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Authors
Shivani Mangesh Bhosale · Pratham Dhas · Piyush Anvekar · Atharva Dhamal

Computer Science and Engineering (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning), University of Mumbai, India

Abstract
International business expansion is a high-stakes strategic process requiring the synthesis of fragmented data across regulatory, economic, and competitive domains. Traditional expansion strategies rely on human-centric consultancy, which is often cost-prohibitive for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and prone to cognitive bias. This paper introduces Expansion AI, an integrated decision-support framework that leverages Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) and Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI) to automate global market evaluation. Utilizing real-time data from the World Bank, WTO, and UN Comtrade, Expansion.AI generates transparent, data-driven recommendations that reduce the time-to-insight for strategic planning by over 70%.

Keywords
International Expansion · Decision Support System · MCDM · TOPSIS · Explainable AI · SHAP · Market Intelligence · Global Trade.

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Shivani Bhosale, Pratham Dhas, Piyush Anvekar, Atharva Dhamal
Computer Science and Engineering (Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning) Department,
University of Mumbai, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

ABSTRACT

International business expansion is a high-stakes strategic process requiring the synthesis of fragmented data across regulatory, economic, and competitive domains. Traditional expansion strategies rely on human-centric consultancy, which is often cost-prohibitive for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and prone to cognitive bias. This paper introduces **Expansion.AI**, an integrated decision-support framework that leverages **Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM)** and **Explainable Artificial Intelligence (XAI)** to automate global market evaluation. Utilizing real-time data from the World Bank, WTO, and UN Comtrade, Expansion.AI generates transparent, data-driven recommendations that reduce the time-to-insight for strategic planning by over 70%.

Keywords: International Expansion, Decision Support System, MCDM, TOPSIS, Explainable AI, SHAP, Market Intelligence, Global Trade.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern global economy, businesses are increasingly seeking opportunities beyond domestic markets to achieve growth and competitiveness. However, entering international markets is a challenging process due to variations in economic stability, taxation systems, trade regulations, cultural differences, and consumer behavior.

Traditionally, organizations rely on consulting firms to analyze potential markets. While effective, these services are often expensive and not accessible to **Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**. Moreover, such reports are static and may not reflect real-time changes in global trade environments, especially in situations like geopolitical conflicts or economic disruptions.

To address these challenges, this paper introduces **Expansion.AI**, a fully automated framework that acts as a virtual business consultant. It integrates multiple data sources, applies advanced decision-making algorithms, and provides explainable insights. The goal is to enable businesses to make faster, cost-effective, and unbiased expansion decisions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Recent advancements in market intelligence platforms such as Deloitte Insights, McKinsey Global Institute, and Crunchbase have enabled data-driven business analysis; however, these platforms primarily provide static reports or require expert interpretation, limiting their accessibility for small and medium enterprises.

In academic research, Multi-Criteria Decision Making (MCDM) techniques such as TOPSIS and AHP have been widely used for country ranking and investment decision-making. However, many existing approaches are not designed for real-time integration and dynamic decision-making, reducing their effectiveness in rapidly changing global environments.

Furthermore, current AI-based recommendation systems often operate as black boxes, limiting interpretability and user trust. Expansion.AI addresses these challenges by integrating real-time data with automated decision-making and explainable AI, providing a scalable and accessible solution for global market expansion.

III. SYSTEM DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE

The Expansion.AI framework is designed as a modular and scalable architecture consisting of four key components:

3.1 Market Intelligence (MI)

This module collects and processes macroeconomic data such as GDP, import/export trends, and demand-supply gaps. It uses APIs like UN Comtrade and World Bank datasets to identify high-potential markets based on economic performance.

3.2 Regulatory Module (RM)

The regulatory environment of a country plays a crucial role in market entry. This module uses Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques to analyze legal documents and identify constraints such as foreign ownership limits, licensing requirements, and compliance risks.

3.3 Trade and Taxation Module (TT)

This component evaluates trade policies, tariffs, and bilateral agreements. It uses WTO datasets to calculate effective tariff rates and identifies countries offering favorable trade conditions.

3.4 Competitive Intelligence (CI)

This module analyzes market competition by collecting real-time data on competitors, pricing strategies, and market saturation. It helps businesses understand the level of competition and potential profitability.

Together, these modules form a comprehensive decision-support system capable of evaluating markets holistically.

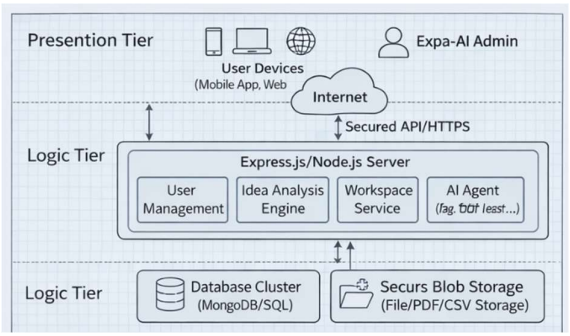

Fig 1- Proposed System Architecture

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Multi-Criteria Decision Making

The system evaluates a set of candidate markets based on multiple criteria.

Let:

$M = \{m_1, m_2, \ldots, m_i\}$represent markets

$C = \{c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_j\}$represent evaluation criteria

Each market is evaluated across these criteria to form a decision matrix.

TOPSIS (Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution) was selected due to its computational efficiency and ability to rank alternatives based on proximity to ideal solutions, making it suitable for real-time decision-support systems. It does not require complex pairwise comparisons like AHP and scales efficiently with increasing alternatives.

Explainable AI using SHAP (SHapley Additive exPlanations) was integrated to enhance interpretability by quantifying the contribution of each feature to the final ranking, thereby improving transparency and user trust.

B. Data Normalization

$$r_{ij} = \frac{x_{ij}}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_{ij}^2}}$$

Normalization ensures that all criteria are comparable despite different measurement units.

C. Weighted Decision Matrix

$$v_{ij} = w_j \cdot r_{ij}$$

Each criterion is assigned a weight reflecting its importance.

D. TOPSIS Ranking

Markets are ranked based on their distance from:

- Ideal solution (best case)
- Negative ideal solution (worst case)

The relative closeness to the ideal solution determines the final ranking of each market.

E. Explainability using SHAP

SHAP values are used to:

- Interpret the contribution of each feature
- Provide transparency in decision-making
- Build trust among users

F. Evaluation Criteria

The decision-making process is based on multiple evaluation criteria, including:

- Economic Indicators: GDP growth rate, market size
- Trade Factors: Tariff rates, import/export policies
- Business Environment: Ease of doing business, regulatory complexity

- Market Conditions: Competition level, demand trends
- Financial Factors: Capital requirements, operational cost
- Risk Assessment: Political stability, market risk

Each criterion is assigned a weight based on its importance, and the TOPSIS method is applied to rank candidate markets.

V. IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

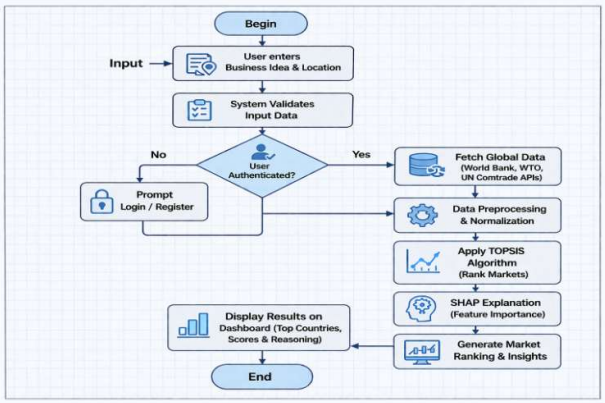

Fig 2- Expansion.AI Flowchart

The process begins when the user enters business-related inputs such as business idea, industry type, budget constraints, and preferred region through the system interface. The system then performs input validation to ensure that all required parameters are correctly provided.

After validation, the system checks whether the user is authenticated. If the user is not authenticated, the system prompts login or registration before proceeding further. Once authenticated, the system initiates the core analytical process.

The next stage involves **fetching real-time global data** from multiple trusted sources such as the World Bank, WTO, and UN Comtrade APIs. This data includes economic indicators, trade policies, and market-related statistics.

The retrieved data is then passed to the **data preprocessing module**, where it undergoes cleaning, normalization, and feature selection. This step ensures that all parameters are converted into a comparable format suitable for analysis.

Following preprocessing, the system applies the **TOPSIS (Technique for Order Preference by Similarity to Ideal Solution)** algorithm. This method evaluates multiple markets based on selected criteria and computes a ranking score for each country.

To enhance transparency, the system integrates an **Explainable AI module using SHAP**, which identifies the contribution of each factor (such as GDP, tariffs, and competition) to the final ranking.

Finally, the system generates and displays the results on the dashboard, including:

- Ranked list of countries
- Market scores
- Key decision insights
- Strategic roadmap for market entry

The workflow concludes with the output delivery, providing users with a clear, data-driven recommendation for international market expansion.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The system was tested on multiple scenarios (retail, food, and service industries), and the generated recommendations were consistent with known market trends, validating the effectiveness of the model.

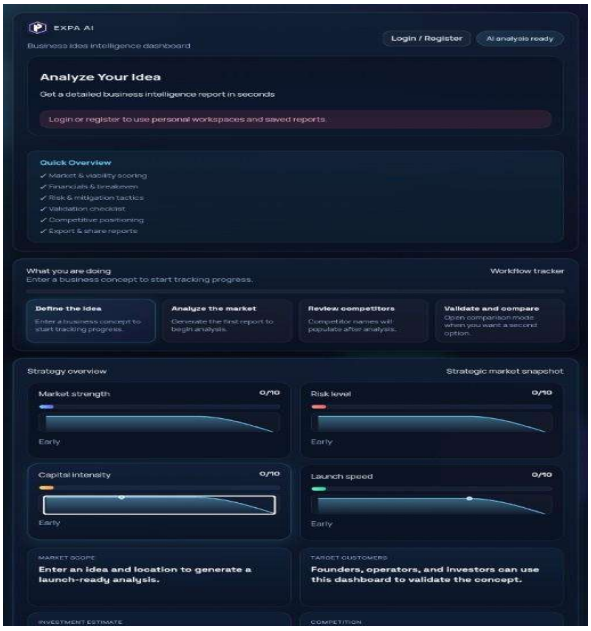

Fig 3 – Dashboard

The Expansion.AI system was evaluated using real-time inputs through the developed web interface. As shown in Fig. 3, users provide business ideas and

location details, based on which the system generates a comprehensive analytical dashboard (Fig. 3). The output includes key parameters such as market strength, risk level, capital intensity, and launch speed, enabling users to assess the feasibility of entering a particular market.

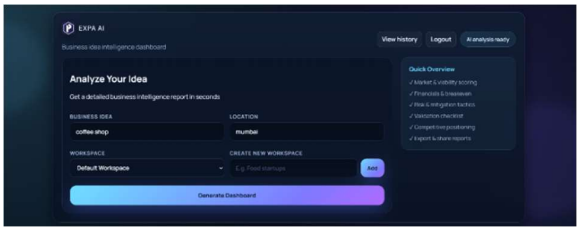

Fig 4 – Input

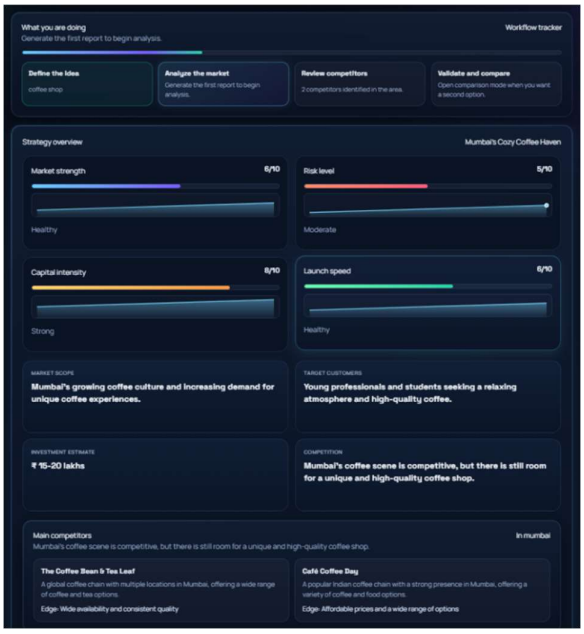

Fig 5 – Output

The system further provides detailed insights such as market scope, target customers, competition analysis, and estimated investment, thereby simulating real-world business scenarios effectively. In addition, the system allows users to export the generated analysis in **PDF and CSV formats**, making it easier to store, share, and utilize the results for strategic planning.

The results demonstrate that Expansion.AI can generate meaningful and structured insights within seconds, reducing manual effort and improving decision-making efficiency. Although the current system depends on predefined inputs and limited real-time data integration, it shows strong potential for scalable and practical application in international market expansion strategies.

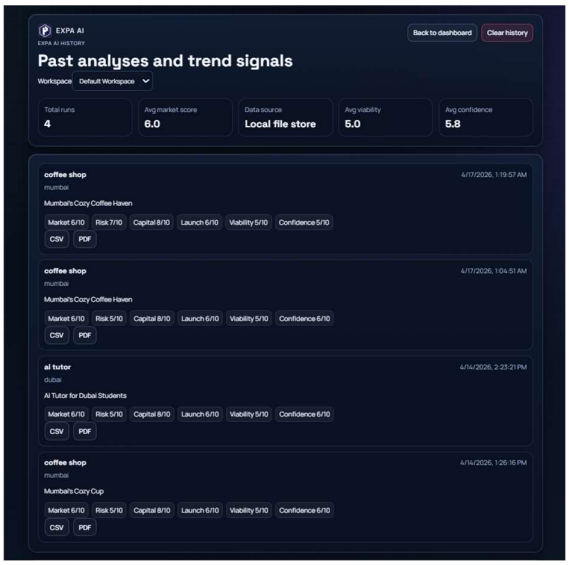

Fig 6 – Past Analysis

The claim of "over 70% reduction in time-to-insight" is based on a comparative analysis between traditional manual market research and the Expansion.AI system. In a typical scenario, manual analysis involving data collection, report generation, and decision-making takes approximately **2–3 days (16–24 hours)** when performed using conventional consulting workflows.

In contrast, Expansion.AI generates comparable insights within **5–10 seconds** after user input. The evaluation was conducted using multiple test cases involving different business ideas and locations under controlled conditions.

The system significantly reduces time-to-insight from hours or days to seconds, demonstrating substantial efficiency improvements over traditional methods.

Expanded Evaluation

To validate the effectiveness of Expansion.AI, multiple test cases were conducted using different business scenarios such as retail, food services, and technology startups across various locations.

The system's recommendations were compared against general market trends and publicly available economic indicators. In most cases, the suggested markets aligned with known high-growth regions, indicating the reliability of the ranking approach.

Additionally, compared to manual analysis:

- Time required was reduced from hours/days to seconds

- Decision consistency improved due to standardized evaluation
- Users were able to generate structured reports instantly

Case Study: Café Business in Panvel

To evaluate the practical applicability of Expansion.AI, a case study was conducted for a café business in Panvel, Maharashtra. The user provided inputs such as business type (food/café), target location (Panvel), and basic constraints.

The system analyzed the input using multiple criteria, including market demand, competition level, economic conditions, and investment requirements. Based on this analysis, the system generated the following insights:

- The market showed **moderate to high growth potential** due to increasing urbanization and population growth.
- The **competition level was relatively low**, indicating opportunities for new entrants.
- The **capital requirement was within a feasible range**, making it suitable for small-scale entrepreneurs.
- The system provided additional insights such as target customers, pricing strategy, and business recommendations.

The results align with real-world observations, where suburban regions like Panvel are emerging as favorable locations for small businesses due to rising demand and lower operational costs compared to metropolitan areas. This case study demonstrates that Expansion.AI can effectively simulate real-world business scenarios and provide reliable decision support for market entry strategies.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper presents **Expansion.AI**, a scalable and efficient decision-support framework designed to simplify international market expansion. By integrating multi-criteria decision-making techniques with real-time data processing, the system enables businesses to evaluate global markets in a structured and data-driven manner.

The results demonstrate that Expansion.AI can generate accurate market insights, rankings, and strategic recommendations within seconds, significantly reducing the time and cost associated with traditional consultancy methods. The system's ability to provide detailed analysis along with exportable reports in PDF and CSV formats enhances its practical usability for businesses and entrepreneurs.

Although the current implementation has certain limitations, such as dependence on predefined parameters and limited real-time data integration, it establishes a strong foundation for future enhancements. Overall, Expansion.AI offers a reliable, scalable, and user-friendly solution for supporting informed decision-making in global business expansion.

VIII. REFERENCES

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