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The Internationalisation Paradox: How Temporal Compression Drives Startup Failure in International Markets

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Abstract: Rapid international expansion assists startup growth, but it may exert strain on organisational capabilities, which can often lead to business failure. Drawing on the resource-based view (RBV) and dynamic capabilities theory, this study examines how temporal compression erodes startups' ability to attain global success. This study presents a case study of the speedy expansion into Europe by Getir, a Turkish ultra-fast grocery delivery startup valued at US\$12 billion, followed by its retreat by 2024. We collected data via interviews with eight senior managers who had experienced both the growth phase and subsequent contraction. Data were triangulated against financial reports, investor disclosures and media coverage. Four failure mechanisms emerged from thematic analysis: (1) centralisation paradox (where excessive hierarchical control limited market responsiveness); (2) temporal-cultural compression (in which speed was prioritised over cultural adaptation); (3) strategic myopia (in which growth objectives overrode long-term sustainability); and (4) operational strain (where resource depletion reduced market flexibility). This study expands on RBV and dynamic capabilities theory by introducing the concept of temporal-cultural compression, which captures the systematic erosion of cultural learning capabilities under accelerated scaling pressures.

Keywords: internationalisation; business failure; temporal compression; global startup; sustainability

1 Introduction

The global startup ecosystem has witnessed a paradigm shift driven by technological advancements (Nambisan et al. 2019a, 2019b; Bejjani et al. 2023) and a surge in the readiness of venture capital (Autio et al. 2018). Nevertheless, international expansion

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in particular continues to be problematic for startups as evidenced by recent research (e.g., Eisenmann 2021), which claims that two-thirds of startups fail to deliver positive returns to investors. This paradox, whereby ambitious rapid scaling reduces organisational capabilities, is increasingly demonstrated in digital firms where accelerated timelines often outstrip a company's ability to adapt to new markets (Autio et al. 2021). Although it is evident that temporal compression hinders sustainable expansion (Jiang et al. 2014), little is known about the specific mechanisms through which speed undermines the adaptability of startups, particularly in culturally and institutionally diverse markets.

Consequently, this study explores how rapid internationalisation-induced temporal compression destabilises startups' ability to sustain growth by disrupting their resource development and market responsiveness. Two interconnected research questions guide this research: (1) How do internal dynamics shape organisational capability development during global expansion? and (2) What external factors determine startups' failures in foreign markets? This study is guided by two complementary, yet distinctive, theoretical perspectives: the resource-based view (RBV) and dynamic capabilities theory.

This research focuses on a Turkish rapid-delivery startup, Getir, valued at US\$12 billion (Retail Gazette 2024) as a classic example of digital platform internationalisation failures. After Getir became a market leader in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bloomberg 2023), it extended into 12 markets across Europe and North America within two years. However, the company terminated all international operations by early 2024 (Reuters 2024). This case study elucidates the disruptive effects of temporal compression on a company's valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) resource development (Barney 1991) and dynamic capabilities, such as market sensing (Teece et al. 1997).

The findings of this study offer actionable insights for key stakeholders engaged in the expansion of digital startups into international markets. For founders, the findings propose a phase-based international market entry strategy supported with well-defined capability development milestones. For investors, the results suggest a focus on sustainability metrics together with growth targets in performance assessments, whereas the results indicate that policymakers should develop regulatory frameworks addressing the unique challenges of digital platform scaling.

The structure of this study is as follows. Key existing literature is reviewed in Section 2; the methodology is outlined in Section 3. Section 4 discusses the study's theoretical and practical implications. The last section (Section 5) highlights the limitations of the study and directions for future research.

2 Literature Review

Rapid global scaling has driven the success of many digital startups, yet this same approach can paradoxically lead to their failure. Traditional internationalisation theories (e.g., Johanson and Vahlne 2009), which emphasise gradual market learning, cannot adequately explain why the fastest-scaling digital platforms often fail first. Although research indicates that startup growth timelines have compressed from years to months (Autio et al. 2018; Banalieva and Dhanaraj 2019), our theoretical understanding of how speed reshapes internationalisation processes still remains underdeveloped.

This temporal compression¹ develops fundamental tensions that are most effectively understood through the complementary lenses of the RBV and dynamic capabilities theory. According to Barney's (1991) RBV theory, sustained competitive advantage is derived from VRIN resources. However, rapid expansion can erode VRIN resources. Digital startups, in particular those that pursue internationalisation aggressively, frequently become 'hollow firms' that, in practice, cannot compete within the institutional nuances of foreign markets (Buckley and Casson 2020). In a local market, certain resources, such as locally optimised algorithms or centralised decision-making systems, may be valuable; however, when these are transmitted to foreign markets without sufficient time to adapt, they can become liabilities. Dynamic capabilities theory provides a complementary perspective that focuses on a company's ability to sense resources in unsettled environments and to seize and reconfigure them in these contexts (Teece et al. 1997). Dynamic capabilities theory highlights a structural vulnerability in founder-led startups: namely, although centralised decision making enables rapid initial scaling, it can increase what O'Reilly and Tushman (2013) termed 'adaptive inertia'. Adaptive inertia suppresses the decentralised responsiveness needed to succeed in varied regulatory and cultural contexts. In this way, the same governance frameworks that facilitate success domestically may constrain international adaptation.

The aforementioned theoretical challenges are compounded by the cultural and institutional dimensions of rapid internationalisation. If startups are forced to replicate domestic templates in foreign markets rather than develop localised

¹ We distinguish between *temporal compression*, *time compression* and *temporal-cultural compression*. *Temporal compression*, as established in the literature, refers broadly to the accelerated timelines characteristic of rapid internationalisation. *Time compression diseconomies* refer specifically to concepts concerning the costs of accelerating resource development (Dierickx and Cool 1989). *Temporal-cultural compression* is our specific theoretical construct, which is defined as *the systematic corrosion of an enterprise's ability for cultural learning and contextual adaptation that arises when rapid scaling needs curtail the required time available for deep understanding and responding to host market cultural and institutional needs*.

approaches due to temporal constraints, then what Kostova and Roth (2002) referred to as ‘institutional duality’ – the tension between home and host-country business practices – becomes intense. These challenges are further intensified by cultural friction, which Beugelsdijk et al. (2018) defined as the misalignment between local consumer preferences and standardised business practices.

In recent years, researchers (e.g., Autio et al. 2021) have attempted to link these perspectives to conceptualise the intersection of cultural adaptation and temporal pressure as a phenomenon in which rapid scaling leads to a systematic preference for speed over contextual learning. Nevertheless, key gaps in the literature remain. In particular, research has generally conducted isolated investigations of cultural barriers, temporal pressures and capability erosion; this has led to a lack of understanding of the mechanisms through which these factors interact to hinder international expansion. Building on this foundation, this study focuses on two interconnected research questions:

- 1) How do internal dynamics shape organisational capability development during global expansion?
- 2) What external factors determine startups’ failures in foreign markets?

3 Research Methodology

In line with Eisenhardt and Graebner’s (2007) framework for theory-building research, we followed a qualitative case study design as this methodology enables deep exploration of complex processes to generate new theoretical insights (Yin 2018), whilst responding to calls for more process-driven studies in international business (Autio et al. 2021).

Getir, a Turkish rapid-delivery startup valued at US\$12 billion (Retail Gazette 2024), was selected as the focal case for three reasons. First, the company is an example of a digital platform that has pursued hyper-fast scaling or ‘blitzscaling’ (Hoffman and Yeh 2018) in distant international markets. This company expanded into 12 countries within two years, and this extreme example of temporal compression allowed us to investigate how rapid global growth destabilises resource building and capability development. Second, the research team contacted senior employees who worked at Getir during the rapid growth phase (2020–2022) and retrenchment period (2023–2024), which provided a longitudinal perspective on capability erosion. Third, Getir’s withdrawal from international markets allowed an exploration of failure mechanisms in real time, thus circumventing survivor bias (Coad 2014) and the sharing of post-exit reflections. This rationale is consistent with Stake’s (1995) criteria for selecting instrumental case studies, where the chosen case

is used to elaborate broader phenomena: in our case, the risks of rapid internationalisation.

3.1 Data Collection and Triangulation

We followed a purposive sampling technique to select participants who had first-hand association with Getir’s international growth initiatives to ensure reliable findings. The sample comprised eight senior employees, with company tenures ranging from two to seven years and an average of nine years of industry experience across diverse functional departments (Table 1). Only participants who had held senior positions that provided insights into Getir’s international strategy, such as market directors and product leads, and those who had worked at Getir during the expansion and retrenchment periods (2020–2023) were recruited. This ensured direct exposure to the company’s scaling efforts, the associated challenges and their consequences. Employees who lacked a longitudinal perspective were excluded with the exception of a software engineer (P5), whose expertise was considered valuable despite a shorter tenure at Getir.

Theoretical saturation was achieved after six interviews, which is consistent with Guest et al.’s (2006) thresholds for qualitative rigour. Two additional interviews confirmed data adequacy, with negative case analysis (Charmaz 2014) validating that no new codes or contradictions emerged.

Table 1: Participant background information.

ID	Role/position	Industry experience (years)	Company tenure (years)	Primary role
P1	Senior Manager	12	5	Strategic planning
P2	Operations Lead	8	4	Logistics management
P3	Marketing Director	10	3	Market strategy
P4	Product Development Lead	7	6	Product innovation
P5	Software Engineer	6	2	Software development
P6	Senior HR Specialist	9	4	Talent acquisition
P7	Finance Manager	15	7	Financial planning
P8	Customer Success Manager	5	3	Customer relations

We conducted all interviews online via Microsoft Teams during June and July 2024. Each interview lasted approximately 30 min. All interviews were conducted in the participants' native Turkish language and audio-recorded. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed by a bilingual researcher, who also translated interviews into English. To ensure semantic accuracy, we applied back-translation verification (Brislin 1970), where key sections were re-translated back into Turkish and compared with the original transcripts.

Interview data were triangulated with several external media sources to improve the credibility of the findings. The external sources were grouped into financial, media and regulatory coverage. In the context of financial documentation, we reviewed Getir's financial reports and investor presentations from 2020 to 2024 to confirm market performance claims and validate interview data on strategic decisions and financial pressures. For media coverage, we reviewed reports from trade and financial press sources, such as Bloomberg (2023, 2024), Business of Apps (2025), CNBC (2024), TechCrunch (2022, 2024) and Retail Gazette (2024). We also reviewed sector-specific outlets reports, such as Grocery Gazette (2024), DutchNews (2022, 2023) and NL Times (2023, 2024), which focused on Getir's expansion trajectory, operational challenges and market withdrawal.

For regulatory documentation, regulatory actions and compliance difficulties in key markets were reviewed to cross-reference with the interviewees' descriptions of institutional obstacles. In the Netherlands, DutchNews (2022) reported a €20,000 fine for violating Amsterdam planning laws, NL Times (2023) documented a ban on under-16 delivery drivers citing safety concerns, and DutchNews (2023) documented the closure of dark stores following city council zoning disputes.

In France, Gigpedia (2023) reported on bankruptcy proceedings that affected 1,800 employees, as well as the government's reclassification of dark stores as warehouses. In Germany, The Local (2024) reported on Getir's market withdrawal and labour disputes, while Tech.eu (2024) documented the closure of Berlin-based Gorillas, which led to 1,800 warehouse workers losing their jobs. In the UK, Grocery Gazette (2024) and The Grocer (2022) documented closures of dark stores, workforce reductions and difficulties associated with the sustainability of the rapid-delivery model. The UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (2022) published employment status guidance that impacted gig economy workers, including Getir's. The emerging themes were cross-referenced against the abovementioned external sources. Interview narratives were retained if corroborated by one or more external sources or if other participants independently confirmed similar information.

3.2 Data Analysis

We followed Gioia et al.'s (2013) qualitative data analysis methodology to transform raw data into theoretical insights. Interview transcripts were manually coded line-by-line using colour-coded annotations (Miles and Huberman 1994), which led to the production of themes, such as centralisation paradox, temporal-cultural compression, strategic myopia and operational strain. Subsequently, we linked the emerging themes with the established theoretical frameworks of dynamic capabilities theory (Teece 2017) and Barney's (1991) RBV theory to contextualise our findings.

Dynamic capabilities theory (Teece 2017) informed our interpretation of strategic rigidity (resistance to adapting decision-making processes), by explaining constrictions in sensing and seizing market opportunities, while RBV (Barney 1991) clarified founder-centric governance (concentration of authority in founding leadership), revealing conflicts between resource orchestration and adaptability. We created codes for interrelated themes using constant comparative analysis (Charmaz 2014) and this iterative approach revealed four overarching themes: (1) the centralisation paradox, (2) temporal-cultural compression, (3) strategic myopia and (4) operational strain. These themes are further discussed in detail in Subsections 3.2.1 to 3.2.4.

3.2.1 Theme 1: Centralisation Paradox

The first theme, centralisation paradox, which emerged from the qualitative data reflects systemic pressures between centralised governance and adaptive flexibility when operating in international markets. This tension validates how hierarchical decision making in large startup structures can systematically erode organisational capabilities under temporal compression. This finding aligns with the study's first research question to understand how internal dynamics shape organisational capability development during international expansion.

The participants consistently described patterns of centralised decision making across operations, such as the practice of paternalistic management styles restricting local autonomy (P5) and overwhelming dependence on boss-driven approvals that led to operational bottlenecks (P7). Similarly, structural rigidity, such as the mandatory requirement of executive approval for regular decisions (P2) and contradictions between an apparently flat hierarchy and actual hierarchical control (P1), further hampered international market adaptation. Getir's transformation into a hierarchy-based firm (P3) strengthened the decision-making authority and thus worsened its organisational inefficiencies (see Figure 1 for detailed excerpts).

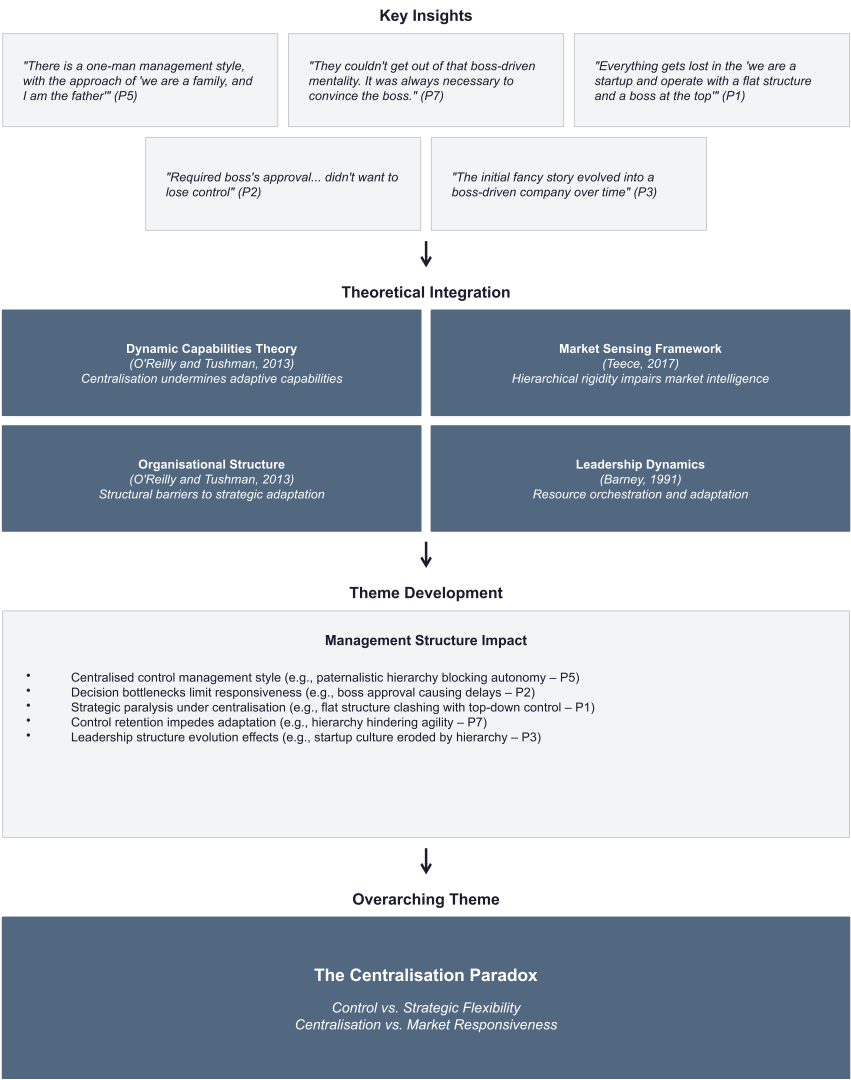


Figure 1: The centralisation paradox.

Media reports also corroborated these centralisation challenges. For example, TechCrunch (2022) reported that Getir's management structure comprised 32,000 employees worldwide, with the company cutting 14 % of staff as it struggled with operational inefficiencies that mainly stemmed from its centralised decision making. Furthermore, a Grocery Gazette (2024) report highlighted that Getir's rapid international expansion was hampered by over-expansion and a lack of local market

autonomy, with the enterprise having depleted cash reserves based on centralised acquisition strategies.

Although centralised governance operations initially boosted the Turkish market, this model was incompatible with Europe's regulatory and market requirements. This scenario is supported by RBV theory, which explains how the firm's founder-centric decision making, which was initially an advantage, became a liability when scaling up was accelerated, and ultimately led to temporal compression (Barney 1991). Similarly, drawing on dynamic capabilities theory, the concept of 'adaptive inertia' proposed by O'Reilly and Tushman (2013) explains how centralisation limited the company's ability to sense and seize new markets. Getir's centralised authority prevented an effective response to diverse institutional demands, which led to strategic paralysis and market misalignment.

The centralisation paradox theme advances our theoretical understanding in two ways. First, it extends RBV theory by representing how temporal pressures reshape resource adaptability, especially in a digital startup context where algorithmic rigidity clashes with institutional heterogeneity (Banalieva and Dhanaraj 2019). Second, the centralisation paradox enhances dynamic capabilities theory by identifying centralised control as a key deterrent to achieving adaptability in founder-led startups. The findings therefore support decentralised governance frameworks, which allow operational consistency at the local level, along with strategic gradual expansion internationally.

As shown in Figure 1, the centralisation paradox theme combines empirical evidence with theoretical concepts to demonstrate how excessive centralisation reduces strategic flexibility and limits wider market adaptability.

3.2.2 Theme 2: Temporal-Cultural Compression

Thematic analysis revealed the second major theme, temporal-cultural compression, which represented fundamental tensions between speed priorities and cultural adaptation requirements when scaling up in international markets. Speedy scaling can lead to systematic erosion of contextual understanding and market responsiveness.

Drawing on previous literature, temporal-cultural compression is framed as a distinct theoretical construct that extends beyond related concepts. The construct is differentiable from cultural distance (Beugelsdijk et al. 2018; Tihanyi et al. 2005), institutional duality (Kostova and Roth 2002) and cultural debt (Beugelsdijk et al. 2018) in the following key ways: first, in terms of processual orientation; second, in terms of interactive mechanism; and third, in terms of structural impediment creation. In terms of processual orientation, while cultural distance evaluates static differences between home and host markets, temporal-cultural compression focuses

on the dynamic process of gradual capability erosion over time. In terms of the interactive mechanism, whereas institutional duality centres on tensions between rival institutional logics, temporal-cultural compression shows how time constraints and difficulties of cultural adaptation emerge not as independent but as mutually reinforcing phenomena. Finally, in terms of structural impediment creation, while the accumulation of cultural debt occurs passively, temporal-cultural compression actively hinders contextual learning through resource allocation approaches that prioritise speed over understanding.

The participants described substantial difficulties in adapting to the local cultures in different markets, such as mismatches in delivery expectations between countries (P7) and the failure to apply Turkish operational expertise in European settings (P3) (see Figure 2 for illustrative quotes). Specific challenges included delivery algorithms tailored for Turkish markets conflicting with European consumer preferences (P4), as well as an absence of market understanding (e.g., lack of reliable local user data resulted in flawed market strategies (P5)). Media reports corroborated these cultural adaptation challenges. For example, the *Grocery Gazette* (2024) pointed out that Getir struggled to adapt its Turkish operating model to European consumer preferences, with the company's 'ultra-fast delivery model' failing to resonate with European customers who preferred weekly bulk purchases. According to CNBC (2024), Getir's business model relied on dark stores scattered around major cities, which worked in densely populated Turkish cities but faced challenges in European suburban areas. According to some participants, the company framed these challenges as simple 'accessibility/availability issues', rather than realising that local user expectations were not being met (P8). An understanding of societal norms in European cities was lacking (P1). Moreover, blindly replicating Turkey's model (P4) further worsened these cultural disconnects, particularly as the organisation had no user data for European markets (P5).

Resource culture transferability theory (Kostova and Roth 2002) explains how the cultural context fundamentally limits resource value in new markets. Expertise localisation frameworks (e.g., Felin et al. 2015) further clarify the positive role of market-specific knowledge. The market adaptation view of Cantamessa et al. (2018) can be linked to the temporal-cultural compression theme, which suggests how lack of local market understanding by Getir led to persistent obstacles to successful internationalisation. This theoretical integration is further supported by Kostova and Roth's (2002) institutional duality insights, which specify how strategic cultural oversight can lead to adaptation failures.

Overall, temporal-cultural compression develops our theoretical understanding by proposing that speed priorities fundamentally reshape cultural adaptation capabilities in international expansion. This establishes the critical tension between standardisation and contextualisation, particularly in situations where speed of

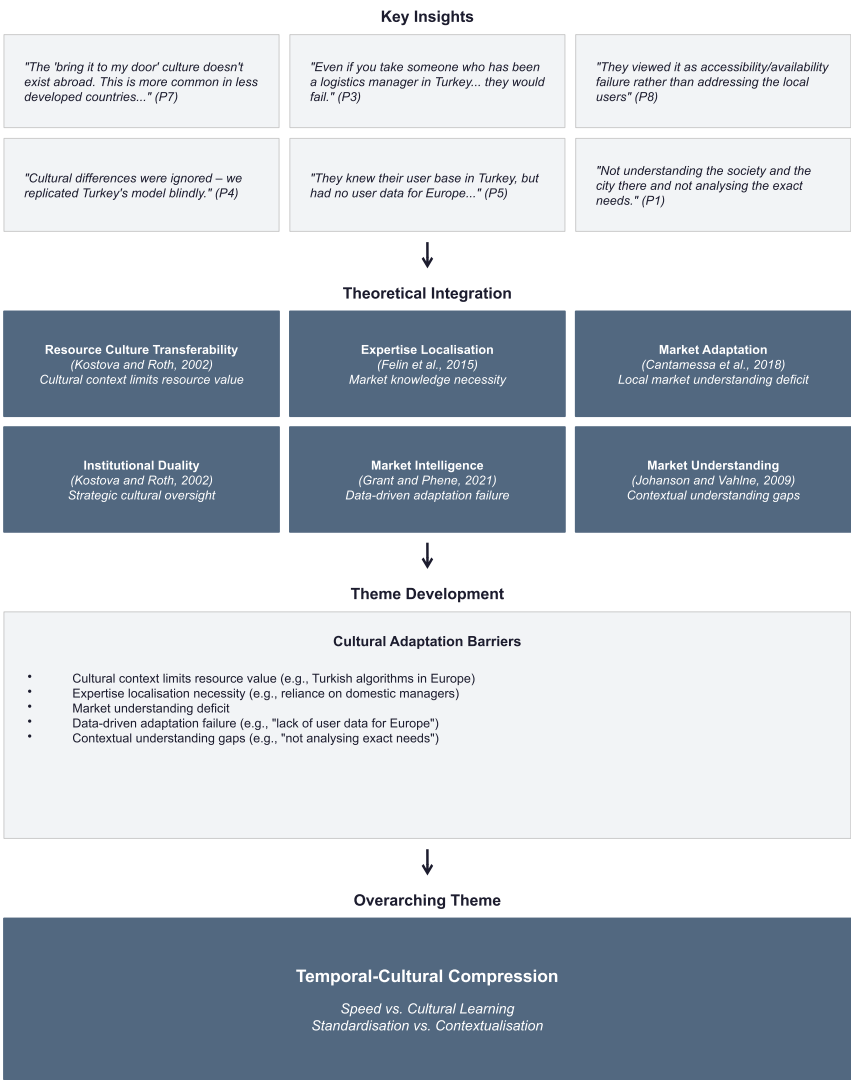


Figure 2: Temporal-cultural compression.

delivery is prioritised over local market understanding, thus suggesting the need for more thoughtful approaches to cultural adaptation in rapid internationalisation expansion.

Figure 2 was derived from the interview data. It maps how pressured timelines can lead to failure to adapt to local culture, and demonstrates the tension between speed versus cultural learning as well as standardisation versus contextualisation.

3.2.3 Theme 3: Strategic Myopia

The third theme, strategic myopia, uncovered a systemic tension between Getir's aggressive growth ambitions and its long-term sustainable strategic development in rapid internationalisation. This tension demonstrates how compression of timelines fundamentally corrodes both strategic planning capabilities and operational sustainability.

The participants observed a recurring mismatch between Getir's aggressive growth plans and its actual strategic planning practices. Examples included a rapidly increasing absence of thorough cost analysis (P2) and an overconfidence in the product's success, which delayed cost-cutting actions until April 2022 (P8) (refer to Figure 3 for representative quotes). Participants' views are also supported by financial press coverage. For example, according to TechCrunch (2024), in 2023 Getir earned US\$3.3 bn in revenue, while international markets (US and Europe) represented only 7 % of revenues and consumed disproportionate resources. CNBC (2024) reported that Getir's valuation had plummeted from US\$11.8 bn in March 2022 to US\$2.5 bn in September 2023, which marked a massive decline of nearly 80 %. Business of Apps (2025) also documented Getir's revenue falling from US\$1.1 bn to US\$800 m between 2022 and 2023; it blamed poor strategic oversight. The interview data revealed deficits in strategic planning, such as lacking a visible strategy (P4), and in investment-driven decision making, such as framing expansions as ad hoc investments (P7), which aggravated strategic challenges. The lack of a well-thought-out strategy behind expansions (P1) further disintegrated strategic coherence and thus intensified operational inefficiencies. For example, prioritising aggressive growth led to simultaneous market entries without appropriate cost analysis, while overconfidence in the product delayed necessary strategic pivots. Drawing on O'Reilly and Tushman's (2013) view, strategic myopia can be explained as constant prioritisation of growth that systematically undermines sustainability, while success trap dynamics (Zahra et al. 2000) contextualises how excessive product-centric approaches led to a form of strategic blindness.

Additionally, growth motivation frameworks (e.g., Autio et al. 2018) clarify how investment-driven decision making, rather than being a strategically grounded move, further erodes effective planning, particularly when speed is given priority over sustainability. This theme enriches our theoretical understanding by illustrating how the continuous pursuit of growth during rapid international expansion deteriorates enterprises' strategic planning abilities. The theme also underscores the major tensions between rapid growth and sustainable strategy, and between speed and prolonged resilience. These insights challenge assumptions about aggressive international expansion strategies, particularly when firms are driven by heavy investment logic as opposed to strategic foresight.

Figure 3 displays the development of a misalignment between growth and strategy, which was aggravated by the prioritisation of growth over long-term

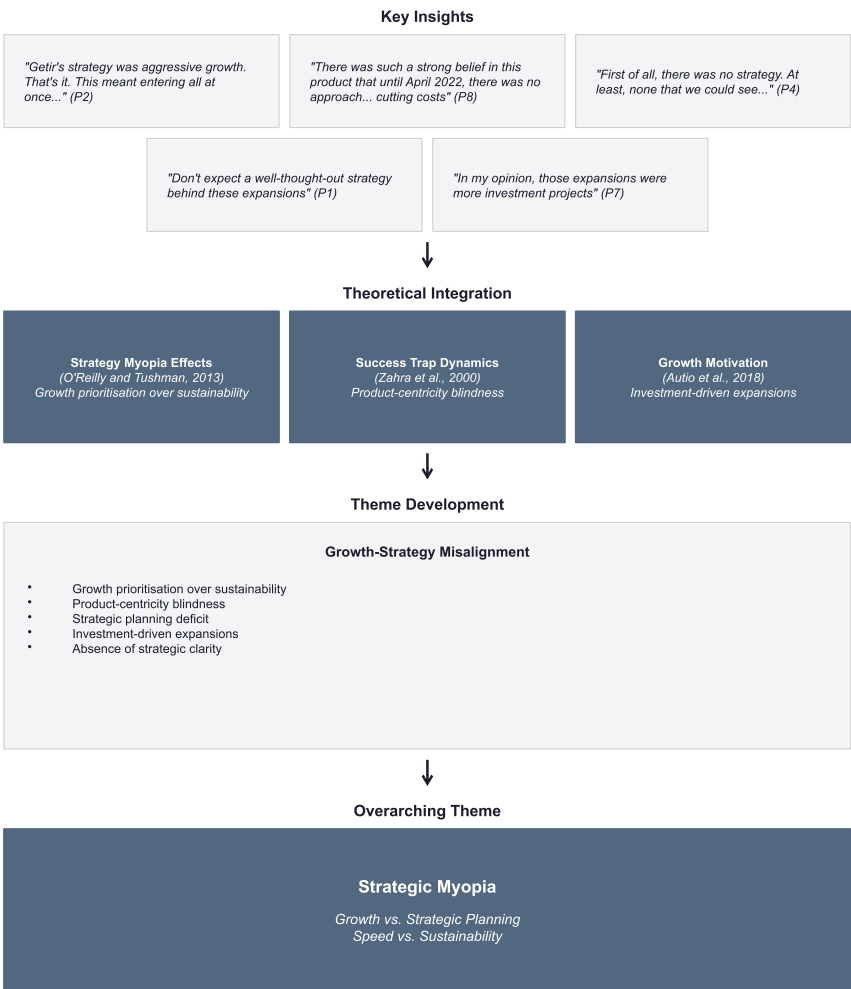


Figure 3: Strategic myopia.

sustainability, a focus on product-centric approaches, deficits in strategic planning, investment-driven expansion and a lack of clear strategic direction.

3.2.4 Theme 4: Operational Strain

The final theme emerged as operational strain, which captured the inherent tensions between ultra-fast international expansion and the sustainable allocation of organisational resources. The operational strain theme reveals how fast-paced

scaling-induced temporal pressure exaggerated resource depletion, and simultaneously eroded the organisation’s capability to develop the resilience required for success in new markets.

Participants highlighted practices lacking sustainability across markets, including local operational erosion during European expansion (P1) and unsustainable haste in scaling efforts (P2). Workforce localisation barriers, such as staffing gaps in institutionally distinct markets (P6) and regulatory missteps, for example, legal oversights due to agility prioritisation (P4), intensified the pressures (see Figure 4).

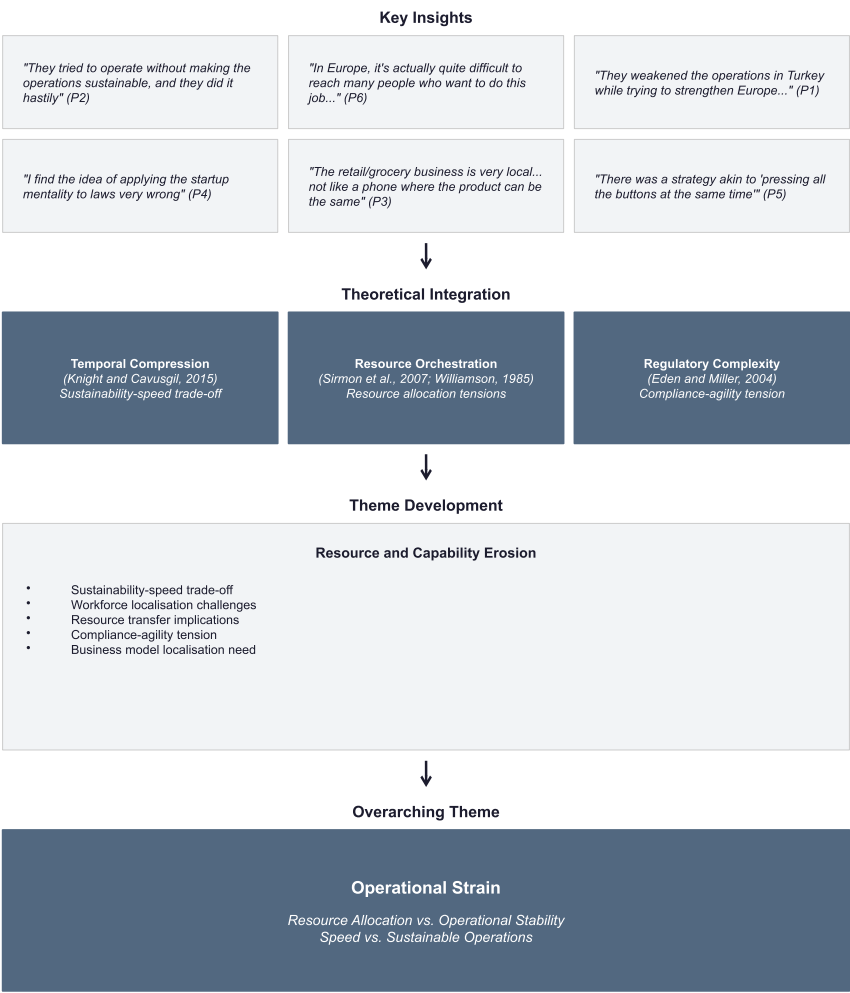


Figure 4: Operational strain.

Regulatory encounters documented across various European markets corroborated participants' views. For example, the *NL Times* (2023) documented how the Dutch government banned children under 16 from working as delivery drivers for rapid grocery services such as Getir; it cited safety concerns about rushing through traffic. In France, Getir faced bankruptcy proceedings, with 1,800 employees affected, because the French government announced that the dark stores used by Getir should be considered warehouses rather than official stores, thereby causing regulatory conflicts (Gigapedia 2023). In addition, *DutchNews* (2022) reported that Getir received a €20,000 penalty for breaching planning laws in Amsterdam, with the court finding that its dark stores caused nuisance to the local community due to extended operating hours and more frequent deliveries. *DutchNews* (2023) further reported that Getir closed five dark stores in Amsterdam and pulled out of six Dutch cities; it cited endless discussions with city councils about zoning laws following noise, waste and traffic complaints from local residents. Simultaneous market activation (P5) further fragmented resource orchestration and exacerbated operational inefficiencies. For example, algorithmic governance that was optimised for Turkish urban density clashed with European suburban geographies (see Figure 4), while standardised pricing models ignored localised consumer expectations (P3), thereby eroding customer retention.

Resource orchestration theory (Sirmon et al. 2007) explains how fragmented capabilities arise from unfocused scaling, while transaction cost economics (Williamson 1985) contextualises inefficiencies in institutionally distant markets. Getir's algorithmic standardisation, used to reduce costs, inflated operational expenses owing to cultural misalignment, which is consistent with the concept of time compression diseconomies (Dierickx and Cool 1989). Organisational learning theory (Levitt and March 1988) explains how shortened learning cycles hinder an organisation's capability development; Getir's failure to enter markets gradually prevented it from adapting to France's specific labour regulations or Germany's consumer preferences, thus resulting in cultural debt and eventual market exits.

The operational strain theme demonstrates how tension between speed and sustainable operations, and tension between resource allocation and operational stability can destabilise international expansion. Figure 4 synthesises this analysis and illustrates that resource and capability erosion happen when: accelerated growth is favoured over sustainability, local workforce adaptation and resource transfer are challenging, regulatory agility pressures are high, and localisation of business models is lacking.

4 Discussion

This study explored the rapid internationalisation paradox of organisational adaptation struggles and capability erosion through a case study of the digital startup Getir. Thematic analysis revealed four interlinked themes (centralisation paradox, temporal-cultural compression, strategic myopia and operational strain) that together explain how speedy scaling systematically disrupts international success. Figure 5 shows an integrated cycle that demonstrates how these mechanisms (themes) interact to create a cascade of failures, with temporal compression as the main catalyst. Figure 5 shows that the centralisation paradox limits local responsiveness, which, in turn, increases temporal-cultural compression; adaptation failures arise from cultural misalignment, which contributes to strained operations; operational failures diminish strategic foresight through resource depletion and narrowed focus; and the perception that centralised control is required is reinforced by short-sighted strategic decision making. Solid arrows in Figure 5 indicate causal relationships, whereas dashed arrows designate reinforcing feedback loops. Market withdrawal results from this self-reinforcing cycle.

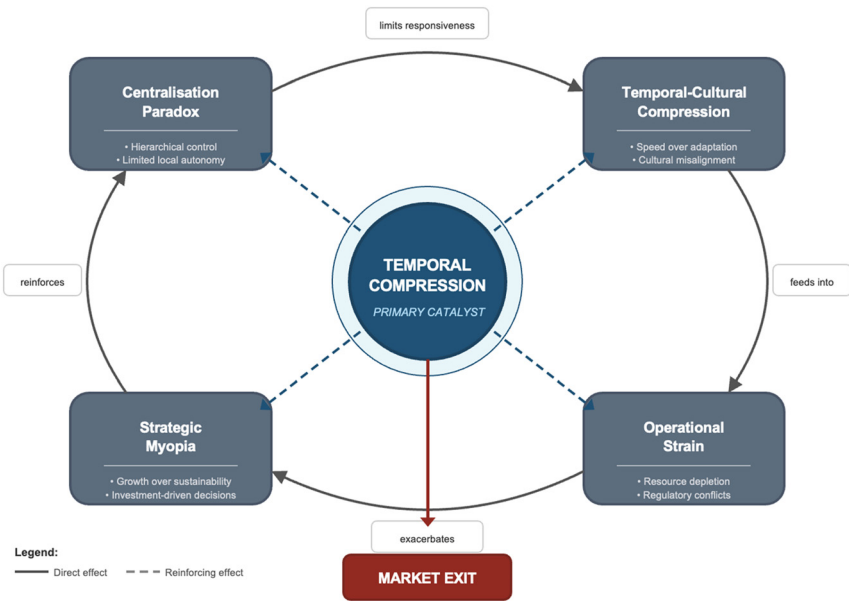


Figure 5: Integrated cycle of temporal compression effects on international expansion.

4.1 Theoretical Implications

The above findings elucidate how temporal compression reshapes resource adaptability and strategic agility, revealing important complementarities and tensions. RBV explains how VRIN resources lose value under temporal pressure, whereas dynamic capabilities theory stresses why businesses fail to reconfigure these resources effectively. However, tensions develop when considering resource accumulation (RBV's focus) against resource reconfiguration (dynamic capabilities' emphasis) under extreme time constraints. The findings suggest that temporal compression forces enterprises into a paradoxical position where they must simultaneously build and deploy resources without adequate time for either process. Based on O'Reilly and Tushman's (2013) concept of adaptive inertia, this study's centralisation paradox analysis elaborates how founder-centric control in rapid international expansion leads to barriers to market responsiveness. This is in line with Verbeke and Hutzschenreuter's (2021) 'dark side' of digital globalisation view, which demonstrates how digital firms overestimate the non-location-boundedness of their firm-specific advantages and underestimate the need for novel resource recombination during internationalisation. Importantly, rigid structures, which were initially a source of competitive advantage, such as algorithmic standardisation, prevent local adaptation and become a liability.

The temporal-cultural compression theme extends Kostova and Roth's (2002) institutional duality framework by adding a new theoretical dimension. Studies such as Felin et al. (2015) have separately explored cultural adaptation and the development of market-specific knowledge (Cantamessa et al. 2018), but the present research explores how time constraints force these processes to interact in a dysfunctional manner. This tension is particularly pronounced in digital platforms, where algorithms tailored for the home market are not sufficiently flexible to adapt to local norms in foreign markets.

The strategic myopia theme expands on success trap dynamics (Zahra et al. 2000) by showing how accelerated growth pressures, combined with founder-centric governance, systematically impede a startup's strategic flexibility. This builds on growth motivation frameworks (Autio et al. 2021) by demonstrating how compressed timelines distort the relationship between long-term planning and responsiveness to local conditions. These pressures are particularly severe in digital platform-based companies, where scale metrics often overshadow the need for market-specific capabilities.

Finally, this study's operational strain analysis expands on resource orchestration theory (Sirmon et al. 2007) by illustrating how temporal compression disturbs resource deployment across various institutional contexts.

4.2 Practical Implications

The findings of the study provide actionable recommendations for key stakeholders engaged in rapid international expansion. Founders should prioritise the following four practices. First, founders should follow phase-based market entry while setting up well-established capability milestones. This approach should include establishing well-defined benchmarks for operational maturity, local cultural understanding and financial sustainability; these should be achieved before moving to other markets. Second, founders should establish local decision-making thresholds that enable country directors to operate autonomously, within well-defined limits, for example, in terms of marketing budget allocations, local partnership agreements and pricing changes within defined ranges. Third, founders should provide an adequate cultural immersion period in new markets and, before aggressively driving customer acquisition, should prioritise algorithm adaptation, refining operational processes and validating their value proposition. Finally, founders should create dual reporting systems with periodic forums, thereby enabling country managers to provide market-specific insights directly to senior leadership and safeguarding against information barriers arising from centralisation.

Investors should consider the following practices. First, when evaluating portfolio companies, assessing market entry readiness, tracking cultural adaptation progress and assessing operational stability, investors should include sustainability metrics alongside growth targets rather than focusing solely on customer acquisition metrics. Second, investors should organise investment tranches based on proven capability milestones, instead of focusing on the speed of geographic expansion. Finally, investors should assess governance structures for their capacity to adapt; this is key to understanding the extent to which portfolio companies can achieve sufficient decentralisation to respond effectively to local market conditions.

For policymakers, although this study's findings show that the main drivers of Getir's international failures were internal factors within the organisation, the reported regulatory challenges highlight the following topics for consideration: first, developing regulatory frameworks for digital platforms across jurisdictions that have a greater level of coordination; and, second, proactively guiding emerging business models to limit the uncertainty of compliance for companies undergoing rapid scaling.

Taken together, these recommendations suggest that 'blitzscaling' strategies for international expansion are not a reliable path to sustainable growth. Instead, companies should shift towards culturally sensitive, measured approaches to international expansion that balance both temporal imperatives and the systematic development of capability.

5 Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this single-case qualitative study provides depth in its theoretical insights, it also has inherent limitations. The context of ultra-fast grocery delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside Getir's specific mix of organisational attributes, means that the identified mechanisms and their mode of manifesting may not be generalisable to other industries, types of organisations and institutional environments. Another limitation of the qualitative design, despite its ability to identify more thoughtful theoretical mechanisms, is its inability to quantify the relative strength of these mechanisms and their interactions.

These limitations offer the potential for future research. For example, comparative studies across various types of digital platforms, from B2B SaaS to ridesharing to fintech, to investigate boundary conditions for the identified mechanisms and to uncover universal versus context-specific factors would be valuable. Research in this area could explore how different organisational structures, leadership styles and institutional environments influence the relationships identified in this study's integrated model.

From a methodological perspective, further studies could establish quantitative metrics to assess temporal-cultural compression across markets and measure its relative impact on strategic agility and resource value. The value of conducting studies with larger sample sizes is also worth highlighting, as such studies could examine the proposed relationships between centralisation, temporal-cultural compression, strategic myopia, and operational strain, as well as moderating factors such as previous international experience, governance structures and market characteristics.

Lastly, by undertaking experimental or quasi-experimental research, researchers could examine whether certain practices have the potential to reduce the negative impacts of temporal-cultural compression, such as staged market entry strategies, extended cultural immersion periods or decentralised governance structures. Such intervention-oriented research would complement this research and bridge the gap between our theoretical contributions and practical implementation by offering evidence-based guidance for digital platforms engaged in rapid international expansion.

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