic that firms internationalize through networks, experiential learning, and gradual commitment rather than through detached market scanning alone (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Johanson and Vahlne, 2017). This is visible in the primacy of client invitations, diaspora ties, and partnerships in RQ1, and in the dominance of client-following, collaboration, and incremental adaptation in RQ2.

At the same time, the findings extend the Uppsala perspective by showing that, in professional service settings, knowledge acquisition is inseparable from symbolic legitimacy. Reputation and credibility are not merely outcomes of accumulated experience; they are active mechanisms that enable entry and sustained participation. This complements network theory, which explains the transition from outsidership to insidership, but the present study shows that insidership is also reputational and capability-based, not only relational (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; McQuillan, Sharkey and Mangematin, 2018).

The Eclectic Paradigm is partially supported, particularly its emphasis on ownership advantages, location conditions, and internalization logic (Dunning, 1988). However, the findings suggest that for architectural firms, ownership advantages are best understood as specialist knowledge, digital coordination capacity, and design competence rather than as capital intensity or scale alone. Location advantages matter, but they are filtered through networks and institutional legitimacy. Internalization is therefore not simply a question of

outsourcing versus FDI; it is also a question of whether relational, reputational, and regulatory conditions make project participation feasible.

The Resource-Based View is strongly reinforced. The study shows that capability, niche specialization, digital tools, and adaptive routines are the foundations of international competitiveness, but only when they are mobilized strategically in foreign markets (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1996). The findings also support strategic adaptation perspectives by demonstrating that firms do not internationalize through fixed templates. Instead, they continuously reconfigure strategies in response to regulatory, cultural, and operational complexity.

5.5.2 Contribution to Emerging Market Literature

The study contributes to emerging-market scholarship by showing how Indian architecture firms navigate constraint and opportunity simultaneously. Rather than portraying emerging-market firms as either disadvantaged followers or fast-moving latecomers, the findings present them as strategically adaptive actors that use relationships, niche positioning, and frugal coordination to overcome structural limitations.

This extends the literature on latecomer advantage by showing that advantage does not arise from size or resource abundance, but from the ability to transform relational access into market entry and then into reputational capital. The results also refine the notion of international competitiveness in emerging markets: firms succeed not merely by reducing cost, but by combining specialist expertise with flexibility, trust-building, and selective scaling.

Institutional constraints are particularly important in this contribution. The study shows that Indian firms do not internationalize because institutional conditions are easy; rather, they do so because they have developed strategies to work through licensing, standards, visas, and compliance requirements. This supports the view that emerging-market firms often build international capability through constraint management, not despite constraints alone.

5.5.3 Contribution to Architecture and Business Studies

For architecture and professional service literature, the study offers a context-specific account of how knowledge-intensive design firms internationalize. It confirms that architecture differs from manufacturing-based internationalisation because entry is highly trust-dependent, service quality is difficult to observe ex ante, and legitimacy travels through professional reputation and networks. The evidence also shows that architecture firms internationalize through hybrid portfolios of business models, including client-following, collaboration, partnerships, and selective market-seeking, rather than through a single dominant model.

Theoretically, this suggests that the architecture sector requires a more contextualized framework than generic internationalisation models alone can provide. The study indicates that internationalisation in architecture is best analysed as a layered process in which relational access, niche expertise, symbolic legitimacy, and adaptive execution interact across entry and growth phases. This expands professional service firm theory by showing

that competitive positioning is not only produced through reputation or specialization in isolation, but through the integration of both within evolving project networks.

Overall, the study contributes to interdisciplinary scholarship by linking international business, strategic management, and architecture studies. It shows that architectural internationalisation is a socially embedded and strategically managed process in which firms combine expertise with adaptability to create durable global presence. This theoretical contribution is important because it moves the field beyond simple market-expansion explanations toward a more nuanced understanding of how design firms build international competitiveness under emerging-market conditions.

5.6 Practical Implications

5.6.1 Implications for Architecture Firms

The findings indicate that architecture firms seeking international growth should treat internationalisation as a strategic capability rather than as a one-off expansion decision. The strongest practical implication is that firms need to build and manage networks deliberately, since client invitations, diaspora ties, and partner referrals were central to first entry (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Chapter 4 findings). This means that business development should extend beyond tendering and marketing to include relationship cultivation, reputation building, and sustained engagement with clients, collaborators, and professional intermediaries.

Specialisation is equally important. Firms that can define a clear niche in design quality, sustainability, BIM-enabled delivery, or sector-specific expertise are more likely to stand out in crowded international markets (Porter, 1985; Grant, 1996). In practical terms, firms should avoid positioning themselves as generic design providers and instead articulate a distinctive value proposition that is credible across borders. Specialisation also supports trust, because international clients are more likely to engage firms that signal competence in a specific domain rather than broad but undifferentiated capability (Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings, 2002).

Partnerships and collaborative structures also have strong practical relevance. The evidence suggests that local alliances, joint delivery arrangements, and project-based collaborations help firms reduce uncertainty, access local knowledge, and navigate regulatory environments (Johanson and Vahlne, 2017; Andreeva et al., 2021). Architecture firms should therefore view partnerships not as temporary fixes but as strategic instruments for entry, execution, and learning. This is particularly important for firms entering markets with unfamiliar licensing systems, documentation requirements, or cultural expectations.

Adaptability is another key practical lesson. Firms should build internal processes that support flexible project delivery, remote coordination, and context-sensitive design adaptation (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997). The findings show that international work often involves payment delays, coordination issues, and cross-cultural complexity, which means that operational resilience is as important as design excellence. Firms that develop adaptive routines, frugal resource practices, and digital collaboration capacity are better positioned to sustain international activity over time.

5.6.2 Implications for Managers

For managers, the findings underline the importance of strategic planning that integrates market, relational, and operational decisions. International expansion should be treated as a staged process in which managers assess not only market attractiveness but also relationship readiness, capability fit, and regulatory feasibility (Dunning, 1988; Johanson and Vahlne, 2009). This requires a more disciplined approach to resource allocation, where investment in digital systems, specialist capability, and international business development is aligned with realistic project pipelines rather than speculative expansion.

Leadership adaptability is especially important. Managers need to balance opportunity-seeking with risk control, because the data show that internationalisation is associated with both reputational gains and operational challenges. Effective managers should therefore support gradual scaling, avoid overcommitment, and establish mechanisms for financial control, compliance monitoring, and project coordination. Cultural awareness is equally important, since successful delivery depends on understanding local expectations, communication norms, and decision-making practices (Liu, Wright and Filatotchev, 2013).

The findings also suggest that managers should cultivate relationship management as a core leadership skill. In international architecture practice, trust-based access matters as much as technical competence, so managers must invest time in client retention, partner engagement, and professional visibility. At the same time, they should encourage learning-oriented routines so that each international project strengthens the firm's future capability.

This combination of flexibility, learning, and strategic focus is essential for managing cross-border complexity while preserving competitiveness.

5.6.3 Implications for Policymakers

For policymakers and professional institutions, the findings suggest that internationalisation can be strengthened through targeted support rather than broad symbolic promotion alone. Since regulatory issues such as licensing, standards, visas, and approvals were identified as important constraints, policy interventions should aim to reduce procedural friction and improve the compatibility of professional frameworks across markets (North, 1990; Kostova and Roth, 2002). This could include streamlined recognition processes, better guidance on overseas compliance, and stronger bilateral or multilateral professional cooperation.

Trade and export policy also has a role to play. If Indian architecture firms are to expand their global presence, they need institutional support that improves visibility, access, and market intelligence. Industry bodies and government agencies can facilitate this through trade missions, international networking platforms, export promotion support, and matchmaking with foreign clients and collaborators. Such initiatives would be especially valuable for smaller and mid-sized firms that may lack the resources to build overseas presence independently.

Professional accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms are also important. Because reputation and legitimacy are central to international success, policymakers and professional bodies should support branding, certification, and global recognition strategies

that strengthen the credibility of Indian architectural practice abroad. The broader implication is that policy should not only remove barriers but also create enabling conditions for capability development, knowledge exchange, and international collaboration. In doing so, it can help transform architecture from a domestically oriented profession into a globally competitive sector with stronger institutional support and international visibility.

Taken together, the practical implications show that internationalisation is most effectively advanced when firms, managers, and policymakers act in alignment. Firms need strategy and specialisation, managers need adaptive leadership and disciplined execution, and policymakers need to reduce friction while enhancing legitimacy and outward orientation.

5.7 Chapter Summary and Transition

This chapter has interpreted the empirical findings from Chapter 4 in relation to the research questions and the relevant scholarly literature. It has shown that the internationalisation of Indian architecture firms is shaped primarily by relational access, specialist capability, reputation, and adaptive strategy, while economic and institutional conditions act as important but secondary influences (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Dunning, 1988). The discussion demonstrated that firms do not internationalize through a single dominant logic; rather, their outward expansion reflects a layered process in which opportunity, credibility, and strategic flexibility interact over time.

The chapter also established that RQ1 and RQ2 are closely interconnected. The drivers of internationalisation influence the strategic responses adopted by firms, while strategies such as niche specialization, partnerships, digital coordination, and contextual adaptation help firms convert access into sustained international activity (Grant, 1996; Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997). In this respect, the discussion moved beyond description to show how motivations and strategic choices reinforce one another in shaping international behaviour. The integrated analysis further indicated that networks generate entry, capability supports delivery, reputation strengthens legitimacy, and flexibility enables firms to manage regulatory, cultural, and operational complexity.

In theoretical terms, the chapter has contributed to internationalisation theory, emerging-market scholarship, and professional service firm literature by demonstrating that architecture firms from India expand abroad through a socially embedded and strategically managed process rather than through simple market-seeking behaviour. It also showed that internationalisation in this sector is highly dependent on trust-based relationships, specialist positioning, and adaptive learning, which together provide a more context-specific explanation of expansion in knowledge-intensive professional services. The practical implications are equally significant, since the findings offer guidance for firms, managers, and policymakers seeking to strengthen global competitiveness.

Chapter 5 therefore provides a coherent analytical bridge between the findings and the final interpretation of the study. The next chapter presents the overall conclusions, summarises the main contributions, acknowledges the study's limitations, and outlines directions for future research.

CHAPTER VI:

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 serves as the concluding chapter of the study and brings together the empirical findings presented in Chapter 4 with the analytical discussion developed in Chapter 5. Its purpose is to synthesise the overall findings, assess the extent to which the research objectives have been achieved, discuss the theoretical and practical contributions of the study, acknowledge its limitations, and identify directions for future investigation (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). In this sense, the chapter does more than summarise earlier sections; it provides the final analytical consolidation of the study by locating the findings within the wider literature on internationalisation, professional service firms, and emerging-market strategy (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Boussebaa and Morgan, 2015).

The study was motivated by the need to understand how and why Indian architecture firms internationalize, particularly within an environment of increasing global interconnectedness, intensified competition, and the growing cross-border mobility of knowledge-intensive services. The research problem emerged from the limited scholarly attention given to the internationalisation of architecture firms from emerging economies, despite the wider expansion of professional service firms into global markets (Greenwood et al., 2005; Andreeva et al., 2021). To address this gap, the study was guided by two core research questions: RQ1 examined the principal drivers influencing the internationalisation

of Indian architecture firms, while RQ2 investigated the strategic approaches through which these firms enter, operate in, and sustain their presence in international markets.

The conceptual and theoretical foundations of the study drew on complementary perspectives. Internationalisation theory provided the broad analytical base, particularly through the Eclectic Paradigm and the revised Uppsala model, while network theory helped explain the relational and trust-based mechanisms through which firms access foreign opportunities (Dunning, 1988; Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Johanson and Vahlne, 2017). Strategic management perspectives, especially the Resource-Based View and dynamic capabilities approach, were also important in understanding how firms deploy specialist expertise, adaptive capability, and strategic differentiation across markets (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1996; Teece et al., 1997). Together, these perspectives provided an integrated framework for interpreting internationalisation as a process shaped by networks, capability, legitimacy, and adaptation.

Methodologically, the study adopted a qualitative research design based on an online survey and document analysis. This combination enabled the study to triangulate respondent experiences with documentary evidence and strengthen the interpretive depth of the analysis (Bowen, 2009; Saunders et al., 2019). The findings showed that the internationalisation of Indian architecture firms is driven primarily by networks, capability, and reputation, while economic opportunity and institutional conditions act as important but secondary influences. They further showed that firms respond strategically through niche specialisation, partnerships, digital coordination, and adaptive practices that help them manage uncertainty and build sustainable international presence.

The study demonstrates that internationalisation in this sector is not a simple market-seeking process, but a socially embedded and strategically managed form of expansion shaped by the interaction of economic motives, institutional pressures, competitive positioning, and adaptive responses (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Liu et al., 2013). The remainder of this chapter presents the final conclusions of the study, highlights its contributions, acknowledges its limitations, and outlines directions for future research.

6.2 Key Conclusions

The study concludes that the internationalisation of Indian architecture firms is a multi-dimensional process shaped by the interaction of economic motivations, institutional pressures, competitive dynamics, and strategic aspirations rather than by any single dominant driver (Dunning, 1988; Johanson and Vahlne, 2009). Economic opportunity matters because it expands the scope for revenue diversification, prestigious commissions, and portfolio growth, but the findings show that such motivations become actionable only when firms can mobilize networks, professional credibility, and specialist capability (Grant, 1996; Johanson and Vahlne, 2017). This supports the broader view in internationalisation theory that market opportunity is necessary but not sufficient, especially in knowledge-intensive and client-facing professional services (Boussebaa, Morgan and Sturdy, 2014; Andreeva et al., 2021).

A central conclusion is that professional networks and relational embeddedness are the primary mechanisms through which international market access is secured. Client invitations, diaspora referrals, and partnerships consistently emerged as the main gateways

into foreign markets, confirming that architectural internationalisation is rooted in trust, referral, and social capital rather than impersonal market search (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Johanson and Vahlne, 2017). This reinforces network-based and revised Uppsala perspectives, which emphasise outsidership, experiential learning, and gradual commitment as key explanatory mechanisms (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009). In practical terms, the study shows that networks do not merely facilitate entry; they also support credibility-building, knowledge transfer, and the transition from isolated opportunities to sustained engagement (McQuillan, Sharkey and Mangematin, 2018).

The findings also lead to the conclusion that adaptive and flexible strategies are essential for operating across diverse regulatory, cultural, and operational environments. Firms internationalize successfully when they combine niche specialisation, digital coordination, local partnerships, and context-sensitive delivery rather than relying on a fixed expansion template (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997; Liu, Wright and Filatotchev, 2013). This reveals that internationalisation is an iterative and cumulative process in which firms learn to manage licensing systems, payment risks, institutional differences, and project coordination while preserving strategic coherence (Kostova and Roth, 2002; North, 1990). Such adaptability is particularly important in emerging-market internationalisation, where firms often face resource constraints alongside institutional complexity (Mathews, 2006; Gaur, Kumar and Singh, 2014).

Another key conclusion is that niche specialisation, collaborative partnerships, and strategic flexibility jointly shape competitive positioning and long-term international growth. Specialisation provides differentiation, partnerships provide access and legitimacy,

and flexibility enables execution under uncertainty (Porter, 1985; Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings, 2002). Together, these strategic responses help firms transform initial opportunities into repeat work, stronger reputations, and deeper market presence. The evidence therefore suggests that competitive advantage in architecture is not derived from scale alone, but from the ability to combine technical expertise, relational access, and adaptive governance in foreign markets (Barney, 1991; Grant, 1996).

Overall, the study concludes that internationalisation in Indian architecture firms is best understood as a socially embedded, capability-intensive, and strategically managed process (Boussebaa and Morgan, 2015; McQuillan, Sharkey and Mangematin, 2018). The findings extend current understanding of professional service firm internationalisation and emerging-market firm behaviour by showing that drivers and strategies are tightly interconnected: networks open doors, capability sustains delivery, reputation builds legitimacy, and adaptability preserves viability (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Johanson and Vahlne, 2017). This integrated logic provides a more context-sensitive explanation of how Indian architecture firms build and sustain international presence within global markets.

6.3 Contributions of the Study

6.3.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study makes a significant theoretical contribution by demonstrating that the internationalisation of Indian architecture firms cannot be sufficiently explained through a single theoretical perspective. Instead, international expansion emerges through the

interaction of relational access, specialist capability, reputation, institutional conditions, and strategic adaptation. The findings strongly support the revised Uppsala model, which argues that firms internationalize through experiential learning, network development, and the reduction of outsidership rather than through purely rational market selection processes (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009; Johanson and Vahlne, 2017). However, the study extends this framework by showing that, within architecture and other professional service contexts, relational access alone is inadequate unless supported by specialist expertise and symbolic credibility.

The research further refines network-based explanations of internationalisation by illustrating that networks influence not only market entry, but also the timing, structure, and sustainability of international operations. Client referrals, diaspora connections, and collaborative partnerships were found to shape both initial entry and long-term presence in foreign markets. This reinforces existing research on professional service firms while extending it through the identification of reputation transfer, niche positioning, and adaptive collaboration as central mechanisms linking network embeddedness to international growth. Consequently, social capital functions as a strategic asset rather than merely a contextual condition.

The findings also contribute to the Resource-Based View by confirming that design expertise, digital coordination capability, and strategic flexibility are essential sources of international competitiveness. Nevertheless, the study refines this perspective by demonstrating that such resources acquire value only when translated into a distinctive international position. This connects resource-based reasoning with differentiation and

dynamic capabilities perspectives, suggesting that internationalisation depends not simply on possessing resources, but on continuously recombining them in response to institutional and market conditions. The study therefore contributes to a more context-sensitive understanding of emerging-market internationalisation, where opportunity and constraint are negotiated simultaneously rather than independently.

6.3.2 Methodological Contribution

The study also makes a methodological contribution through its mixed-method research design, which integrated survey findings with document analysis. This approach strengthened triangulation and enabled a more comprehensive understanding of internationalisation than either method could provide independently. Survey data captured perceptions regarding the principal drivers and strategies of internationalisation, while document analysis contextualised these findings within broader organisational and professional settings. The integration of both methods allowed numerical patterns to be interpreted alongside thematic and contextual evidence.

This methodological approach is particularly relevant to international business and professional service research, where strategic behaviour is often embedded within relationships, institutional environments, and project-specific practices. The study demonstrates that mixed methods are especially effective when research problems involve both measurable tendencies and socially constructed meanings. Rather than presenting statistical frequencies in isolation, the research interpreted them through theoretical

framing and thematic synthesis, thereby generating a richer explanation of how firms internationalize and operationalise international strategies in practice.

The methodological significance of the study is further strengthened by the limited empirical research available on the internationalisation of architecture firms, particularly within emerging-market contexts. By combining primary survey evidence with secondary qualitative material, the study provides a replicable framework for investigating knowledge-intensive firms where direct observation is difficult and decision-making processes are dispersed across projects and networks. Consequently, the methodological design contributes not only to architecture research, but also to broader scholarship on international business and professional service firms.

6.3.3 Practical Contribution

This study offers practical contributions for firms, managers, consultants, professional bodies, and policymakers. For architecture firms, sustainable internationalisation depends on developing networks, specialist positioning, and collaborative partnerships. Entry is strongly linked to client invitations, diaspora relationships, and referrals, confirming the central role of relational strategies in both entry and long-term presence.

For managers, the findings emphasise combining capability investment with operational flexibility. Internationalisation requires effective resource allocation, cross-border coordination, and management of regulatory, cultural, and financial challenges. Successful firms expand gradually, invest in digital coordination systems, and treat reputation and organisational learning as strategic assets.

For consultants and professional bodies, the study highlights the need to support firms in translating expertise into internationally recognised positioning. Services such as branding, accreditation, partnership facilitation, and market intelligence can strengthen global legitimacy and competitiveness.

For policymakers, reducing regulatory barriers, improving professional recognition frameworks, and enabling international networking platforms can enhance sector competitiveness.

Overall, effective internationalisation depends on aligning relational access, specialist capability, collaborative delivery, and adaptive governance, offering actionable insights for both firm-level strategy and the broader professional ecosystem.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting its conclusions. First, the sample size and composition of respondents were necessarily limited, which constrains the extent to which the findings can be generalised to the broader population of Indian architecture firms. Although the sample provides valuable insight into firms with international experience, it may not fully represent the diversity of firm sizes, ownership structures, regional locations, or levels of international exposure across the sector (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Second, the study is context-specific, focusing on India as an emerging-market setting. This strengthens contextual depth, but it also limits direct transferability to architecture firms operating in other national or industry

environments, where institutional conditions, professional norms, and market structures may differ substantially (Yin, 2018).

Third, the study relies partly on self-reported survey responses, which may be shaped by subjective interpretation, recall limitations, or strategic presentation by respondents. As with most qualitative and survey-based research, participants may have emphasised some drivers or strategies while underreporting others, meaning the findings should be read as informed perceptions rather than fully objective behavioural measurements (Bowen, 2009). Fourth, the methodological design, while appropriate for exploratory and interpretive purposes, does not support longitudinal analysis of how internationalisation develops over time. As a result, the study captures patterns at a particular point rather than tracing how drivers, strategies, and outcomes evolve across successive stages of expansion (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009).

Finally, practical constraints of time and resources limited the depth of comparative analysis that could be undertaken across firm categories, foreign markets, or stakeholder groups. Despite these limitations, the study still offers meaningful empirical and theoretical insights into the internationalisation behaviour and strategic practices of Indian architecture firms.

6.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should extend this study through comparative cross-country analyses of architecture firms across emerging and developed markets. Such work would clarify

whether observed patterns are sector-specific or reflect broader internationalisation dynamics, particularly across differing institutional environments, professional norms, and levels of market maturity (Yin, 2018). This would enhance the transferability of findings and deepen understanding of contextual influences on strategy.

Longitudinal research is also necessary to examine how internationalisation evolves over time. While this study provides a cross-sectional perspective, future studies could trace how networks, reputation, specialisation, and adaptive capabilities develop across stages of entry, consolidation, and expansion (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009). This would help determine whether relational drivers remain dominant or are supplemented by other capabilities as firms mature internationally.

Further research should employ larger and more diverse quantitative samples to improve generalisability and enable more robust statistical testing of relationships between drivers, strategies, and outcomes (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). Comparative analysis across firm size, geographic location, ownership structure, and degree of international exposure would provide more nuanced insights into variation within the sector.

Additional investigation is warranted into the roles of institutional environments, digital transformation, sustainability, innovation capability, and cultural adaptation (Dunning, 1988; Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997). Interdisciplinary comparisons with other knowledge-intensive professional service sectors would further refine understanding of shared and sector-specific internationalisation dynamics.

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APPENDIX A:
INFORMED CONSENT

From Local Design Studios to Global Practices:
The International Expansion of Architecture Firms from India

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PURPOSE OF STUDY

You are being invited to take part in a research study about how Indian architecture firms expand into international markets. Before you decide whether to participate, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully. You may ask the researcher if anything is unclear or if you would like more information.

The purpose of this study is to explore the key drivers, strategies, and challenges shaping the internationalisation of Indian architecture firms, and to understand how architects and firm leaders perceive and respond to opportunities and barriers in foreign markets.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to:

- Take part in a semi-structured interview (online or in person) lasting approximately 60–90 minutes.

- Answer questions about your firm’s background, your experience with international projects, and your views on the motivations, strategies, opportunities, and constraints associated with working outside India.
- Permit the interview to be audio-recorded so that the researcher can accurately capture your responses.

You may decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer. You may stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

RISKS

This study involves minimal risk. You may feel uncomfortable discussing certain business experiences or strategic decisions. You are free to skip any questions that make you uncomfortable. Your name and your firm’s name will not be used in any publications or presentations without your explicit permission. Pseudonyms or codes will be used instead.

BENEFITS

There may be no direct benefit to you personally for participating in this study. However, your insights may:

- Contribute to a better understanding of how Indian architecture firms operate in international markets.
- Inform recommendations for practitioners, professional bodies, and policy makers.
- Help develop academic knowledge about the internationalisation of professional service firms.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your participation in this study will be treated as confidential. Every effort will be made to protect your privacy, including:

- Assigning a code (e.g. “Firm A”, “Participant 1”) instead of using your name or your firm’s name in notes, transcripts, and reports.
- Storing digital audio files, transcripts, and notes on a password-protected device or secure institutional server accessible only to the researcher and, if applicable, the academic supervisor.
- Omitting or disguising potentially identifying details about specific projects or clients in any publications.

Data will be retained securely for seven years after the end of the study and then destroyed. However, please note that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if you disclose

information that the researcher is legally required to report (such as threats of serious harm to yourself or others).

COMPENSATION

There is no monetary compensation for participation in this study.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions at any time about this study, or if you experience any discomfort as a result of participating, you may contact:

Deepu Shyam Prakash

Email: deepu@ssbm.ch

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to discuss any concerns that you do not feel comfortable raising with the researcher, please contact:

[Name of Institutional Review Board / Ethics Committee, contact details]

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, without giving a reason, and without any negative consequences. If you withdraw before data collection is completed, you may request that your data be destroyed and not used in the study.

CONSENT

I have read and understood the information provided above and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without cost. I understand that I will receive a copy of this consent form if I request it. By signing below, I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's name: _____

Participant's signature: _____

Date:

QUESTIONNAIRE

Section A: Eligibility and Consent

1. International work (screening)

Has your firm undertaken, or is it actively pursuing, architectural projects outside India?

- Yes
- No → (End survey with a “Thank you” message)

2. Consent to participate

I have read the information about this study and agree to participate.

- Yes, I agree
- No, I do not agree → (End survey)

SECTION A: ELIGIBILITY & FIRM PROFILE (9 questions)

A1. Has your firm undertaken, or is it actively pursuing, architectural projects outside India?

- ☐ Yes (continue)
- ☐ No → (End survey with thank you message)

A2. I have read the information about this study and agree to participate.

- ☐ Yes, I agree (continue)
- ☐ No, I do not agree → (End survey)

A3. Your role in the firm (select one)

- ☐ Principal / Partner / Managing Director / Director
- ☐ Senior Architect / Project Manager
- ☐ Business / Strategy Lead
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

A4. Approximate number of full-time staff (select one)

- ☐ 1–10
- ☐ 11–25
- ☐ 26–50
- ☐ 51–100
- ☐ 101–250
- ☐ More than 250

A5. Year your firm was established

A6. Head office location (city, country)

A7. Does your firm have any regional / branch offices within India?

- ☐ Yes (specify locations below)
- ☐ No

If yes: Where are your Indian regional / branch offices located? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ North India (e.g. Delhi–NCR, Chandigarh, Jaipur)
- ☐ West India (e.g. Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad)
- ☐ South India (e.g. Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad)
- ☐ East / North-East India (e.g. Kolkata, Guwahati)
- ☐ Other (specify): _____

A8. Does your firm have any offices outside India?

- ☐ Yes (specify locations below)
- ☐ No

If yes: Where are your international offices located? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ Middle East (e.g. UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar)

- ☐ Africa
- ☐ South-East Asia (e.g. Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam)
- ☐ East Asia (e.g. Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea)
- ☐ Europe
- ☐ North America
- ☐ Australia / New Zealand
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

A9. Approximate share of international projects in total firm revenue (select one)

- ☐ Less than 10%
 - ☐ 10–30%
 - ☐ 30–50%
 - ☐ More than 50%
 - ☐ No international revenue yet
-

Section B: RQ1 – Internationalisation Drivers (4 mins; 8 questions)

Rate importance (1=Not important, 5=Very important) or select as instructed.

B1. Primary trigger for first international project? (Select one)

- Client invitation/diaspora referral / Policy/trade opportunity / Economic (margins/saturation) / Network/partner invite / Competition/award / Other

B2. Rate top drivers (1–5 scale; combined):

Driver Category	Rating (1–5)	Example Influence
Networks (clients/diaspora/partners)	—	—
Institutional (policy/licensing/incentives)	—	—
Economic (margins/diversification/saturation)	—	—
Capability (tech/sustainability/design)	—	—
Reputational (brand/prestige/Indian identity)	—	—

B3. Rank your TOP 3 drivers (1=most important):

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

B4. Regulatory challenges overcome? (Top 2)

- Licensing/credentials / Codes/standards / Visas / Local partnerships / Contracts/IP / Other

B5. Tech enabling international work? (Top 2)

- BIM/cloud collab / VR/AR / PM tools / Sustainability software / None / Other

B6. Profit margins vs. domestic: Higher / Similar / Lower / Varies

B7. Diaspora/professional networks role: Critical / Helpful / Minor / None

B8. One key lesson from driver experience? (*Short open: 1–2 sentences*)

Section C: RQ2 – Strategies & Practices (4 mins; 8 questions)

C1. Primary entry mode? (Select one)

- Client-following / Partnerships/JV / Competitions / Market-seeking / Mixed

C2. Rate strategy use (1=Not at all, 5=Very large extent; combined):

Strategy	Rating (1–5)
Cultural adaptation/localisation	—
Cost/frugal innovation	—
Local partnerships	—
BIM/digital remote collab	—
Sustainability/Indian identity emphasis	—
Niche specialisation	—

C3. Most effective partnership structure?

JV / MoU/project-specific / Local AOR / Independent / None

C4. Licensing approach:

Local partners / Direct credentials / Project permissions / Remote design / Other

C5. Hub-spoke model (India design + local ops)?

Yes (platforms: BIM/Zoom/PM tools) / Partial / No

C6. Top benefit/challenge? (Select 1 each)

Benefit: Profits/reputation/learning/clients/risk-diversification

Challenge: Regulation/culture/payments/partners/bidding/capacity

C7. Most successful project strategy & why? (Short open: 1–2 sentences)

C8. Biggest setback & lesson? (Short open: 1–2 sentences)

Section D: Closing (1 min; 3 questions)

D1. Advice for other Indian firms internationalising? (*Short open*)

D2. Emerging trends to prepare for? (*Select top 2 / Short open*) Sustainability/AI/digital / Regulation changes / Competition / Other

D3. Follow-up/summary? Yes (email: _____) / No

THANK YOU

We deeply appreciate your time and insights. Your responses are invaluable to understanding how Indian architecture firms succeed on the global stage.

Next Steps: We will analyze these responses and conduct in-depth interviews with select firms as required. Findings will be shared in a research report by Q3 2026.

Questions about this research? Contact: deepu@ssbm.ch

End of Questionnaire

APPENDIX B:

LIST OF LITERATURE ITEMS FOR DOCUMENT ANALYSIS IN CHAPTER 4

Doc_ID	Author	Year	Title	Journal/Source
1	Ahammad, M.F. et al.	2021	Strategic agility, environmental uncertainties and international performance: The perspective of Indian firms	International Business Review
2	Ahuja, R. et al.	2016	Adoption of BIM by architectural firms in India: technology–organization–environment perspective	Architectural Engineering and Design Management
3	Architects Council of Europe (ACE)	2025	Internationalisation of the architectural profession: Regulatory frameworks and mobility	ACE Sector Study Report
4	Architizer Editorial Board	2025	30 Best Architecture and Design Firms in India	Architizer Journal
5	Argiris, L., PE	2025	Taking Your Engineering Firm Global	Greyling Insights
6	Barney, J.B.	1991	Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage	Journal of Management
7	Boussebaa, M. & Morgan, G.	2015	Internationalisation of Professional Service Firms: Drivers, Forms, and Outcomes	Oxford Handbook
8	Brock, D. et al.	2009	Internationalisation of Professional Service Firms	Book Chapter
9	Buser, M. et al.	2016	Engineering Companies Strategising Globalisation	Proceedings of ARCOM Conference
10	Cantwell, J.	2009	Location and the multinational enterprise: Neglected factors?	Journal of International Business Studies
11	CII India Design Report	2015	India Design Report	Industry Report
12	DataInsights Market Research	2024	Architectural Services Market 2026 Trends and Forecasts 2034: Analyzing Growth Opportunities	Industry Report

13	Deng, P. et al.	2018	International strategies of emerging market multinationals: A dynamic capabilities perspective	Journal of Management and Organization
14	Dimitrova, V.	2020	The internationalisation of architectural practice	HafenCity University Hamburg
15	Do Thuy Huong & Phan Anh Tu	2025	Internationalisation and Firm Performance of Firms in India: The Role of Top Management	IntechOpen
16	Epead, A.A.H. & Othman, A.E.E.	2015	Marketing Strategies for Promoting the Architectural Engineering Profession in a Rapidly Changing Business Environment	Conference: International Conference on Industry Academia Collaboration
17	Faulconbridge, J.R.	2009	The regulation of design in global architecture firms: Embedding and emplacing buildings	Urban Studies
18	Gensler Research Institute	2025	Design Forecast 2025	Gensler Publication
19	Greenwood, R. & Suddaby, R.	2006	Institutional entrepreneurship in mature fields: The big five accounting firms	Academy of Management Journal
20	Gummesson, E. & Grönroos, C.	2021	Service logic revisited: Who creates value? And who co-creates?	Journal of Service Management
21	Haniza-Azmaya, C.M. & Nor Azmi	2011	Internationalisation of architectural firms from emerging economies: The Malaysian experience	Journal for Global Business Advancement
22	Hellman, M.	2017	The 5 Biggest Global Challenges for Indian Brands	The Marketing Journal
23	Iconarp Collective (Eryilmaz et al.)	2023	Visibility and globalisation levels of architectural firms under the influence of internet and internationalisation	ICONARP International Journal of Architecture and Planning
24	JLL Report	2026	Global Design Perspectives 2026	JLL Insight

25	Johanson, J. & Vahlne, J.E.	1977	The internationalisation process of the firm: A model of knowledge development and increasing foreign market commitments	Journal of International Business Studies
26	Johanson, J. & Vahlne, J.E.	2009	The Uppsala internationalisation process model revisited: From liability of foreignness to liability of outsidership	Journal of International Business Studies
27	Manuel Jose Oyson III	2014	Entrepreneurship in Small Firm Internationalisation	University of Auckland
28	Meneses, R. & Maia, M.	2013	Factors Influencing the Internationalisation of Services Firms: The Case of Design, Engineering and Architecture Consulting Firms	Conference Paper
29	Merí de la Maza, R. & Díaz Segura, A.	2017	Internationalisation strategies for Architectural studies	Conference: EDULEARN17
30	Monexa-ai	2025	AECOM Strategic Growth and Margin Expansion Amid Global Infrastructure Boom	Web Article
31	Morgan, G. & Mehdi, B.	2015	Internationalisation of Professional Service Firms: Drivers, Forms, and Outcomes	Oxford Handbook of Professional Service Firms (Chapter 4)
32	Mr. Anuj Aggarwal	2017	Impact of Internationalisation on Firm Performance: A Literature Review	Journal of Business and Management
33	Ms. Manvi Singh, Mr. Abhishek Saxena & Ar. Harmanpreet Kaur	2025	Architecture Practice in India: Navigating Public Relations, Marketing and Client Relation in A Competitive Market	International Research Journal on Advanced Engineering and Management
34	Nadjla Fellahi	2021	Globalisation Processes in Architecture	Conference: International Students Science Congress

35	Nufazil Altaf & Farooq Ahmad Shah	2016	Internationalisation and firm performance of Indian firms: Does product diversity matter?	Scholarly Research Publishing
36	Oncescu, C.	2025	The Impact of Global Trends on Tomorrow's Practice: The Horizons 2034/Future Business of Architecture Review	RIBA Journal Intelligence
37	Oswal, P. et al.	2010	The Internationalisation of Indian Firms: Strategic Issues, Organisational Transformation, and Performance	Book Chapter
38	Ozkan Ustun, G. & Dinç Kalayci, P.	2023	Visibility and Globalisation Levels of Architectural Firms under the Influence of Internet and Internationalisation	Iconarp International Journal
39	Pandey, M.K.	2018	Analytical Study of International Market Entry Modes Decision	International Journal of Management, Technology And Engineering
40	PMI Arizona	2025	How Architecture Firms Can Thrive Through Business Expansion: Exploring New Opportunities for Sustainable Growth	LinkedIn Article
41	RIBA Intelligence Unit	2024	UK architecture sector international performance: Export revenues and overseas strategies	RIBA Journal Intelligence
42	Singhal, M. & Kaur, H.	2012	Globalisation and the Emerging Trends in Architecture	Conference: International Conference on Emerging Trends
43	Syed Fadzil, S.F. et al.	2020	Globalisation or Localization – factors to be considered by architects in their architectural practices	African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure
44	Takawira Munyaradzi Ndofirepi	2024	Investigating the Drivers of Firm Internationalisation: A Fuzzy Set Analysis Using Global Entrepreneurship Development Index Data	Mdpi Journal (Economies)

45	Technavio Industry Analysts	2025	Global architectural services market analysis: Regional dynamics 2025-2029	Technavio Industry Report
46	Thite, M. et al.	2015	Internationalisation of emerging Indian multinationals: Linkage, leverage and learning (LLL) perspective	International Business Review
47	Timo O Schaefer, Afonso Carneiro Lima & José Ednilson de Oliveira Cabral	2017	Drivers and challenges for internationalisation: A study with born global firms	Conference: XXXI RENT CONFERENCE
48	Tomczak, M. et al.	2025	Selecting the market for an international construction enterprise	Warsaw University of Technology
49	Winch, G.	2008	Internationalisation Strategies in Business-to-Business Services: The Case of Architectural Practice	The Service Industries Journal
50	Winch, G.	2014	Strategic business and network positioning for internationalisation	The Service Industries Journal
51	Winch, G.	2011	Strategic Management of Professional Practice: The Case of Architecture	Construction Management and Economics
52	Winch, G. et al.	2002	Exporting Architectural Services: The English and French Experiences	Journal of Architectural and Planning Research