This work is dedicated to Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) internationalisation and strategic orientations. In recent years, these two factors have become prominent as being levers for SME competitiveness and performance in an increasingly global marketplace. So far, SME business-level strategising when approaching foreign markets has been described as essentially unplanned and reactive or at best opportunistic. Only recently, in the field of international entrepreneurship, has the so-called entrepreneurial orientation, a combination of proactive, innovative and risk-taking behaviour, been identified as key influencer of fast and broad internationalisation. Here we ask whether any other strategic orientation constructs such as customer, market, and sales orientation described in the field of strategic management and marketing, do have an impact on internationalisation success and patterns.

An empirical analysis of 150 Italian SMEs uncovers the presence of differentiated strategic types, their profile and their particular characteristics considered crucial for International performance. Possessing and developing a business strategy and related competencies proves to be a critical success factor for Italian SMEs going abroad, regardless of industry, company size or company age.

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THEME AREA: Economics and statistics

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