

Managerial mindset effects on international marketing strategy adaptation decisions

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates how managerial implicit theories—people's implicit beliefs about the malleability of human characteristics—affect international marketing strategy adaptation decisions among B2B exporting managers. Building on mindset theory and the international marketing literature, we hypothesize that managers with a growth mindset will opt for higher levels of marketing strategy adaptation while fixed-mindset managers, who believe in the immutability of human traits, will likely standardize across markets. Across two experimental studies that manipulate mindset, we test these hypotheses and their underlying mechanism and boundary conditions. The results of Study 1 show that mindset affects lifestyle adaptation intentions for individuals in general, thus establishing the baseline relationship. Study 2 finds that business-to-business international marketing managers exposed to a growth (fixed) mindset are indeed more likely to adapt (standardize) their international marketing strategy toward foreign markets. We further show that mindset affects ambiguity tolerance, which in turn affects adaptation decisions, and that the effect of mindset is dampened (strengthened) under low (high) psychic distance conditions. This research enriches the international marketing literature by showing a managerially relevant antecedent of international marketing strategy adaptation decisions and extends implicit theory by showing a behavioral outcome of mindset.

1. Introduction

International marketers are constantly faced with challenges in cross-border activities, and these challenges intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, which brought major disruptions to almost every firm and market across the world (Griffith & Yalcinkaya, 2022). Although digitalization has considerably facilitated international activity (Katsikeas, Leonidou, & Zeriti, 2019), traditional challenges such as the diversity beyond national borders remain evergreen (Grinstein, Hewett, & Riefler, 2022). Business-to-business (B2B) firms seeking opportunities for international expansion and profit growth oftentimes need to make strategic decisions about the degree of adaptation of their international marketing mix (Lee & Griffith, 2019) for the heterogeneous markets they are aiming to enter (Powers & Loyka, 2007). These industrial markets, unlike consumer markets, are characterized by a small number of buyers that have different needs and purchase big product volume (Håkansson & Östberg, 1975). Therefore, international B2B marketing adaptation decisions are critical to craft and optimize marketing strategies and maximize performance outcomes.

Despite international marketing strategy standardization versus adaptation being one of the central discussions in international marketing (Griffith, 2021), research has continually called for more up-to-date and sophisticated studies (Mandler, Sezen, Chen, & Özsoy, 2021), but surprisingly few studies have actually focused specifically on B2B organizations (e.g., Navarro-García, Peris-Oritz, & Barrera-Barrera, 2016; Viio & Grönroos, 2016). Marketing strategy standardization refers to consistency in the application of the same marketing processes and programs across national and international markets (Jain, 1989; Levitt, 1983) and is enabled by the continuous global movement of people, technological evolution, and homogenization of consumer needs (Griffith, 2010). Conversely, marketing strategy adaptation is related to consideration of environmental factors in a foreign market to design and apply tailored marketing strategies (Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003).

The role of managerial judgment and decision-making ability is crucial in international marketing research and no longer relies solely on purely normative or objective assessments (Hultman, Katsikeas, & Robson, 2011). Given that international marketing decisions ultimately stem from managerial judgment, managerial decision processes

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undoubtedly hold a key position, with the important role of the manager as a key decision-maker consistently highlighted in the literature (Aharoni, Tihanyi, & Connelly, 2011; Cavusgil & Godiwalla, 1982). Macro-level factors are a useful starting point to understand and predict strategic decisions, but explaining when, how, and why individual-level factors shape such decisions in an international marketing domain is also of particular importance (Diamantopoulos & Kakkos, 2007; Foss & Pedersen, 2019; Kumar, Borah, Sharma, & Akella, 2021).

In this research, we examine the effect of an individual-level managerial factor—namely, mindset—on international marketing strategy adaptation decisions among B2B firms. A widely accepted notion is that decisions are powered by decision-makers' mindset. Therefore, drawing on mindset theory, we aim to experimentally investigate whether, how, and under what conditions mindset affects B2B managers' decisions about international marketing strategy adaptation.

Mindset, rooted in implicit theories, refers to a priori beliefs that people hold about human qualities (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). The research stream on mindset has traditionally focused on and compared two implicit theories or mindsets: entity theory or a fixed mindset and incremental theory or a growth mindset. Under a fixed mindset, people believe that human characteristics are fixed, whereas under a growth mindset, people view human characteristics as malleable (Plaks, 2017).

Mindset is a compelling tool that has helped researchers understand and evaluate a broad spectrum of behavioral and psychological responses (Jain & Weiten, 2020). During the past 30 years, research on mindset across different disciplines has centered on judgment, behavior, and information processing (Murphy & Dweck, 2016). A few studies have also investigated the wider influence of mindset in innovation (e.g., Ringberg, Reihlen, & Rydén, 2019), branding (e.g., Carnevale, Yucel-Aybat, & Kachersky, 2018; Mandal, Sahay, Terron, & Mahto, 2021), and internationalization decisions (e.g., Jiang, Ananthram, & Li, 2018; Lazaris & Freeman, 2018), while the entrepreneurial mindset in an international setting has been under-research (e.g., Andersson & Evangelista, 2006; Felício, Caldeirinha, Rodrigues, & Kyvik, 2013; Harveston, Kedia, & Davis, 2000). Work in consumer psychology has mainly examined mindset in the areas of advertising (e.g., Cinelli & Yang, 2016), charity appeals (e.g., Hsieh & Yucel-Aybat, 2018), and luxury advertising (e.g., Kwon, Seo, & Ko, 2016). Research has also investigated the role of mindset in personality (e.g., Burgoyne, Hambrick, Moser, & Burt, 2018), product-harm crisis (e.g., Yin, Yu, & Poon, 2016), and financial decision-making (e.g., Rai & Lin, 2019).

Despite the importance of fixed and growth mindsets as drivers of human behavior and motivation and their ability to address real-world managerial problems, research on mindsets in the marketing management field is still at an early stage (John & Park, 2016; Rucker & He, 2016). Research has thus begun calling (e.g., Murphy & Dweck, 2016) for managerial mindset studies, as they can provide rich insights into the design of marketing strategies and provide guidance when entering new product categories and markets. Moreover, given the tradition in the literature on international marketing strategy and B2B marketing to overly rely on cross-sectional research, with all the shortcomings such approaches entail, establishing actual cause-and-effect relationships is also a pressing need in this domain (Viglia, Zafarian, & Ulqinaku, 2021).

To address the aforementioned gaps, we draw on mindset theory to experimentally investigate the effect of managerial mindsets in B2B international marketing settings. More specifically, we assess whether growth-mindset managers are more prone to adapt their marketing strategy to foreign market ventures and fixed-mindset managers are more apt to standardize their international marketing strategy. To test these assumptions, including the mediating mechanism and boundary conditions, we conduct two experimental studies in which we manipulate mindset. Study 1 reveals a significant effect of mindset on general lifestyle adaptation intentions for individuals who are about to move to a new country, thereby establishing the baseline theoretical relationship. In Study 2, we take a B2B marketing manager perspective and find that

international B2B marketing managers in the growth-mindset condition develop higher marketing strategy adaptation intentions when presented with a particular export venture scenario than those assigned to the fixed-mindset condition. Moreover, we answer specific research calls (Molner, Prabhu, & Yadav, 2019) and uncover ambiguity tolerance as the underlying mechanism of the effects to show how mindset operates under different levels of psychic distance. Table 1 presents the aim of our research, as well how each study addresses part of the overarching goal.

This research extends the B2B and international marketing literature streams in three ways. First, implicit theory offers valuable insights into the effects of fixed and growth mindsets on adaptation decisions in international marketing. As Table 2 shows, recent empirical research examining marketing strategy adaptation outcomes has primarily focused on environmental and internal characteristics rather than the individual decision-maker. In our study, we move away from the traditional external micro- and macro-business environment perspectives by zooming in on the B2B manager's decision-maker role.

Second, our experimental evidence sheds light on the reasons behind managerial decision-making in a realistic business environment by introducing a psychological mechanism to a B2B international marketing context: ambiguity tolerance. Table 2 shows a distinct lack of mediating mechanisms under investigation, despite international adaptation strategies being a prolific research stream over the last half-decade. To our knowledge, our study is the first attempt to examine a mechanism that mediates the effect of mindset on marketing adaptation intentions in B2B settings.

Third, we further strengthen our findings by examining interesting boundary conditions drawn from the psychic distance literature. This literature is replete with conflicting results (Ambos & Håkanson, 2014) and been criticized in terms of its operationalization (Obadia, 2013). In addition, most studies exploring this construct are survey-based (see Table 2) and thus prone to various issues otherwise counterbalanced by experimental data (Viglia et al., 2021). We address these issues by manipulating psychic distance and by employing an experimental research design that better unravels the underlying cause-and-effect relationship.

As Table 2 further reveals, only one empirical study in the last 20 years has focused specifically on B2B companies (Navarro-García et al., 2016); the overwhelming majority of research has focused on either consumer companies, taking a hybrid approach (e.g., Gregory, Karavdic, & Zou, 2007), or declined to disclose the nature of their empirical data (e.g., Assadinia, Boso, Hultman, & Robson, 2019; Magnusson, Westjohn, Semenov, Randrianasolo, & Zdravkovic, 2013; Samiee & Chirapanda, 2019; Sousa & Bradley, 2008). Given that B2B marketing is increasingly relying on international marketing practices to deal with current global challenges and opportunities (Helm & Gritsch, 2014), focusing specially on international B2B firms' challenges is important to determine why some international marketing practices work and others fail in B2B settings (Leonidou & Hultman, 2019). Therefore, in response to calls for B2B research to continuously seek answers to and better explanations of important international B2B phenomena (Katsikeas, 2006) and conduct more sophisticated B2B marketing research (Lilien, 2016), we further offer an important contextual construction with our specific B2B focus in

Table 1
Summary of studies.

	Study 1	Study 2
Overarching aim	To investigate whether, how, and under what conditions mindset affects managers' decisions regarding international marketing strategy adaptation.	
Aim	To investigate the effect of mindset on adaptation decisions among the general population and establish the overall mechanism	To examine the conditions under which mindset affects managers' decisions regarding the level of marketing strategy adaptation
Method	Experiment with lay people	Experiment with B2B managers

Table 2

Past key empirical on antecedents of marketing strategy adaptation in the last 20 years.

Study	Context	Unit of analysis	Methodological approach	Antecedents investigated	Explanatory mechanisms		Strategy variable investigated	Major findings
					Mediators investigated	Moderators investigated		
O' Cass & Julian, 2003	Australian exporters	Export venture	Survey	Firm-specific characteristics, environmental characteristics	–	–	Marketing strategy adaptation	Both firm and environmental characteristics have a significant impact on marketing mix strategy adaptation.
Calantone, Cavusgil, Schmidt, & Shin, 2004	US and S. Korean manufacturers	Export venture	Survey	Marketing organization and practice, business unit experience, environmental similarity	–	–	Product adaptation	Business unit experience positively (negative) affects product adaptation for US (Korea). Environmental similarity increases (decreases) product adaptation for Korea (US).
Lages & Montgomery, 2004	Portuguese SME exporters	Export venture	Survey	Prior performance, firm's exporting commitment, export market competition, export market development	–	–	Marketing strategy adaptation	Export performance affects the degree of adaptation of product, pricing and distribution.
Calantone, Kim, Schmidt, & Cavusgil, 2006	US, Korean and Japanese exporters	Firm	Survey	Firm, industry and market factors	–	–	Product adaptation strategy	Firm (export dependence), industry (industry adaptation) and market (market similarity) factors affect product adaptation strategy across all three countries.
Katsikeas, Samiee, & Theodosiou, 2006	Global UK –based manufacturers	Product (line)	Survey	Macro- and micro-environmental factors	–	–	Marketing strategy standardization	A number of macro and microenvironmental factors are significantly related to marketing strategy standardization.
Gregory et al., 2007	Australian B2B and B2C exporters	Export venture	Survey	Internal and external determinants, e-commerce drivers	–	E-commerce drivers	Marketing strategy standardization	Product online transferability and e-commerce assets increase promotion adaptation. E-commerce drivers moderate the relationship between product uniqueness and promotion adaptation and between e-commerce export experience and product adaptation.
Sousa & Bradley, 2008	Portuguese exporters	Firm	Survey	Environmental characteristics, number of markets, experience	–	–	Price adaptation	Managerial experience and foreign market characteristics influence price adaptation.
Hultman, Robson, & Katsikeas, 2009	Swedish exporters	Export venture	Survey	Macro- and micro-environmental factors, internal factors	–	–	Product adaptation	A variety of macro, microenvironmental, and internal, factors drive product adaptation.
Li, 2010	Chinese exporters	Firm	Survey	Organic structural design: Export coordination, export process control	–	–	Rigid product adaptation decisions	Export coordination and process control mechanisms reduce rigid product adaptation decisions.
Magnusson et al., 2013	U.S. exporters	Individual decision-maker	Survey	Environmental differences	–	Motivational cultural intelligence	Marketing mix adaptations	Motivational cultural intelligence positively moderates the relationship between environmental differences and marketing-mix adaptations.
Navarro-García et al., 2016	Spanish B2B ^a SME exporters	Firm	Survey	Perceived psychic distance	–	Foreign market intelligence	Marketing mix adaptation	Greater psychic distance leads to a higher level of strategic adaptations.
Rao-Nicholson & Khan, 2017	Indian and Chinese firms	Firm	Mixed methods	Brand identity, institutional factors, cultural factors	–	–	Global marketing strategy adaptation and standardization	Institutional factors have the strongest positive effect on the global marketing strategy standardization among emerging-market firms.
Assadina et al., 2019	UK and Chinese exporters	Firm	Quasi-longitudinal survey	Export learning process	–	–	Marketing strategy adaptation	Export learning process is positively linked to marketing strategy adaptation in both UK and China.
Samiee & Chirapanda, 2019	Thai exporters	Product-market venture	Survey	Macro- and microenvironmental influences	–	–	Marketing strategy adaptation	All the macro and microenvironmental characteristics (except for regulatory environment and marketing intermediaries) have a positive effect on marketing strategy adaptation.
Khan, 2020	Pakistani exporters	Firm	Survey	Marketing agility	–	Market complexity	Marketing strategy adaptation	Marketing agility increases marketing program adaptation. The interaction effect of market complexity and marketing agility on marketing program adaptation is negative and significant.
This study	Greek B2B ^a exporters	Individual decision-maker	Experimental vignette methodology	Growth vs. fixed mindset (manipulated)	Ambiguity tolerance	Psychic distance (manipulated)	Marketing strategy adaptation intentions	Growth mindset generates adaptation intentions through ambiguity tolerance. The effect is strengthened under high psychic distance.

Note: B2C = business-to-consumer.

^a Focuses on B2B firms in particular.

conjunction with our study design (Viglia et al., 2021).

In the next section, we outline existing literature on implicit theory and proceed with our conceptual development. We then introduce our methodology and experimental research design, after which we discuss our analysis and results. Next, we present the theoretical contributions and managerial implications. We conclude with limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development

2.1. Defining mindset

Mindset refers to “a psychological orientation that affects the selection, encoding, and retrieval of information; as a result, mindsets drive evaluations, actions, and responses” (Rucker & Galinsky, 2016, p. 161). Prior research shows how mindset shapes motivation (Dweck, 1999) and its effect on different dimensions of human behavior (Jain & Weiten, 2020). Research in the consumer behavior field has also extensively examined the impact of mindset on effort beliefs (e.g., Lam & Zhou, 2020; Yeager et al., 2014; Zeng & Mourali, 2021).

Many important points arise when assessing the intersection between mindset and consumer psychology, in the broader spectrum of psychological literature. For example, the underlying goals that derive from simple to more complex consumer behaviors, such as purchasing a cookbook to making lifetime decisions, can vary significantly depending on an individual’s mindset (Priester & Petty, 2016); specific types of information may become more prominent, motivating, or significant than others (Rucker, 2012). These effects have far-reaching consequences, influencing consumer preferences, information processing, and behavioral choices (Rucker, 2012). For example, the display of inauthenticity in the form of fake smiles align more with an interdependent self-construal, which in turn can influence judgment (Pham, Lechner, & Mathmann, 2022).

Overall, mindsets such as the interdependent self-construal (Ma, Yang, & Mourali, 2014) and fixed and growth mindset are known for their robust, “hard” nature and are considered stable and dispositional factors that govern human behavior and directly affect judgment and evaluation (Rucker & Galinsky, 2016). Conversely, “soft” mindsets, such as smiles, may be largely dependent on boundary conditions, resulting in less generalizable produced effects (Lechner & Mathmann, 2021). Beyond the field of consumer psychology, mindset can offer important insights into the area of international B2B marketing. The study of managerial mindsets can advance knowledge in various decision-making processes, such as adaptation, market entry, product development, brand extension, and marketing-mix decisions (Murphy & Dweck, 2016).

2.2. Views of human nature

2.2.1. Implicit theories

Implicit theory refers to “the implicit conception about the nature of ability” (Dweck & Leggett, 1988, p. 262). In other words, implicit theory captures an individual’s belief that personal abilities and intelligence can or cannot change. The belief of change versus stability in personal traits is a fundamental assumption that defines an individual’s worldview and gives importance and substance to events (Kelly, 1955). The implicit theory model comprises two distinct theories: incremental theory and entity theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

In general, people who align with *incremental theory* accept that intelligence is a dynamic, malleable trait that can be developed over time. A series of studies (e.g., Bandura & Dweck, 1985; Dweck & Bempechat, 1983; Leggett, 1985) have confirmed that individuals who match an incremental profile pursue learning goals and ultimately develop challenge-seeking behaviors to develop and increase their abilities and intelligence (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Thus, when faced with demanding situations or failure, incremental theorists strive to improve

their performance by developing adaptive strategies and exerting effort (Dweck, Chiu, & Hong, 1995).

By contrast, people who endorse *entity theory* hold the belief that intelligence is a static, fixed, and non-malleable trait that remains stable throughout life. Moreover, as a driver of goal orientation, entity theory leads individuals to adopt performance goals to avoid challenging situations and secure favorable judgment of their innate abilities (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). In addition, entity theorists are not willing to exert effort in the face of failure and attribute negative performance to their lack of abilities (Dweck et al., 1995).

2.2.2. Fixed and growth mindset

The entity theory model, which is aligned with the conceptualization of mindset, centers on beliefs that people hold about the malleability of human characteristics (Dweck, 1999) and reflects “an underline psychological process that sets up different cognitive, affective, and behavioral response patterns” (Dweck & Leggett, 1988, p. 256). The terms *growth* and *fixed mindset*, which are commonly used to characterize incremental and entity theorists, respectively, emerged after decades of research on implicit theory (e.g., Dweck, 2006).

Importantly, mindsets can be chronic, directly changed, or situationally activated (Dweck, 1999; Murphy & Dweck, 2016; Rucker & He, 2016). For example, an individual may hold chronic beliefs about the malleability of personal traits and thus has a growth mindset. A growth mindset may also be temporarily induced if, for instance, researchers experimentally manipulate it (Murphy & Dweck, 2016).

In general, people with growth mindsets, which indicate personal growth and development, believe that effort is desirable; by contrast, people with fixed mindsets focus more on the outcome of a given action and believe that high effort is not a necessary prerequisite for success, as abilities are inherent (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007). Mrazek et al. (2018), for example, found that a growth mindset reduces effort avoidance and encourages individuals to engage in more challenging tasks. In addition, research has investigated behavioral outcomes of mindsets, such as behavioral intentions, preference, and choice, in various contexts (e.g., Mukhopadhyay & Yeung, 2010; Rai & Lin, 2019; Septianto, Seo, & Paramita, 2022). Overall, people with a growth mindset tend to make decisions based on their desire for growth and challenge, whereas fixed-mindset people seek credence and security in their decisions (Roy & Naidoo, 2021).

2.3. Mindset and strategy adaptation

Research has studied adaptability in various real-life and business contexts, such as response to failure (Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin, & Wan, 1999), brand extensions (Yorkston, Nunes, & Matta, 2010), entrepreneurial success (Neneh, 2012), and computer science education (Murphy & Thomas, 2008). We suggest that fixed and growth mindsets are linked to adaptation decisions in general, as mindset activates adaptive or maladaptive behaviors (Dweck & Leggett, 1988) and B2B marketing strategy adaptation in particular, as it promotes challenging and riskier behaviors. Individuals with a growth (vs. fixed) mindset are characterized as more adaptive, as they respond, for instance, to failure in more adaptive ways (Hong et al., 1999). Building on this literature, we suggest that growth-mindset individuals are more willing to adapt their life strategies when necessary; by contrast, fixed-mindset people are apt to be less willing to change their habits.

By extension, we further expect that a fixed or growth mindset also has a significant effect on B2B marketing strategy adaptation decisions. Assessing how managers’ mindsets control decisions such as entering new foreign markets is important. Research has generally associated marketing adaptation strategies with increased costs and risk (Narver, Jacobson, & Slater, 1999). Taking into consideration that growth-mindset individuals have preferences for more challenging tasks (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), they are likely to employ adaptation strategies to a greater extent than fixed-mindset individuals. Adaptation (vs.

standardization) strategies require more resources, such as tailored product designs, new manufacturing processes, and multiple creative promotional communications, as well as adjustments in price, supply chain, and distribution strategies (Lee & Griffith, 2019). Logically, such modifications demand a great deal of additional investment while also occupying countless resources.

Marketing adaptation strategies have a high level of complexity, especially in dynamic cross-border markets (Kumar, Sunder, & Ramaseshan, 2011). This complexity is further enhanced in B2B markets given the more complex nature of B2B demand in conjunction with greater customer heterogeneity and fragmentation (e.g., Coviello & Brodie, 2001). B2B managers, who hold a central role in marketing strategy making, are often rationally bounded in their ability to predict all possible challenges (Hadjikhani & LaPlaca, 2013; Slater & Narver, 1995) associated with adaptation strategies; therefore, the level of difficulty and the likelihood of failure increase (Lee & Griffith, 2019). Primarily due to their anticipated level of failure, adaptation strategies tend to be risky (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). On the one hand, individuals with a growth mindset are more willing to engage in riskier behaviors because even in cases of failure, they acknowledge that an unsuccessful attempt can provide valuable feedback to perform better in the future (Elliott & Dweck, 1988). On the other hand, fixed-mindset individuals are risk averse and also unable to respond effectively to difficult tasks. As such, we expect fixed-mindset managers to prefer standardization strategies. Thus:

H1. A managerial mindset affects international marketing strategy adaptation intentions. Managers with a growth (fixed) mindset are more likely to adapt (standardize) their marketing strategy across different markets.

2.4. Mediating role of ambiguity tolerance

Ambiguity tolerance refers to an individual's cognitive sensitivity to ambiguous stimuli (McLain, Kefallonitis, & Armani, 2015) and captures "the tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as desirable" (Budner, 1962, p. 29). Any individual who is tolerant of ambiguity can effectively cope with risk and uncertainty (Ellsberg, 1961), as well as inadequate, overcomplicated, or contradictory information (Budner, 1962).

In volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments (Cavusgil et al., 2021), including many B2B markets (Coviello & Brodie, 2001), international marketing managers are constantly faced with the lack of available and precise information (Gabrielsson & Gabrielsson, 2013). Within these business landscapes, individual decision-makers who have higher levels of ambiguity tolerance tend to be more comfortable with organizational change (Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999) and environmental uncertainty (Galkina & Chetty, 2015); consequently, they are often successful when making complex adaptation decisions (Griffith & Hoppner, 2013).

Research has not examined the precise role of ambiguity tolerance in the adaptation process to a great extent (Andries & Debackere, 2006), and this may be due to the failure of marketing strategy literature to account for managerial characteristics in adaptation decision-making processes (see Table 2). Nevertheless, a few studies have empirically tested and found that tolerance for ambiguity is an important driver of marketing strategy adaptation (Pitt & Kannemeyer, 2000), cross-cultural adaptation (Ruben & Kealey, 1979), and managerial agility (Nemkova, 2017).

Specifically, as Pitt and Kannemeyer (2000) show, managers who are tolerant of ambiguous situations tend to prefer a more adapted marketing strategy when it comes to key marketing-mix strategic elements, such as product, service, and distribution adaptation. In addition, Obadia (2013) found that managers adapt export pricing to a higher degree when they are confronted with ambiguous information in foreign markets. He attributes this finding to sense-making that can be triggered by ambiguity; when managers must make sense of ambiguous information,

their actions become more adaptable, and thus export pricing decisions are more dynamic (Obadia, 2013).

We argue that these research findings on marketing-mix adaptation are more pronounced when managers are more tolerant of ambiguity. We agree with Griffith and Hoppner (2013) view that managerial ambiguity tolerance is a critical asset in strategic adaptation decisions for two reasons. First, B2B managers who are tolerant of ambiguity make well-rounded strategic decisions because they are more comfortable with uncertainty and risk, and second, these managers are better equipped to make successful marketing strategy changes as they tend to spend more time scanning the environment. Against this backdrop, we expect that ambiguity tolerance will affect strategy adaptation decisions, as these are generally characterized by complexity, heightened uncertainty, and risk (Kumar et al., 2011).

Furthermore, ambiguity tolerance, often conceptualized as a stable individual personality trait, can be malleable and vary by context (Endres, Camp, & Milner, 2015; Muehling, Vijayalakshmi, & Laczniak, 2018; Sagioglou & Forstmann, 2013). Previous studies have shown that within-person variability of ambiguity tolerance across different content domains can change over time (Durrheim, 1998; Durrheim & Foster, 1997) or vary with experience (Helson & Wink, 1992; Howard & Bray, 1988).

From a cognitive perspective, and as a mechanism of processing, interpreting, and reacting to information, ambiguity tolerance drives decision outcomes and may be activated by a psychological orientation that drives evaluation—namely, mindset. Although research has investigated the critical role of ambiguity in complex decision outcomes (e.g., Tversky & Kahneman, 1981), few studies have examined ambiguity tolerance as a mechanism of B2B managerial decision-making processes. We thus propose that growth-mindset individuals who cope better in uncertain and complex situations (Jain & Weiten, 2020) will naturally develop higher tolerance for ambiguity and, in turn, be more likely to favor higher levels of adaptation in their strategic decisions. Considering this discussion, we suggest the following:

H2. Ambiguity tolerance mediates the effect of a managerial mindset on international marketing strategy adaptation intentions.

2.5. Moderating role of psychic distance

Perception is a process by which individuals arrange and analyze environmental stimuli to make sense of their world (Robbins, Judge, Millett, & Boyle, 2013). In a managerial context, perceptions represent "one's construction of reality, as perception serves to distort or filter the environment, amplifying some elements and attenuating others" (Nebus & Chai, 2014, p. 13).

Individual-level perceptions of distance refer to the subjective distance between two entities and are characterized by a dynamic nature (Baack, Dow, Parente, & Bacon, 2015). Perceptions of distance are therefore not stable and vary significantly among individuals. In other words, B2B managers faced with the same problem such as the extent of adaptation of the marketing mix to a foreign market will likely make different decisions even when provided with the same amount of environmental information.

The managerial perception of environmental differences or similarities between a home and a host country is traditionally defined as psychic distance (Evans & Mavondo, 2002). Psychic distance has attracted a great deal of research interest in the field of international marketing in the past decades, mainly because of the established influence of perceptual factors on strategic decisions and international marketing activities (Cavusgil & Godiwalla, 1982; Leonidou, Katsikeas, & Piercy, 1998).

Specifically, with high levels of psychic distance, perceived uncertainty about a foreign market grows because of a lack of familiarity with the foreign environment (O'Grady & Lane, 1996). In such cases, managers who do not have adequate knowledge of the host market might

also be concerned about their ability to adapt, as a flawed adaptation strategy could result in an unsuccessful and costly effort abroad (Griffith, Lee, Seob Yeo, and Calantone, 2014; Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006). Therefore, in high psychic distance conditions, the level of effort to adapt is also high. For managers with a growth mindset, high effort is desirable and valued as they have a chance to unfold their full potential and ultimately improve (Murphy & Dweck, 2016). Conversely, managers with a fixed mindset are traditionally risk averse and not willing to put in effort, as success, according to these individuals, is merely the result of inherent capabilities (Murphy & Dweck, 2016).

Consequently, we expect that in a high psychic distance situation, in which adaptation challenges and implementation risks are heightened (Johnson et al., 2006), growth-mindset managers will expend determined effort to employ adaptation strategies. By contrast, in the face of heightened risk and challenge, fixed-mindset managers will exhibit a more secure coping strategy, which is the norm when these individuals are faced with increased difficulties (Jain & Weiten, 2020). Thus:

H3. Psychic distance weakens the effect of mindset on adaptation intentions.

Fig. 1 depicts our conceptual framework.

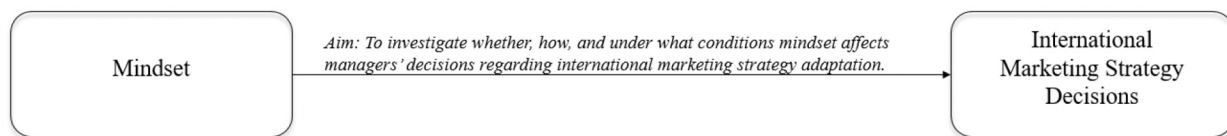
3. Overarching framework

3.1. Study 1: the effect of mindset on lifestyle adaptation decisions

3.1.1. Research design and sample

The aim of Study 1 is to investigate the main effect of mindset on adaptation (H1) by manipulating mindset and measuring lifestyle adaptation intentions among the general population. According to our theorization, we expect individuals exposed to a growth (fixed) mindset manipulation to show higher (lower) intentions to adapt their everyday lifestyle to the foreign country of their destination. Thus, we use a single factor (mindset: growth vs. fixed) between-subjects experimental design. We asked participants to imagine a hypothetical scenario of moving for work or studies to another country and to answer several lifestyle adaptation questions. We adapted our scenario from Price, Coulter, Strizhakova, and Schultz (2017, Study 2b), who investigated mindset in the frame of transformative change (fresh start). The fresh-start metaphor is not only widely accepted in contemporary cultures but also commonly used in marketing communication practices (Price et al., 2017). Therefore, being semantically related to lifestyle adaptation, it adds authenticity and realism to our study. We recruited 319 adults via Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants reflected the demographic distributions of the general population and were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions (fixed vs. growth mindset).

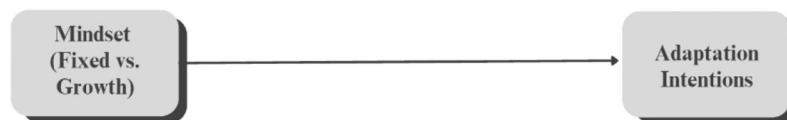
Overarching Framework



Study 1

Sample: 319 consumers

Hypotheses tested: H1



Study 2

Sample: 252 B2B managers

Hypotheses tested: H1, H2, H3

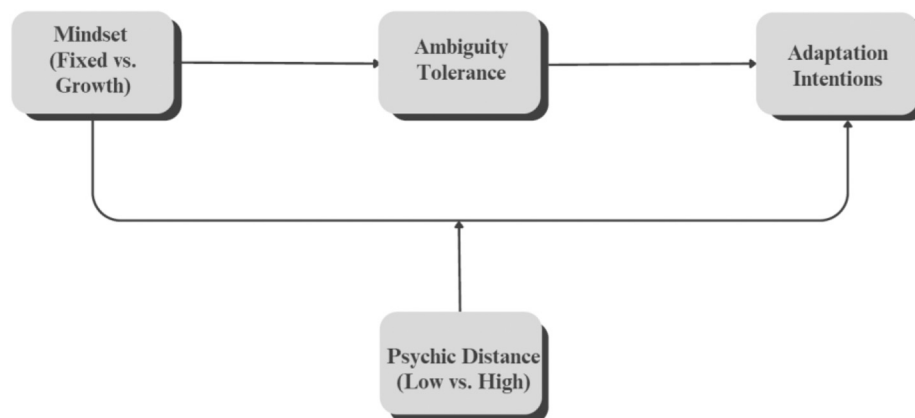


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework.

3.1.2. Mindset manipulation and manipulation checks

To manipulate mindset, we asked participants to read a *Psychology Today*-type article (adapted from Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997) that presented scientific views of either fixed or growth mindsets. The article, based on prior research studies, portrayed implicit theory in a rigorous way, without referring to the dependent variables of the study. Although, in general, individuals are inclined toward one of these mindset types, they can adopt a particular mindset when presented with relevant manipulated information (Murphy & Dweck, 2016).

The growth-mindset article described that people's personality and mindset constantly evolve and are highly malleable. Moreover, human traits are considerably dynamic and can even change someone's character. The fixed-mindset article outlined a fixed and solid human nature over a lifetime, stressing the static personality and mindset one develops during adulthood. Valid and trustworthy research outputs underpinned each of these viewpoints. Appendix A presents the manipulation stimuli.

After they read the relevant passage, we asked participants to summarize in a few words the essence of the text they had just read. As a manipulation check, we used the measure of implicit theory (Chiu et al., 1997), which included three statements: (1) "The kind of person someone is, is something very basic about them and it can't be changed very much"; (2) "People can do things differently, but the important parts of who they are can't really be changed"; and (3) "Everyone is a certain kind of person, and there is not much that can be done to really change that." Participants then indicated the extent of their agreement on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree," 5 = "strongly agree"). The manipulation was successful; participants who read the fixed-mindset scenario scored higher on the relevant scale ($M_{\text{fixed}} = 3.06$, $SD = 1.11$) than those in the growth-mindset scenario condition ($M_{\text{growth}} = 2.60$, $SD = 1.14$; $F(1, 317) = 12.96$, $p < .01$). Scores >3 on the implicit theory scale indicate agreement with a fixed mindset; scores <3 imply compliance with a growth mindset (Huang, Dong, & Mukhopadhyay, 2014).

3.1.3. Measures

The main outcome variable is lifestyle adaptation intentions. We adapted Wells and Tigert (1977) scale, on which participants indicated the likelihood of adapting their lifestyle across different dimension (recreational, purchasing, and leisure time activities; culinary, media, and fashion interests; and cultural, political, and social opinions) if they were to relocate to another country on a 5-point scale (1 = "extremely unlikely," 5 = "extremely likely"). We also measured life satisfaction (1 = "extremely dissatisfied," 5 = "extremely satisfied") and happiness (adapted from Hills & Argyle, 2001) (1 = "strongly disagree," 5 = "strongly agree") on a 5-point scale.

3.1.4. Analysis and results

We ran analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) on mindset and lifestyle adaptation intentions with life satisfaction and happiness as covariates. The results show a main effect of mindset on adaptation intentions ($F(1, 318) = 5.54$, $p = .019$), giving preliminary support to H1. Participants in the growth-mindset condition reported higher adaptation intentions ($M = 3.51$) than those in the fixed-mindset condition ($M = 3.33$). Fig. 2 illustrates these results.

3.2. Study 2: effect of mindset on international B2B marketing strategy adaptation decisions

After confirming a significant effect of mindset on adaptation intentions among individuals in general, our goal in Study 2 was to establish the same effect in a B2B managerial context in addition to formally testing the hypotheses. Thus, Study 2 examines the conditions under which fixed and growth mindsets affect managers' decisions about the level of marketing strategy adaptation. Moreover, we examine the mediating mechanism that explains the mindset-adaptation intentions relationship. To test our hypotheses, we conducted an

experiment with B2B managers based on an experimental vignette methodology (EVM), in which we used rigorous and realistic scenarios written in everyday language (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). EVM enhances internal and external validity given its increased realism and therefore is a suitable methodology for researchers to effectively manipulate independent variables and investigate their effect on behavioral outcomes (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014).

3.2.1. Research design and sample

We used a 2 (mindset: fixed vs. growth) \times 2 (psychic distance: low vs. high) between-subjects experimental design. After running a pretest to ensure managers' ease with the content and language of the instrument, we randomly assigned them to one of the four experimental conditions. The sample included Greek chief executives and international marketing managers in the B2B sector who were responsible for their firms' marketing decisions. Greece heavily depends on exports; $>40\%$ of Greece's gross domestic product was export revenue in 2021.¹ In addition, we employed a multi-industry sample. According to the Hellenic Statistical Authority,² for the fiscal year 2020, no dominant export industry represented Greece's exporting activity; instead, exports were led by manufacturing products, which represented 40% of total exports, followed by fuels (30%) and agricultural products (20%). The remaining 10% of Greece's total exports comprised raw materials and unclassified products.

We primarily obtained the sampling frame for Study 2 from Athens Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which has a rich Greek export directory. After excluding service firms and business-to-consumer-only companies, we had a list of 512 international B2B companies. We also used a second database, Greek Exporters Association, and, through the same process, generated a second list of 318 international B2B companies. We contacted each of the 830 companies by telephone and discussed the aim and significance of the study. Of the companies, 303 refused to participate or could not be reached. The primary reason for not contributing to the study was data protection, followed by insufficient or merely occasional international activity. For the 527 companies that agreed to proceed, we sent emails with an attached link for the online survey, which we designed in Qualtrics. After two follow-up reminders, we collected 264 responses, seven of which were dropped because of missing data (partial responses) and five because of scores lower than 4 on the 7-point scale about confidence in answering correctly. Therefore, the final responses were 252, yielding an effective response rate of 47.6%. Table 3 lists the profile details of respondents.

3.2.2. Mindset and psychic distance manipulation and manipulation checks

We manipulated mindset by prompting managers to read the same scientific articles as in Study 1. The articles presented views of either a fixed or growth mindset, to activate one of the two mindset types. Consequently, respondents had to briefly summarize the essence of the article they had just read.

For an effective manipulation check, we measured mindset similarly to Study 1, with a 3-item scale adopted from Chiu et al. (1997). The results supported the experimental manipulation, with respondents in the fixed-mindset condition reporting a higher level on the implicit theory scale ($M_{\text{fixed}} = 4.20$, $SD = 0.65$) than those in the growth-mindset condition ($M_{\text{growth}} = 2.01$, $SD = 0.95$; $F(1, 251) = 715.13$, $p < .001$). Scoring high on this scale means compliance with a fixed mindset, whereas lower scores imply the adoption of a growth mindset.

We manipulated psychic distance by assigning each respondent to a certain geographic area that represented high or low psychic distance. We selected this geographic area by examining relevant research studies. Drawing on the main factors that determine the psychic distance

¹ https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/trade/trade-in-goods-and-services/indicator/english_0fe445d9-en.

² <https://www.statistics.gr/en/exp-export-expect>

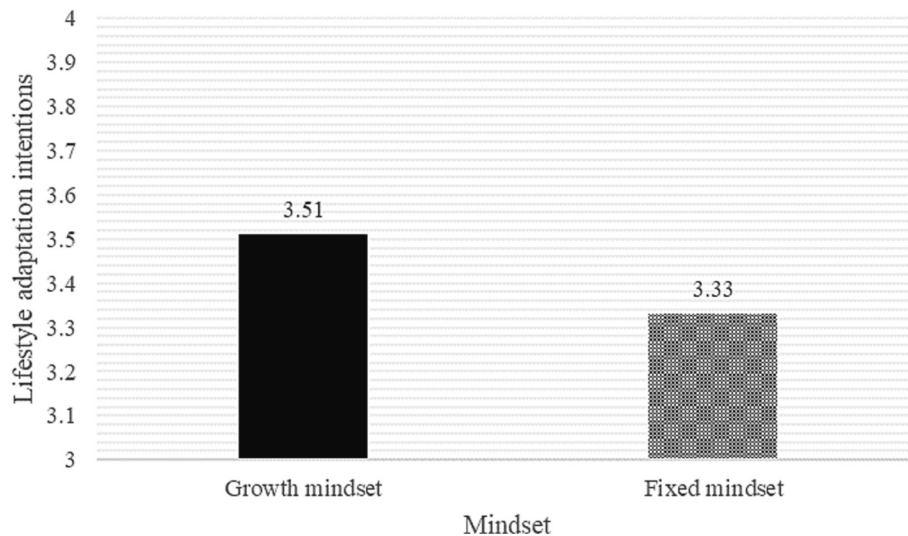


Fig. 2. Study 1 effects of mindset on lifestyle adaptation intentions.

Table 3
Study 2 profile details of respondents.

	Study 2
Firm size	
Fewer than 10 employees	5.2%
10–50 employees	83.7%
51–250 employees	10.7%
251–1000 employees	0.4%
Manager's international experience	
<5 years	25%
5–10 years	44%
11–15 years	16.7%
16–20 years	10.3%
>20 years	4%
Company's international experience (duration)	
<5 years	3.6%
5–15 years	43.6%
16–25 years	35.3%
26–35 years	12.3%
>35 years	5.2%
Number of international markets (scope)	
Fewer than 5	46.8%
6–10	47.2%
11–15	4.4%
16–25	1.2%
>25	0.4%
Manager's experience with the company	
<5 years	5.6%
5–10 years	37.7%
11–15 years	19.8%
16–20 years	19.8%
>20 years	17.1%

scale (Theodosiou & Katsikeas, 2001), we concluded that South East Asia and Eastern Europe were valid representatives of high and low psychic distance, respectively, from Greece. A manipulation check with 30 managers from Greece showed that they perceive South East Asia and Eastern Europe as psychically close and distant, respectively, as intended. Appendices A and B present the vignettes used in Study 2.

We also assessed psychic distance as a manipulation check by asking managers to indicate the perceived distance to a country in the foreign region in question and to answer the extent to which the region was similar to or different from Greece in terms of aspects such as the level of economic and industrial development and cultural values. We adapted the 5-point scale (1 = “very similar,” 5 = “very different”) from Katsikeas, Skarmeas, and Bello (2009) and Evans and Mavondo (2002). The manipulation check results revealed that managers in the low psychic

distance condition (Eastern Europe) scored low on the relevant scale ($M_{\text{LowPD}} = 2.20$, $SD = 0.54$), indicating a great extent of similarity perceptions between the home and host countries. Respondents in the high psychic distance condition (South East Asia) were inclined to perceive dissimilarity between the two countries and therefore scored higher on the scale ($M_{\text{HighPD}} = 4.25$, $SD = 0.37$; $F(1, 251) = 262.44$, $p < .001$). Thus, the manipulations of fixed and growth mindsets and psychic distance had the intended effect.

3.2.3. Measures

We measured marketing strategy adaptation intentions with a 4-item, 7-point scale (1 = “fully standardized strategy,” 7 = “fully adapted strategy”), on which each item corresponded to an element of the marketing mix (price, promotion, product, and distribution). We used Budner (1962) tolerance for ambiguity scale to measure ambiguity tolerance on a 7-point scale (1 = “strongly disagree,” 7 = “strongly agree”). Appendix C provides a detailed list of the measures.

3.2.4. Analysis and results

To test our hypotheses, we ran a 2 (mindset: fixed vs. growth) \times 2 (psychic distance: low vs. high) between-subject ANCOVA. Firm size (number of employees), manager's international experience, company's international experience (duration and scope), manager's experience with the company, perceived market attractiveness, and perceived risk served as covariates, and adaptation intentions was the dependent variable.

The results revealed that mindset has a significant main effect on adaptation intentions ($F(1, 251) = 13.56$, $p < .001$), in support of H1. That is, respondents exposed to the fixed-mindset scenario reported lower adaptation intentions ($M_{\text{fixed}} = 3.62$) than those exposed to the growth-mindset scenario ($M_{\text{growth}} = 3.91$). Fig. 3 illustrates the effects.

Furthermore, to assess the effects of mindset on the adaptation intentions of different marketing-mix elements, we conducted a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA). The set of covariate variables remained the same. The results show a main effect of mindset on price adaptation intentions ($M_{\text{fixed}} = 3.68$, $SD = 1.86$; $M_{\text{growth}} = 4.48$, $SD = 1.67$; $F(1, 251) = 8.92$, $p < .05$), promotion adaptation intentions ($M_{\text{fixed}} = 3.49$, $SD = 1.88$; $M_{\text{growth}} = 4.59$, $SD = 1.67$; $F(1, 251) = 17.17$, $p < .001$), and distribution adaptation intentions ($M_{\text{fixed}} = 3.45$, $SD = 2.08$; $M_{\text{growth}} = 4.29$, $SD = 1.94$; $F(1, 251) = 8.16$, $p < .05$). The effect of mindset on product adaptation intentions was not significant ($F(1, 251) = 0.20$, $p > .05$). Table 4 summarizes these results.

To test the moderating role of psychic distance, as hypothesized in H3, we conducted a regression-based analysis using PROCESS (model 1,

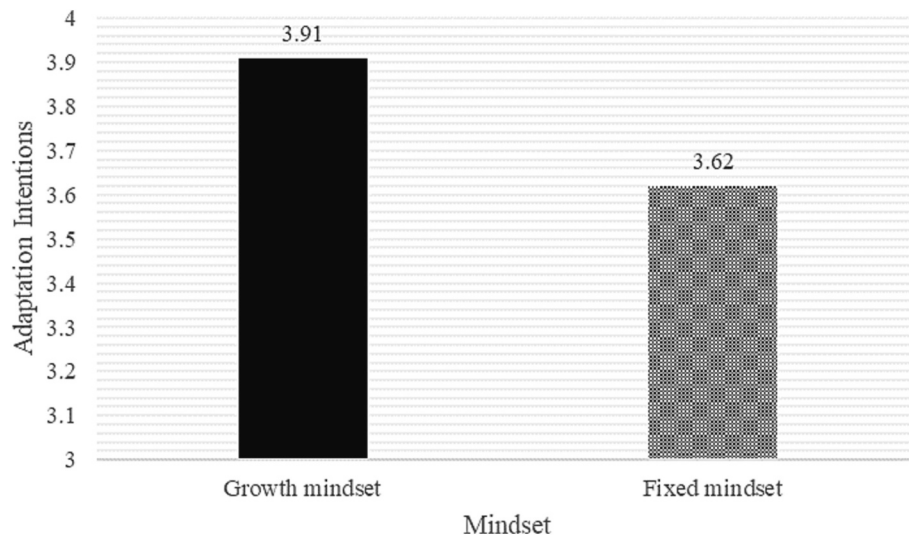


Fig. 3. Study 2 effects of mindset on marketing strategy adaptation intentions.

Table 4
Study 2 MANCOVA results.

Direct effects	p-value	F statistic	M _{growth}	M _{fixed}
Mindset (growth vs. fixed) → strategy Adaptation intentions	<0.001	13.56	3.91	3.62
Mindset (growth vs. fixed) → price adaptation intentions	<0.05	8.92	4.48	3.68
Mindset (growth vs. fixed) → promotion adaptation intentions	<0.001	17.17	4.59	3.49
Mindset (growth vs. fixed) → product adaptation intentions	>0.05	0.20	3.17	3.06
Mindset (growth vs. fixed) → distribution adaptation intentions	<0.05	8.16	4.29	3.45

Note: Statistically significant effects are in bold.

Hayes, 2018). The model used 5000 resamples for the calculation of confidence intervals (CIs) and used bias-corrected accelerated bootstrap (Hayes, 2018). In line with our expectations, we find a significant interaction effect of mindset and psychic distance on adaptation intentions ($\beta = -0.44$; 95% CI $[-0.86, -0.01]$), in support of H3.

Specifically, mindset has a significant effect on adaptation intentions when psychic distance is low (effect = 0.44; 95% CI $[0.12, 0.76]$), and this effect disappears when psychic distance is high (effect = 0.04; 95% CI $[-0.29, 0.36]$). In other words, in the low psychic distance condition, growth-mindset managers demonstrate higher adaptation intentions than fixed-mindset managers; conversely, when psychic distance is high, managers with both growth and fixed mindsets opt for similarly high levels of adaptation. Fig. 4 depicts these effects.

3.2.5. Mediation analysis

H2 predicts that ambiguity tolerance mediates the effect of mindset on adaptation intentions. We conducted a mediation analysis with 5000 resamples for the estimation of CIs (PROCESS Model 4; Hayes, 2018). As expected, ambiguity tolerance mediates the mindset–adaptation intentions relationship with an indirect effect of 0.17 (95% CI: $[0.01, 0.38]$); thus, H2 is supported as the results reveal that mindset has a positive indirect effect on adaptation intentions through ambiguity tolerance (see Fig. 5). Table 5 provides a summary of Study 2’s results.

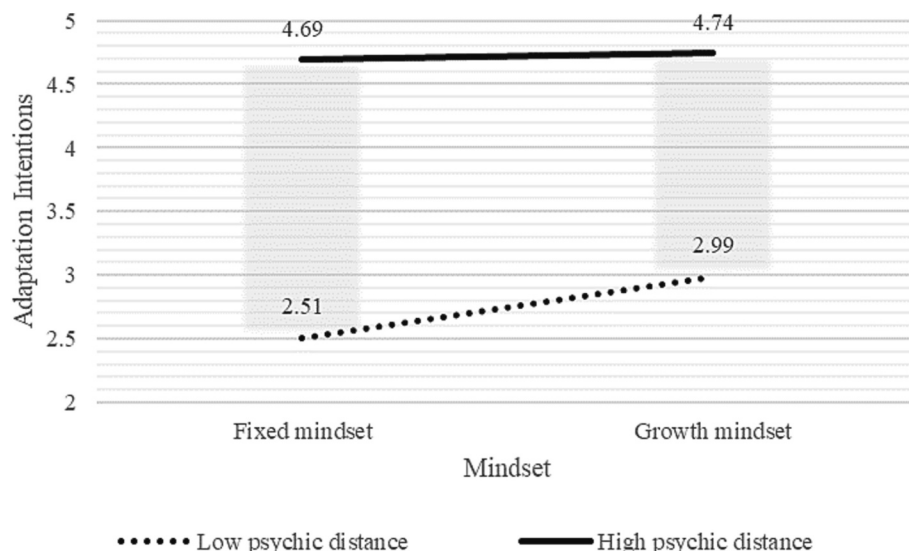


Fig. 4. Study 2 moderation effect of psychic distance.

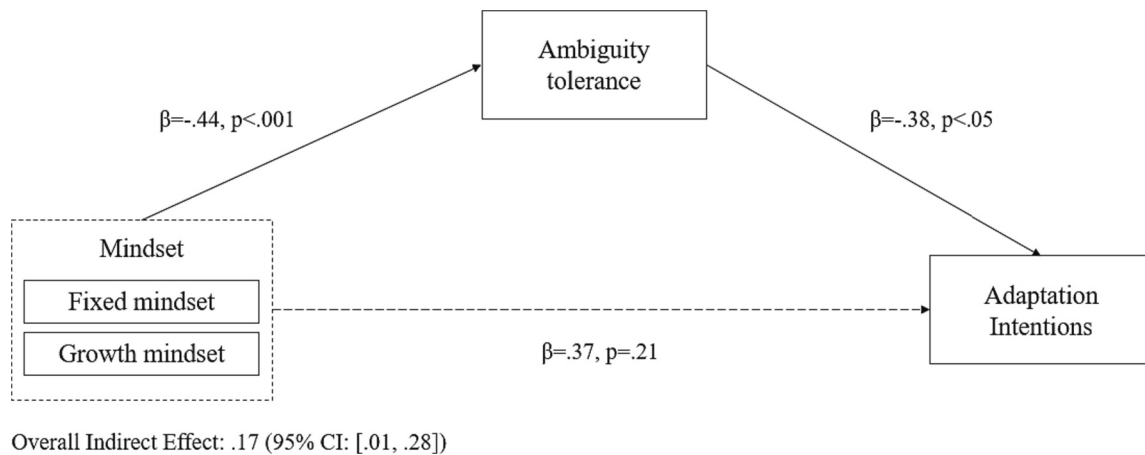


Fig. 5. Study 2 mediating effect of ambiguity tolerance.

Table 5
Study 2 moderating and indirect effects.

Hypothesized effect	β	95% CI
Mindset (growth vs. fixed) \times psychic distance (high vs. low) \rightarrow adaptation intentions	-0.44	-0.86; -0.01
Mindset (growth vs. fixed) \times low psychic distance \rightarrow adaptation intentions	0.44	0.12; 0.76
Mindset (growth vs. fixed) \times high psychic distance \rightarrow adaptation intentions	0.04	-0.29; 0.36
Mindset (growth vs. fixed) \rightarrow ambiguity tolerance \rightarrow adaptation intentions	0.17	0.01; 0.38

Note: Statistically significant effects are in bold.

4. Discussion

4.1. Theoretical contributions

Overall, the study results reveal that mindset has a direct effect on managerial international B2B decisions, through this effect is moderated by different levels of perceived distance and mediated by ambiguity tolerance. More specifically, when B2B managers adopt a growth mindset, they tend to make adaptation decisions; by contrast, their fixed-mindset counterparts are more favorable toward standardization decisions. Although previous research has strongly linked the concept of adaptability to mindset (Dweck & Leggett, 1988), we examine the level of adaptation in different contexts to draw more reliable conclusions. We find that in both layman and B2B managerial settings, mindset and adaptation are positively related.

Study 1 provides insights into the effect of mindset on general adaptation intentions. We discovered that mindset is a significant determinant of lifestyle adaptation. In particular, when we asked individuals to imagine that they had to relocate to a new country for either work or studies, those in the growth-mindset condition reported higher adaptation intentions. Effective manipulation of mindset led individuals to indicate different levels of adaptation in terms of their activities, interests, and opinions in the foreign country. This is an important finding and confirms the flexibility, adaptivity, and dynamism characterizing a growth mindset (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Having established the powerful effect of mindset on general adaptation decisions, we proceeded with a replication of this effect in international B2B settings. Study 2 sheds further light on the conditions under which mindset affects the level of adaptation in cross-border strategies. We provide causal empirical support to explain the moderating role of psychic distance and the mediating effect of ambiguity tolerance.

In particular, we found that mindset is a strong driver of marketing

strategy adaptation intentions among B2B managers. The results indicated that managers with a growth mindset tend to undertake higher levels of adaptation given their more flexible and challenge-seeking nature (Trope & Liberman, 2010). We thus establish that mindset holds a potentially central position in marketing strategy adaptation decision outcomes. Adaptability is strongly associated with growth-mindset individuals, who, in general, frequently respond to challenges in adaptive ways (Hong et al., 1999). The finding that B2B managers' mindset indeed plays a significant role in international strategic decisions may also explain some of the mixed results in the international marketing standardization/adaptation literature proposing that B2B companies would, by nature, be more inclined toward standardization because "purchasing decisions are based on 'rational' rather than 'emotional' criteria" (Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003, p. 155).

Our results lend further support to the view that managers are boundedly rational and that neglecting their cognitive orientation and perceptions could engender flawed results (Aharoni et al., 2011; Kaczmarek & Ruigrok, 2013). For example, it could be argued that such findings would contradict classic B2B marketing reasoning derived from exchange theory and economic decision-making based on rational choices and high access to information (Hadjikhani & LaPlaca, 2013). While most international B2B decision-makers are certainly rational human beings, their ability to interpret and construe environmental stimuli is restricted by the abundance and complexity of available information (Ahi, Baronchelli, Kuivalainen, & Piantoni, 2017), especially in the international context. Nevertheless, in a business context, mathematical precision in decision-making processes is rather unrealistic, given the extreme time pressure and environmental complexity (Tarka, 2017). Thus, B2B managers are often compelled to form subjective reasoning mechanisms (Perlow, Okhuysen, & Repenning, 2002), which characterize bounded rationality. These findings indeed correspond with recent theoretical developments in the B2B marketing field that have acknowledged bounded rationality and drawn on behavioral theory in addition to traditional exchange theory (Hadjikhani & LaPlaca, 2013).

We also contribute to the B2B marketing strategy literature by investigating the mediating mechanism of ambiguity tolerance in adaptation decisions. Prior research has consistently highlighted the critical role of ambiguity and its effect on various strategic outcomes (e.g., Jean & Kim, 2021; Lee, Wang, Ma, & Anderson, 2022; McNally, Durmusoglu, Calantone, & Harmancioglu, 2009). Our study contributes to this body of literature by focusing on the individual decision-making process in B2B settings. Specifically, we uncover a new antecedent of ambiguity tolerance—namely, mindset—and show its effect on adaptation intentions. We establish that ambiguity tolerance can indeed explain why growth-mindset B2B managers prefer international adaptation strategies. Such a finding brings further attention to the research

stream examining phenomena predicted by ambiguity tolerance and answers calls for additional research on the phenomena predicted by ambiguity tolerance (Wangrow, Schepker, & Barker III, 2015).

Moreover, we uncover an important boundary condition and show how international strategy adaptation decisions may vary with different levels of psychic distance. By manipulating psychic distance, we address criticism on the construct's operationalization (Obadia, 2013) and also show that growth-mindset managers prefer adaptation strategies to a higher degree, while this preference is more pronounced under high levels of psychic distance. When the perceived distance between a home and host market is high, uncertainty and risk grow (O'Grady & Lane, 1996). Thus, growth-mindset individuals who cope rather well with uncertainty are more likely to have higher strategy adaptation intentions.

4.2. Managerial implications

Our findings have important managerial implications in the B2B and international marketing domains. Although scholars are agnostic about which type of thinking is more effective, they generally agree that growth mindsets are superior. Nevertheless, within business contexts, such views are not always supportive of this; indeed, the managerial mindset must be well calibrated to reality (Wheeler & Omair, 2016). A suggestion, therefore, is that while B2B managers are not biased by the seeming superiority of growth mindset, they should carefully evaluate specific situations before building strategies based on them. Mindset is a powerful tool with extensive applicability to a wide range of marketing-related decisions. Comprehending the way mindset shapes strategy adaptation decisions should help B2B marketing managers target their desirable audience and also guide firms when entering new markets or setting international marketing strategies.

Moreover, our findings are particularly relevant for B2B firms that value the flexibility that adaptation marketing strategy offers. Specifically, we found that promotion, price, and distribution strategy adaptations are more likely when key decision-makers have a growth mindset and are tolerant of ambiguity. This mechanism can be a valuable tool for C-level managers whose main strategic priority is agility and resilience as a means to deal with disruptions (Zahoor, Golgeci, Haapanen, Ali, & Arslan, 2022). Business buyers expect sellers to understand their needs; therefore, agility is critical in offering tailored and on-demand products and services (Akter, Hani, Dwivedi, & Sharma, 2022). We suggest that regular internal assessments of managers' mindsets need to take place; in doing so, firms will be able to first detect and then leverage the capabilities that growth-mindset managers have to offer in dynamic business environments. For this reason, our findings also contradict some studies on international B2B marketing (e.g., Akaah, 1991; Cavusgil, Zou, & Naidu, 1993) suggesting that international strategy standardization by default is preferable because of the allegedly more rational purchasing approaches of B2B purchasing organizations (Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003).

Nevertheless, C-level managers should consider our findings with caution. We showed that the promotion element is more prone to adaptation than distribution and price. Considering that extreme promotion adaptation may also have negative performance effects (Hultman et al., 2011), we suggest that equal attention is paid to not only individual decision-makers but also external forces (e.g., legislation, bureaucracy, cultural nuances) that determine the level of marketing strategy adaptation in B2B export settings. Prior research (e.g., Sousa, Lengler, & Martínez-López, 2014) has also highlighted the inverted U-shaped relationship between price adaptation and export performance. Our findings suggest that growth-mindset B2B managers, who handle environmental uncertainty well, should be particularly careful not to over-adapt their pricing strategy, to avoid potential detrimental effects such as imbalanced resource allocation (Cadogan, Kuivalainen, &

Sundqvist, 2009). Moreover, distribution adaptation is one of the most adapted marketing-mix elements mainly because of distributive institution rigidity (see Dimitrova & Rosenbloom, 2010), that is, fixed distribution structures across countries that often dictate mandatory adaptation. Given our findings, we encourage B2B practitioners to consider current channel structures and assign distribution adaptation tasks to growth-mindset managers (and teams) with good international experience. Overall, however, encouraging the development of agility and adaptability through a growth mindset should be the result of careful assessment of mindset and individual ambiguity tolerance.

Against this backdrop, our findings also advance a criterion for B2B training and recruitment processes. Human resources departments, in collaboration with marketing and sales departments, should develop, apply, and maintain training tools on the mindset that complies with their companies' objectives. In this way, mindsets that align with the business scope can be cultivated and appropriate candidates identified.

4.3. Limitations and future research avenues

This study also has inherent limitations, including the reliance on EVM rather than actual field data on managerial international strategic adaptation decisions based on mindsets. Although we deemed EVM a suitable methodology for the research question at hand given its inherent advantages (see Aguinis & Bradley, 2014), we advise future researchers to examine ways to replicate the findings in a field setting. Moreover, as is the case in all international marketing research, the findings may be limited to the context in which they were investigated. Further research endeavors are therefore necessary to investigate whether similar results would appear in cases in which the international marketing managers have a different cultural background. For example, would a manager with a completely different cultural background be as responsive to the impact of mindset, ambiguity tolerance, and psychic distance as Western perspective managers included in the current investigation?

In addition, product was the only marketing mix element unaffected by mindset. This finding can be justified by the nature of the strategy; indeed, adapting B2B products would demand new production design and, at the same time, would delay or even impede the rapid diffusion of products in markets (Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003). To further investigate the findings, future research could assess both mutual and unilateral dyadic adaptation in B2B markets at the product level.

Moreover, the current research centered on the effect of mindset on intended behavioral outcomes and provided insights into the managerial decision-making process within the marketing field. Nevertheless, given the importance of performance, future studies should further develop our model by evaluating mindset as an antecedent and venture performance as its outcome.

In particular, export performance—namely, the three-dimensional market, financial, and customer performance (Hultman et al., 2009)—is a relevant outcome of marketing strategy adaptation decisions common in the field of exporting (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). In this way, new research findings can shed light on the evergreen but fragmented effect of marketing strategy adaptation on firm performance (Mandler et al., 2021), which has recently been characterized as a double-edged sword (Wang, Gao, Jia, & Wang, 2022). Finally, given the importance and robustness of mindset, we suggest that future research examine whether other mindsets (e.g., power mindset; Galinsky, Rucker, & Magee, 2015) may also drive managerial decisions and also evaluate any potential mindset hierarchies.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

Appendix A. Mindset manipulation

A.1. The growth-mindset article read

According to scientists, people's attitudes, beliefs and opinions are considerably dynamic. Thus, your personality and your mindset are not static, as they constantly evolve before adulthood and are highly malleable throughout adulthood. Moreover, research has shown that in general people change a lot during their life, as human nature is volatile and each one of us owns a dynamic set of developing traits. In his talk at the American Psychological Association's annual convention [...] Dr. Medin [...] reported numerous large longitudinal studies showing that people can mature and change their character. He also reported research findings showing that people's personality characteristics can change, even in their late sixties.

A.2. The fixed-mindset article read

According to scientists, people's attitudes, beliefs and opinions are considerably static. Thus, your personality and your mindset are not dynamic, as they shape before adulthood and remain solid and robust throughout adulthood. Moreover, research has shown that in general people do not change much during their life, as human nature is stable and each one of us owns a limited set of fairly fixed traits. In his talk at the American Psychological Association's annual convention [...] Dr. Medin [...] reported numerous large longitudinal studies showing that people can mature and change their character. He also reported research findings showing that people age and develop, but they do so on the foundation of enduring dispositions.

Appendix B. Psychic distance manipulation

B.1. High psychic distance condition

Now imagine that your company plans to enter a new South East Asian country where you have never performed any activity in the past. Please answer the following questions with the aforementioned scenario in mind.

B.2. Low psychic distance condition

Now imagine that your company plans to enter a new East European country where you have never performed any activity in the past. Please answer the following questions with the aforementioned scenario in mind.

Appendix C. Constructs used in Study 1 and Study 2

Construct (Cronbach's α)	Source
Mindset Study 1 ($\alpha = 0.95$), Study 2 ($\alpha = 0.88$) Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements, regarding your style of coping with negative events. (1 = "strongly disagree," 5 = "strongly agree")	Chiu et al. (1997)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The kind of person someone is, is something very basic about them and it can't be changed very much. - People can do things differently, but the important parts of who they are, can't really be changed. - Everyone is a certain kind of person and there is not much that can be done to really change that. 	
Psychic distance ($\alpha = 0.88$) Please indicate the extent to which the aforementioned scenario country is similar to or different from the country your company is located in, with regard to the following aspects. (1 = "very similar," 5 = "very different")	Evans and Mavondo (2002); Katsikeas et al. (2009)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level of economic and industrial development - Political and legal system - Level of literacy and education - Cultural values. Beliefs, attitudes and traditions - Language 	
Ambiguity tolerance ($\alpha = 0.75$)	Budner (1962)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please respond to the following statements by indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree with them. (1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly" agree) - An expert who doesn't come with a definite answer, probably does not know much. - A good job is one where what to be done is always clear. - What we are used to is always preferable to what is unfamiliar. - Many of our most important decisions are based upon insufficient information. - People who insist upon a yes or no answer, just do not know how complicated things are. 	
Adaptation Intentions ($\alpha = 0.75$) Please indicate to what extent you would select a standardized or adapted strategy for the marketing mix elements, relative to your home market (1 = "fully standardized strategy," 7 = "fully adapted strategy")	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Price strategy - Promotion strategy - Product strategy 	

(continued on next page)

(continued)

Construct (Cronbach's α)	Source
- Distribution strategy	
Lifestyle adaptations intentions ($\alpha = 0.84$)	Wells and Tigert (1977)
How likely are you to adapt the following aspects of your lifestyle (activities, interests and opinions) on the lifestyle of the country you will go? (1 = "extremely unlikely," 5 = "extremely likely")	
- Recreational activities (e.g., dining out)	
- Purchasing activities (e.g., local stores vs. shopping centers)	
- Leisure time activities (e.g., indoor vs. outdoor activities)	
- Culinary interests (e.g., cuisine)	
- Fashion interests (e.g., fashion trends and style)	
- Media preference (e.g., TV, internet etc.)	
- Cultural opinions (e.g., tradition and values perceptions)	
- Political opinions	
- Social issues opinions (e.g., Public health and education systems)	
Life satisfaction	
How satisfied are you with your life as a whole (1 = "extremely dissatisfied," 5 = "extremely satisfied")	
Happiness ($\alpha = 0.80$)	Hills and Argyle (2001)
Please read the statements carefully and give the answer that is true for you in general or most of the time. (1 = "strongly disagree," 5 = "strongly agree")	
- I feel that life is very rewarding.	
- I don't feel particularly pleased with the way I am.	
- I am well satisfied about everything in my life.	
- I can find time for everything I want to.	
Risk propensity	Adapted from Tversky and Kahneman (1981)
Imagine that you face the following pair of decisions. First examine both decisions and then indicate which option you prefer.	
- 80% chance £400 or £320 for sure	
- £300 for sure or 20% £150	
- 90% £200 or £180 for sure	
- £160 for sure or 10% £1600	
- 50% £500 or £250 for sure	

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