

Emerging advanced topics in an advanced emerging market? International business research in Poland in the period 1990-2014*

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The main objective of this paper is to present the findings of a structured review of contributions to international business research in Poland in the period 1990-2014. In order to address this objective, qualitative and quantitative methods were integrated to identify main research areas, their relative importance and changes thereof within the analysed timeframe, as well as specific research topics within each area. The results indicate that macro- and micro-level internationalisation, followed by international firm competitiveness and international entrepreneurship have consistently remained dominant research areas, although their relative importance has evolved throughout the period under study. Quantitative research methods, with a strong focus on descriptive statistics, have been the main tools in previous contributions. In addition to highlighting the need for more attention to performance- and competitiveness-related issues, the results of the review also prompt IB scholars to devoting more attention to inter-relationships between macro-, meso- and micro-level variables.

Key words: *international business research, literature review, Central and Eastern Europe, emerging markets, business history (JEL: F21, F23, J24, L25, M16)*

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1. Introduction

Being the largest Central and Eastern European (CEE) economy, Poland has gradually increased its integration into the network of global economic ties by increasing its share of world trade and foreign direct investment (Gorynia/Nowak/Wolniak 2006). The rising internationalisation of Poland's economy, industries and firms has frequently been considered as one the key drivers of the country's transformation toward a market-based economy. In fact, the significant political and economic shift in the CEE region in 1989 opened both the economies and firms of the region to the global economy. This process was simultaneously facilitated by the implementation of a new economic policy, which *inter alia* included liberalised prices, privatisation of previously state-owned firms, a shift of the geographic profile of trade relations from the former Soviet bloc towards Western European economies, and not least opening several key industries to foreign direct investment (Gorynia/Nowak/Wolniak 2003). Furthermore, similar to some other post-communist countries from the region, the transformation also required the convertibility of the national currency, foreign trade monopolization, cancellation of non-tariff trade barriers, liberalised customs tariffs or the restoration of economic freedom for international business transactions (Gorynia 2002). These changes were further complemented by Poland's accession to international organisations such as the OECD and particularly the European Union. Indeed, the increasing internationalisation of Poland's economy can be reflected by its share of global exports and foreign direct investment (FDI) stocks. Poland moved from the position of 38th exporter in value terms to the 27th rank between 1990 and 2010 (Gorynia 2012).

In line with the internationalisation of economies and firms from the CEE region, Poland being only one of numerous cases, the academic discipline of international business also embarked upon a brand new stage of development. Many economics and management scholars from the CEE started reflecting on the macro- and micro-economic level globalisation of the region, providing conceptual and empirical contributions to the academic debate on the specificity of internationalisation into and from emerging markets. As Obój (2014) put it, emerging markets constitute a promising ground for refining and enriching extant theoretical concepts of international business. However, after more than two decades of economic transformation in the region, the present economic positioning of CEE economies is highly heterogeneous and, in some instances, highly ambiguous (Trąpczyński 2015). In the case of Poland, some international institutions still classify the country as an emerging market (see e.g. MSCI 2013), while others regard it as an advanced economy (see e.g. UNCTAD 2013). FTSE (2013) assigns Poland to the "Advanced Emerging" category in terms of, *inter alia*, market institutions quality, consistency and predictability, stability and

market access.¹ This indicates an intermediate position and inevitably raises a valid question as to how research in the context of a mid-income country can contribute to extant international business scholarship, which has strongly accentuated either the traditional developed country contexts, in which a bulk of the mainstream international business theory is rooted, or emerging countries, with BRIC countries occupying a prominent role. Thus, the main aim of this review article is to examine the evolution of international business research in Poland in 1990-2014, with a particular focus on the relative relevance of different sub-disciplines, specific research themes addressed, research methods and publication outlets.² Thereby, it is to be examined whether and to what extent research on a specific context has contributed and can further contribute to the field international business. In order to fulfil this objective, the findings of a structured review of conceptual and empirical contributions to international business scholarship in Poland are presented and discussed in this paper.

The paper first outlines the literature review methods used. Subsequently, the results of the literature review are synthetically presented, with a specific focus on the identification of key research areas and the research themes tackled therein. Quantitative summaries of the observed tendencies are enriched with a discussion of main research topics addressed, as well as research gaps and areas for further conceptual and methodical development. In the final section of the paper some preliminary indications for future research are set out based on the findings of the present review, bearing implications for Poland in specific, and – to some extent – for the CEE in general.

2. Review scope and method

In order to define the scope of the literature review, the academic discipline under study should be clearly delimited. According to Daniels and Radebaugh (2001: 3-4), international business refers to "all commercial transactions – private or governmental – between two or more countries". This rather broad categorisation can be refined by distinguishing possible conceptual approaches and levels of analysis. Gorynia (2012) proposes that international economic activity can be analysed from the perspective of both economics and management. Economic explanations are mostly focused on macro-level research questions, while micro-level analyses have predominantly adopted the view of management science. Hence, for the purpose of the present review it is broadly assumed that international business embraces research problems and variables embedded at the levels of the economy, region or industry sector, and firm. Thereby, they can be approached from both economics and management perspectives, a common denominator being the preoccupation of each contribution with issues related to

¹ Some CEE countries such as Slovenia and Slovakia rank even lower - namely among "Frontier" markets.

² The present literature study is a continuation of a previous analysis presented in Puślecki, Staszków, and Trąpczyński (2014).

cross-border activities at the said levels of analysis. While no binding "catalogue" of research topics can be identified, based on the authors' literature studies, a selection of research areas was established for the purpose of the present review (see Table 1).

Table 1: Selected subdisciplines of international business

Level of analysis	Research areas
Macro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Globalisation of the Polish economy
Meso	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International regional competitiveness (clusters, technology parks)
Micro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firm internationalisation (export, FDI, etc.) • International entrepreneurship • International firm competitiveness • International marketing • Organisation & strategic management • International HRM • International alliances • International firm cooperation

In order to narrow down the confines of international business research in Poland, two classificatory assumptions were made by the authors:

- 1) the reviewed research should pertain to Polish economic activity abroad or foreign economic activity in Poland, at either macro-, meso- or micro-economic levels of analysis;
- 2) the authors of reviewed contributions should be affiliated with Polish research centres.

Although these criteria can be criticised for oversimplifying research reality and excluding certain valuable contributions, they nevertheless allow delimiting the research field along the dimensions of content and authorship, which has a two-fold rationale. Firstly, it implies that international business in Poland may contribute to the discipline in general by generating insights which are specifically related to an advanced emerging country. Secondly, such delimitation allows diagnosing the current level of advancement of this research field in Poland.³ In line with the aforementioned delimitation of the field, research contributions devoted to the Polish economy, its meso-systems (regions and industry sectors) and firms were taken into account.

For the purpose of data collection, keyword-driven search was undertaken in leading international journal databases (including *inter alia* EBSCO, ScienceD-

³ Hence, studies carried out at foreign research centres in which Poland was (one of) the empirical setting(s) under examination, were not included in this review.

rect, Emerald, JSTOR, Proquest). The search process involved a dedicated set of keywords in English and Polish languages, specific to each of the pre-defined categories (see Figure 1), and their different combinations.⁴ In order to enhance the coverage of Polish contributions, which have traditionally recurred to national publication outlets, BazEkon, the leading Polish database of printed journals, books and book chapters, was also used. Moreover, the desk research also included non-indexed sources, such as books, monographs, conference proceedings, etc., aimed at complementing articles identified in the said databases. These were accessed by using the library database of the Poznan University of Economics and applying similar combinations of keywords as for online resources. In the last step, the research findings were verified for the fulfilment of the aforementioned criteria for geographic scope, authorship and original contribution. Finally, a sample of 342 journal articles, chapters or monographs was collected.⁵

Different methods of critical literature reviews in the field of international business and management have been used in order to take stock of extant research contributions, to identify the most salient features of previous works and to reflect constructively on the most promising avenues for further investigation.⁶ Due to the fact that the field of international business is highly heterogeneous in terms of theoretical approaches, levels of analysis and research designs used, the first step in the present review was a preliminary qualitative analysis (Seuring/Gold 2012) of papers from specific research areas.⁷ Thereby, more detailed research topics, methods and key findings and other bibliometric attributes were coded for each contribution. In order to enable a consistent system of codes within research areas, each research area was analysed by a dedicated researcher. Furthermore, in order to provide an account on the relative relevance of each research area and its changes within the analysed period, quantitative analysis followed (Schuh/Rossmann 2009). The integration of content analysis (qualitative) with frequencies of the attributes concerned (quantitative) aimed at providing a possibly exhaustive and comprehensive perspective on extant scholarship and its major contributions, as well as highlighting the paths for future research.

⁴ Due to the significant number of research areas, a detailed list of keywords would exceed the scope of the present paper. Thus, detailed keywords are available from the authors upon request. In general, they are closely related to the research topics, the most widespread of which have been presented in the present paper.

⁵ This paper provides current results of an ongoing literature review project, which is to be updated and extended on a regular basis.

⁶ See e.g. Schmid and Kotulla (2009).

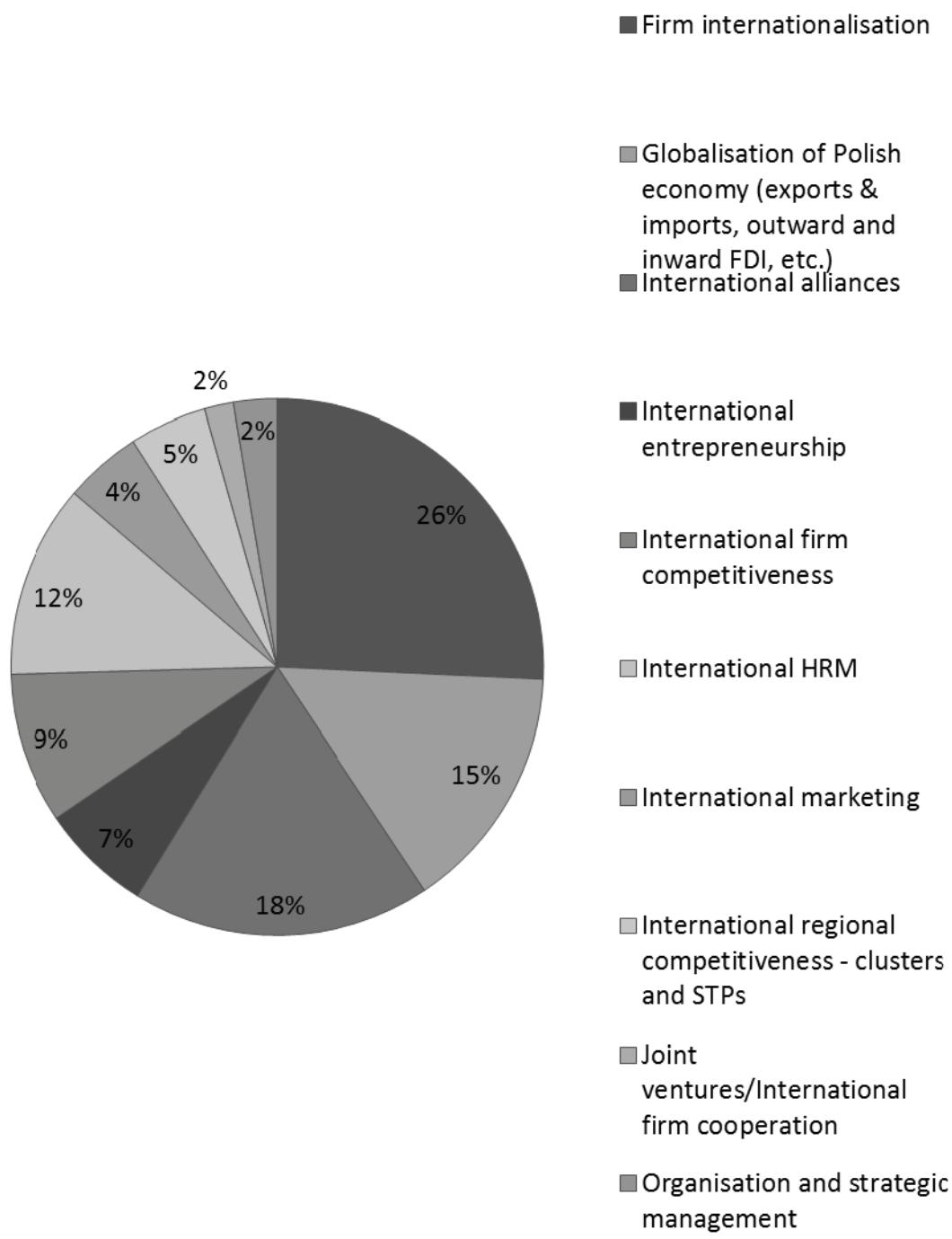
⁷ A meta-analysis cannot be used for heterogeneous operationalisations and research methods (Sousa, Martínez-López & Coelho 2008), which is the case of the present research sample.

3. Literature review results

3.1 Relative Relevance of Research Areas

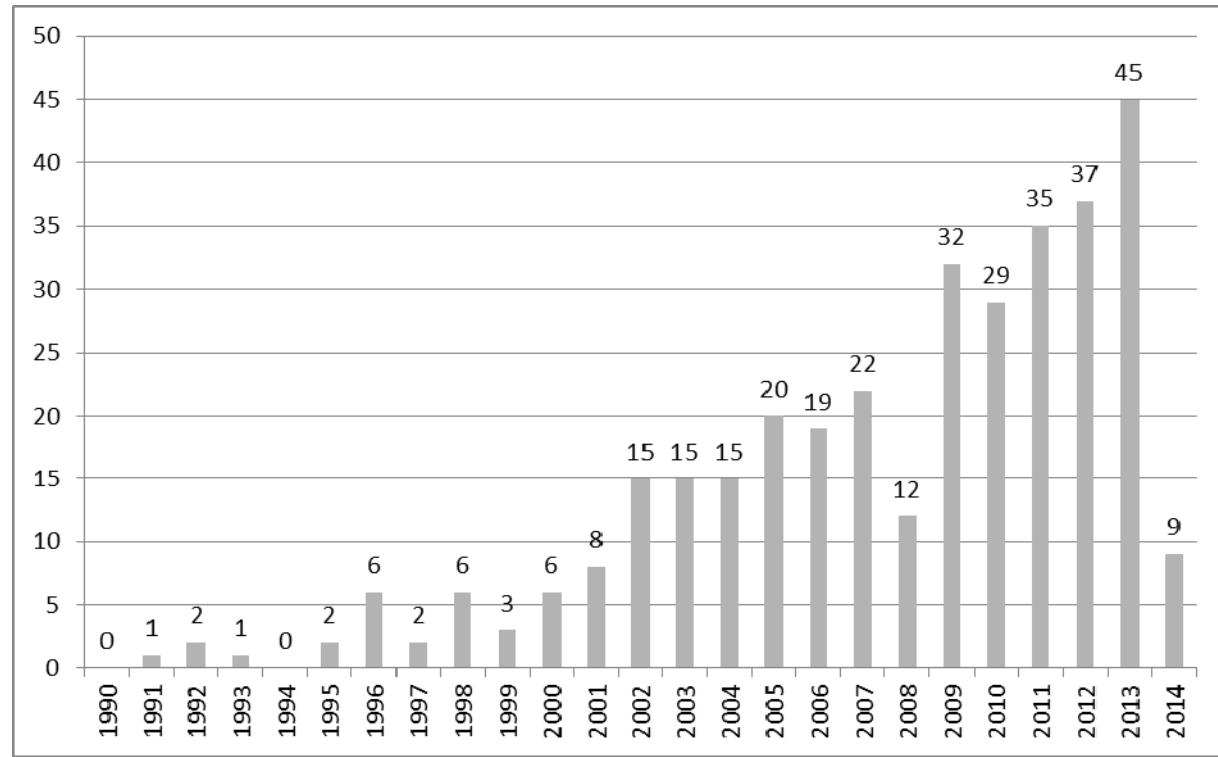
Within the reviewed sample of 342 contributions of Polish authors in the years 1990-2014, the area of firm internationalisation (26%) has remained a predominant field of inquiry (see Figure 1). The globalisation of the Polish economy, concerned with similar questions to the former area, but at a macroeconomic level, constitutes 15%, while international firm makes up 18%, international

Figure 1: Structure of specific research areas (N=342)



human resource management (HRM) 12%, whilst international entrepreneurship 7% of all research areas within the examined sample. The structure of research areas appears to coincide with the present standing of Poland as a post-transformation economy, whereby its rising internationalisation has consistently raised the interest of scholars looking into both international trade and FDI inflows and outflows or the competitiveness of the newly internationalised economy, as well as phenomena related to foreign firm activities in Poland as an emerging CEE market and the rising tide of foreign expansion undertaken by Polish firms, alone or by exploiting international inter-firm relationships. Among the publications within the analysed period (see Figure 2), it is to be noted that the largest number of articles was published in 2013 (45 articles). On the whole, a positive upward trend in the number of international business contributions could clearly be identified, which is coinciding with the aforementioned internationalisation of the economy, sectors and firms. Especially starting in 2005, the annual output in different publication sources started to grow visibly. This trend coincides with the accession of Poland to the European Union, which facilitated internationalisation of firms from and into Poland, providing simultaneously a fertile empirical basis for investigation. At a more technical line of explanation, international business scholars obtained an ever increasing access to secondary data sources, which gave rise to new research ideas.

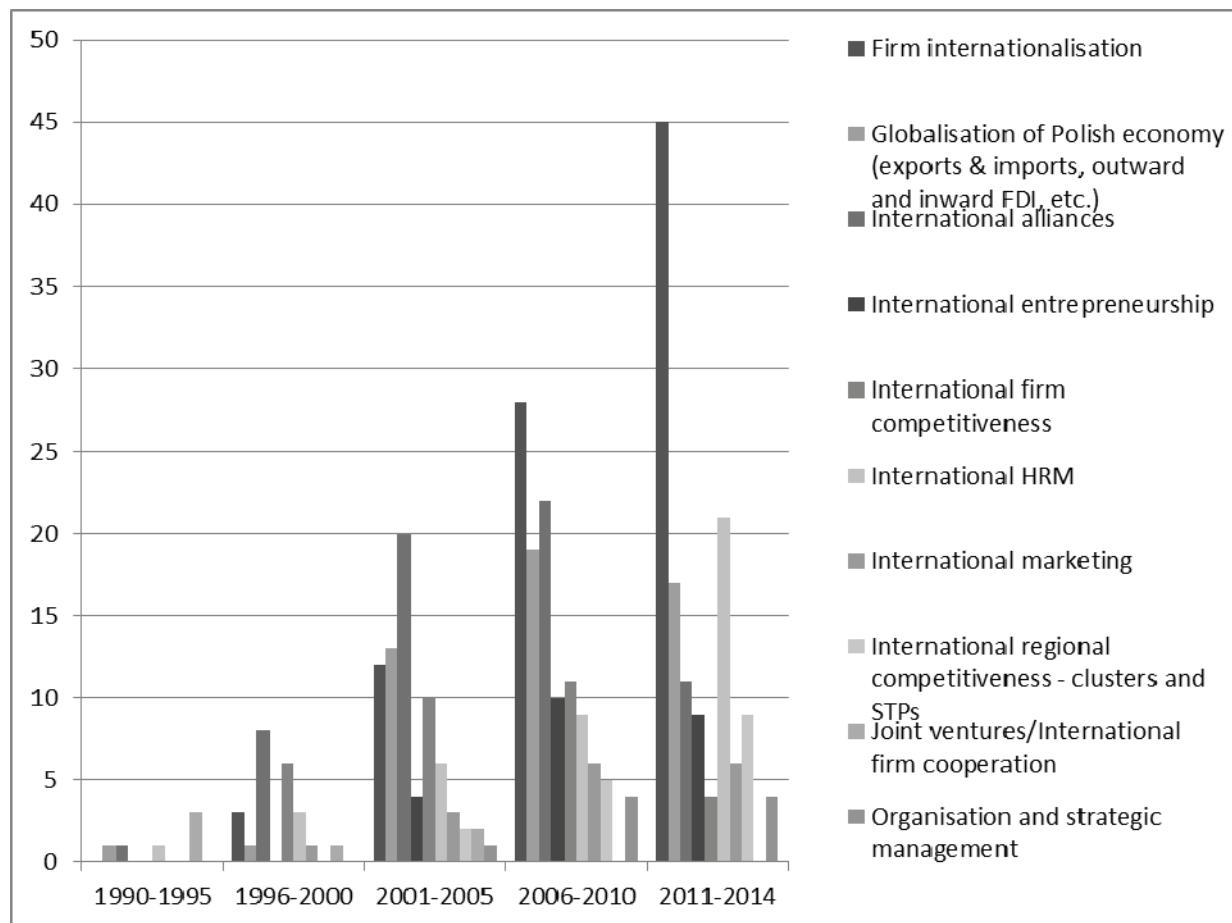
Figure 2. Changes in the number of scholarly contributions (N=342)



Taking a glance at different periods, namely 1990-1995, 1996-2000, 2001-2005, 2006-2010, 2011-2014, the relative relevance of each research area has clearly

evolved (see Figure 3). On the one hand, firm internationalisation, globalisation of the economy and international entrepreneurship have prevailed, especially in the periods of 2001-2005, 2006-2010 and 2011-2014. For other research areas, there have been more abrupt changes. In the years 1990-1995, after the outset of the transformation period, there were merely 6 articles published in the areas of international alliances, globalisation of the Polish economy, international HRM, joint-ventures or other forms of international firm cooperation. This observation reflects the fact that these phenomena still remained at a nascent stage. However, it must be also mentioned that the low number of related contributions may also be due to the difficulties of identifying contributions from that early period, which are not necessarily available in indexed sources. Another relevant finding relates to change in the structure of research areas, whereby outward internationalisation of the economy, sectors and firms is gradually replacing inward internationalisation into Poland, which can be identified across all specific research areas and detailed topics. Conversely, inter-firm cooperation was extensively covered in the 1990s, however it gradually lost on relevance in favour of issues related to international firm competitiveness, international alliances and management-related problems from such functional areas as marketing or human resource management.

Figure 3: Changes in the relevance of specific research areas (N=342)

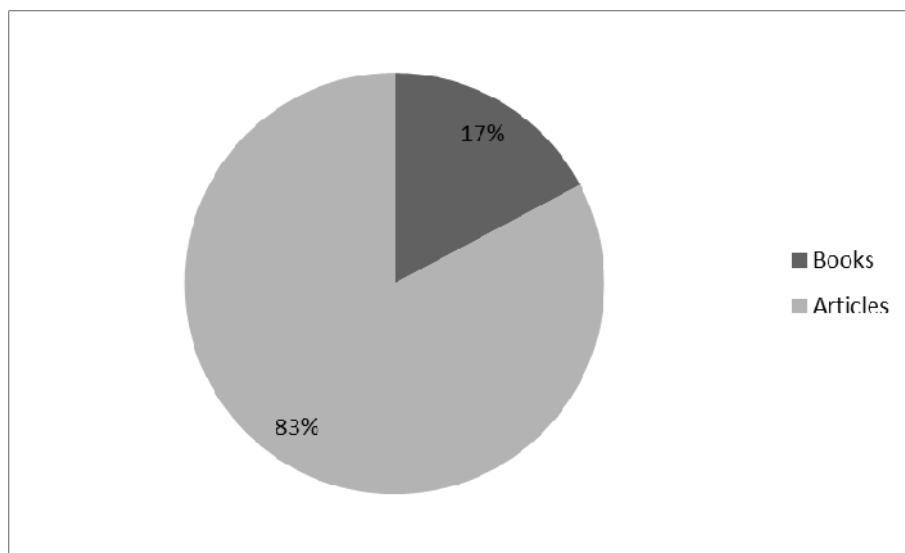


3.2 Publication sources and research methodology

While searching through paper databases, particularly Polish, such as BazEkon or catalogues of university libraries, the authors found many publications providing an overview of extant literature in the fields of interest (more than 800 sources). According to the previous assumptions, however, they were not qualified for further study since they presented a high level of generality, not referring strictly to the Polish market, despite the fact that their conclusions or conceptual insights could be applied to the international market.

The results of the present review indicate that 83% of the contributions were academic papers in journals, while 17% books and book chapters or conference proceedings. As regards publication channels in which the publications appeared (Figure 4), the most popular journal recurred to Polish scholars was *Gospodarka Narodowa*, accounting for a total of 24 articles in the sample of 342 results in the entire period of 1990-2014. The second most important journal used was the *Journal of Economics and Management* with 18 articles published in the period under review (see Table 2). The relative relevance of particular outlets in the research sample can nonetheless be influenced by the existence of special issues devoted to international business, thus biasing the structure of publication outlets.

Figure 4: Distribution of publication forms (N=342)

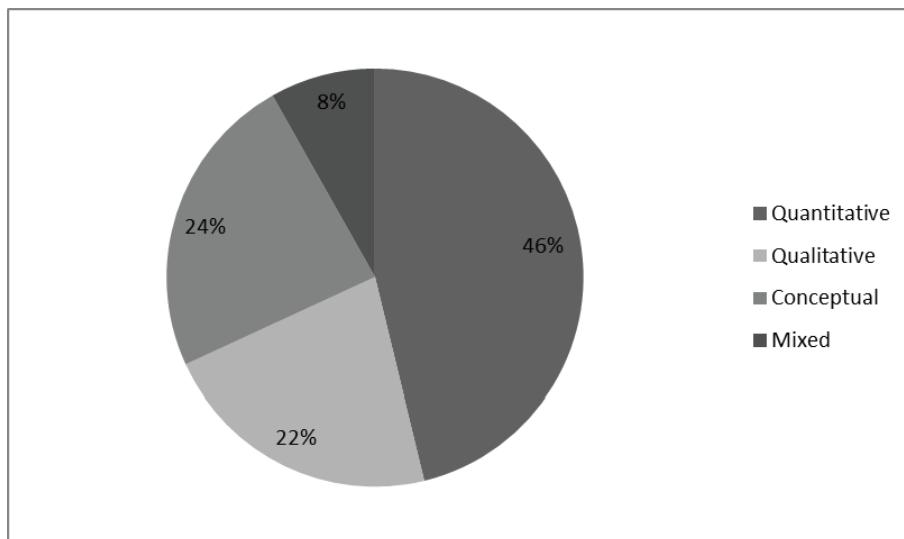


As far as research designs of the reviewed contributions are concerned, almost 50% of all articles (46%) used quantitative methods, with a clear predominance of descriptive statistics, such as means, medians and frequencies. At the same time, primary data were collected mostly from postal (or electronic) surveys. More complex econometric methods, such as regression analyses (16 articles), cluster analyses (2 articles), or other modelling techniques (2 articles), have remained particularly scarce (for notable exceptions see e.g. Klimek 2011; or Wilíński 2012). If they were used, they were mostly applied to secondary data.

Table 2: Top journals for Polish IB contributions in 1990-2014

Name of the journal	No. of articles
Gospodarka Narodowa	24
Journal of Economics and Management	18
Zeszyty Naukowe UE Wrocław	15
Marketing i Rynek	12
Zeszyty Naukowe UEP	11
Ekonomika i Organizacja Przedsiębiorstwa	9
Przegląd Organizacji	8
Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi	7
Poznań University of Economics Review	6
Ekonomista	6
Organizacja i Kierowanie	6
Eastern European Economics	5

In regards to data collection methods, few research projects recurred to advanced tools, such as CATI, with some exceptions (see e.g. Jarosiński 2011; Witek-Hajduk 2009, 2012). Qualitative methods were used in only 22% of contributions, with a visible predominance of descriptive case studies, relying on both primary and secondary data. However, within studies based on qualitative analyses, very few attempts at theory building by using grounded theory (such as Gorynia/Nowak/Trąpczyński/Wolniak 2013, 2015) or qualitative content analysis (such as Kowalik/Baranowska-Prokop 2013) were undertaken. In regards to the number of theoretical, review or purely conceptual contributions, these could be found in 24% of reviewed contributions. Mixed-method designs combining qualitative and quantitative methods (regardless of the role of either research method) were applied in merely 8% of contributions (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Structure of research methods used (N=342)

It should be mentioned that the present article is the first one to comprehensively describe the achievements of Polish scientists in the field of international business. The current database will be developed in the coming years. A similar approach can be seen in the articles concerning history of British business. Articles on the above mentioned subject can be found in the *Journal of Business History*, beginning from 1988 (Ollerenshaw 1990), up to the year 2005 (Rollings 2007). Ollerenshaw (1990) analysed articles, which appeared in 1988 in scientific journals concerning British business aspects, such as transport and trade, employers, labour and education, or multinational enterprises. Research based on the same assumptions was carried out in subsequent years (eg. Matthews 1991; Wilson 1994; Singleton 1996; French 1999). Over time new issues were added, such as economic development and performance, learning networks, trade and international business, government and regulations. A similar analysis on the history of Italian business was carried out by Carnevali (1998) and covered the period 1991-1997. Such comprehensive literature reviews are good examples to follow in other academic papers.

3.3 Research topics and research gaps

The supplementary qualitative analysis allowed identifying and coding detailed research themes belonging to each of the aforementioned research areas, thus reflecting the specific contents of the reviewed contributions. Within every research area, research questions can be identified which have remained relatively under-researched and those which are particularly strongly covered. The results of this coding process are outlined in Table 3. However, owing to space limitations, the discussion in subsequent sections does not embrace all examined research contributions and thus only provides an illustration for the trends identified in the course of the analysis.⁸

With regard to studies positioned at the macroeconomic level of analysis, research concerned with the inward perspective has sought both to diagnose the current state of investments into Poland (e.g. Domański 2003), their impact on economic development (e.g. Weresa 2004; Zorska 2005) or regional spillovers (e.g. Dorożyńska/Dorożyński/Urbaniak 2011). At the same time, a significant number of contributions has dealt with the outward, active internationalisation of the economy via exports or foreign direct investment (e.g. Gorynia et al. 2003; Gorynia et al. 2006; Gorynia/Nowak/Wolniak 2008), including such aspects as FDI location (e.g. Obłój/Wąsowska 2012), or FDI sectoral structure and outward to inward FDI ratio development as a sign of economic development (e.g. Gorynia et al. 2008). Thereby, initial efforts have been undertaken to develop a discussion around institutional determinants of both inward (e.g. Świerkocki 2011) and outward (Gorynia 2006) internationalisation of the economy.

⁸ Only quoted contributions are included in the reference list. The entire list of reviewed contributions is available on demand from the authors.

However, more normative contributions assessing the effectiveness of economic policy facilitating both aspects of Poland's internationalisation still appear to be in shortage. This refers particularly to specific analyses of the system of support measures targeted at exports and FDI. In this respect, the state of advanced of Polish studies linking policies to the international expansion of the economy, as compared to analyses available for other emerging markets (Buckley/Clegg/Cross/Voss 2010; Luo/Xue/Han 2010; Xue/Han 2010),

Table 3. Detailed research topics in each research area⁹

Research area	Research topic	# of articles
Globalisation of the economy	FDI location structure	15
	FDI sectoral structure	10
	Export/import development	9
	OFDI/IFDI ratio development	9
	Export/FDI support measures	9
	Economic policy	9
	FDI externalities	5
	Government support	5
	Host-country determinants	4
	Industry-level factors	3
	Institutional perspective	2
	Internationalisation performance	2
	Competitiveness	1
	Expansion motives	1
International regional competitiveness, clusters and STPs	Institutional environment	7
	Technology and knowledge transfer	4
	Cluster cooperation	3
	R&D market	2
	Tenants analysis	1
	Cluster financing	1
Firm internationalisation	Internationalisation paths	28
	Entry modes	24
	Expansion motives	22
	Internationalisation degree	20
	FDI location	12
	Internationalisation performance	12
	Firm competitiveness	12
	FDI barriers	9
	Resource determinants	9
	Information sources	2
	Internationalisation paths	14
	Internationalisation degree	8
International entrepreneurship	Born globals	6
	Entry modes	6
	Internationalisation motives	5
	Resource determinants	4
	Competitive potential	4
	Competitive strategy	3
	Performance	2

⁹ A particular research contribution can address several research topics.

Research area	Research topic	# of articles
International firm competitiveness	Internationalisation degree	11
	Competitive potential	9
	Competitive strategy	9
	Resources	8
	Competitive position	6
	Gap to foreign firms	6
	EU accession	4
	Effect of foreign entry	4
	Economic policy	3
	Internationalisation paths	1
	Expansion motives	1
	Competitive strategy	6
	Internationalisation degree	5
International marketing	Competitive potential	3
	Entry modes	3
	Internationalisation paths	3
	Resource determinants	2
	Location choice	2
	Foreign sales	2
	Market research methods	2
	Internationalisation degree	3
	HQ subsidiary relations	3
	Competitive strategy	2
Organisation & strategic management (in international context)	Entry modes	2
	Internationalisation	1
	Business model	1
	Firm performance	1
	Market choice	1
	Location choice	1
	HRM Overview	10
	Career management	9
	Trends in HRM	9
	Work performance	5
International HRM	Culture	4
	Innovation in HRM	4
	Downsizing	1
	Women perspective	1
	Leadership	1
	Inter-firm relations	18
	Inter-organisational relationships	10
	Alliance management	10
	Alliance portfolio/Alliance network	9
	Mergers & acquisitions	5
International alliances	Marketing alliances	4
	Alliance development	4
	Coopetition	4
	Technological creation	2
	Comparative analysis	3
	Supply chain management	2
	Joint Ventures motives	9
	Joint Ventures / International firm organisation	

At the mesoeconomic level, as far as the international regional competitiveness area is concerned, within the research area of clusters and science and technology parks (STP) most articles were theoretical or conceptual. Researchers focused mainly on the institutional environment (e.g. Dziura 2013; Krzak 2011; Marciniec/Guliński 2002; Piątyszek-Pych 2013), which enables technology and knowledge transfer (e.g. Capello/Olechnicka/Gorzelak 2013; Guliński/Marciniec/Wolniewicz 2002; Jankowska/Pietrzykowski 2013). In this respect, an apparent gap related to cluster cooperation and STP's tenant analysis occurred. In the databases used, the authors identified only one article that systematically described the structure of tenants of technology parks in Poland and in the world (Marciniec 2007). The research carried out by Marciniec (2007) requires further development, for since 2007 numerous new institutions of this type were established. The authors of the present literature review found articles concerning services provided by STPs, but their results were based mainly on descriptive statistics, not empirical research (e.g. Staszków 2013). Those were provided by International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovations, which comprises more than 350 STPs around the world. The authors also recognise the need to provide studies concerning STP performance measurement, since both public and private-owned STPs gained on importance in Poland after 2004. The monitoring of performance of technology parks is not simple due to the variety of the legal forms and financing schemes the parks feature. It is usual for a park that is public-funded that generating profit is not its principal aim. However, for private parks to achieve their statutory objectives, including enhancing entrepreneurship and knowledge transfer, it is a prerequisite for generating profits. A good benchmark in this respect are the articles of foreign authors, like Fukugawa (2006), Colombo and Delmastro (2002), Wallsten (2004), Lindelöf and Löfsten (2002). When it comes to research concerning clusters, they were mostly conceptual, or as it was mentioned before, results from existing literature (e.g. Piątyszek-Pych 2013; Jankowska 2011; Kowalski 2011). The said research focused on issues such as institutional environment, the role of clusters in global economy, internationalisation of clusters or clusters development paths. Few of them were not only literature reviews, but also indicated case studies as an illustration of theoretical concepts (e.g. Bojar/Bis 2006; Jankowska 2010).

At the microeconomic level, themes related to firm internationalisation have notably included foreign expansion motives (e.g. Gorynia/Nowak/Wolniak 2007; Karpińska-Mizielńska/Smuga 2007; Maleszyk 2007), FDI locations (Gorynia et al. 2013), foreign market entry modes (e.g. Gołębiowski/Witek-Hajduk 2007; Klimek 2011), FDI effectiveness evaluation (e.g. Jaworek/Szóstek 2008), or internationalisation performance (e.g. Doryń 2011). There have been relatively few articles regarding FDI barriers and resource determinants (Jaworek 2008). It appears that with several exceptions (e.g. Gorynia/Nowak/ Trąpczyński/Wolniak 2014; Szałucka 2008; Szałucka/Szóstek 2013), the link between internationalisa-

tion and foreign market performance, as well as the performance of the entire multinational firm as a result of undertaking internationalisation (e.g. Doryń 2011), has not been strongly explored in extant scholarship related to emerging markets, particularly those in the CEE region. This remains in contrast with the relatively high number of similar studies in the context of advanced economies.¹⁰

Furthermore, with several exceptions, there have been few attempts at using more advanced qualitative methods for formulating hypotheses for future research (e.g. Gorynia et al. 2014). At the same time, hypotheses have been predominantly verified by the use of mere descriptive statistics rather than advanced statistical modelling, which would have significantly enhanced the normative value of the obtained results, as well as their comparability with findings from advanced economies. Similar conclusions can be drawn for the area of international entrepreneurship, which has applied similar research questions as the area of firm internationalisation to the phenomenon of entrepreneurial firms and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), especially in relation to early internationalisation (e.g. Jarosiński 2013; Kowalik/Baranowska-Prokop 2013). One can also note a recent surge of studies devoted to born globals (e.g. Jarosiński 2013), however these still remain at a relatively early, descriptive stage. While this category of studies has also indicated an early stage of international entrepreneurship in Poland, expressed mostly by exports (e.g. Witek-Hajduk 2009; Jarosiński 2011; Wach 2012) and driven by the motive of gaining new markets (e.g. Jarosiński 2013), there have been few relationship-testing attempts (such as e.g. Nowiński/Nowara 2011) at explaining the most salient drivers of the behaviour of young firms from an advanced emerging market, as well as their specific characteristics as compared to their counterparts from advanced economies, where the related research has thrived for decades. Similar to the overall research stream on internationalisation, the most underrepresented topics also feature firm performance, as well as the relationship between international entrepreneurship and firm competitiveness (see e.g. Musteen/Francis/Datta 2010; Zhou/Wu 2014).

Research devoted to international firm competitiveness has predominantly concerned such issues as internationalisation degree, internationalisation paths and different dimensions of firm competitiveness, by using predominantly descriptive statistics (e.g. Gorynia/Jankowska 2013). It may appear quite interesting that whilst political factors have been studied frequently in the context of Poland's transformation, there is an apparent lack of articles exploring how economic policy shapes firm competitiveness (e.g. Gorynia 2006). As regards the area of international marketing, popular topics include marketing strategies in foreign markets (e.g. Jonas 2013) or the role of marketing resources as a constit-

¹⁰ Compare e.g. Brouthers, Brouthers and Werner (2008); Chan, Makino, and Isobe (2010); Fang, Wade, Delios, and Beamish (2007) or Gao, Pan, Lu, and Tao (2008).

uent of competitive potential (e.g. Szymura-Tyc 2009). Thereby, somewhat neglected topics include the coordination of international marketing activities in foreign markets, which may be related to the aforementioned early stage of international expansion by foreign firms. In the area of organisation and strategic management in an international context, most notable contributions relate to business models in firm internationalisation (e.g. Gołębiowski/Dudzik/Lewandowska/Witek-Hajduk 2008) or value chain configuration decision of Polish firms (e.g. Dzikowska 2012), whereby there has been no research into the coordination of organisational structure decisions or strategic manoeuvres of Polish firms across foreign markets, or on the evolving roles of foreign subsidiaries in Poland. This field of research has been influential in international business research in the context of advanced economies¹¹, thus its striking paucity in the Polish context cannot be any longer justified by the early stage of the related phenomena.

Researchers belonging to International HRM focused predominantly on career management and new trends in HRM. Many articles in this area were conceived with the use of qualitative studies based on case studies. As it was mentioned before, there are many articles concerning HRM written by Polish authors, but they often focus only on the Polish market without any connections to the international level. Nevertheless, the authors identified papers indicating also international examples to the subjects of innovations in HRM (e.g. Borkowska 2010; Świetlikowski 2014), influence of culture on HR management (e.g., Buchelt 2012; Zajac 2012) or work performance (e.g. Oczki 2013; Gajdzik 2014; Grabus 2014). Extant research also focused on current trends in HRM, such as outsourcing in HR (Stuss 2012) or freelancing (Cewińska 2012). However, there appears to be a deficit of scientific papers concerning the leadership or women perspective in HRM from Polish perspective.

Taking into account the research area related to joint ventures and international firm organisation, there were only 9 articles and all of them concerned joint ventures motives (Andruszkiewicz/Gronski/van de Ven 2001; Cygler 2009; Gołębiowska-Tataj/Klonowski 2009; Kostecki/Nowakowski/Walkowicz 1996; Łuczak 2001; Miciński 1992; Sroka 1996; Uchman 1991; Zembura 2002). The second research area – international alliances includes 63 articles. The most essential research topic pertains to inter-organisational relationships (28 articles). The authors of the reviewed papers focused mainly on the relationship between firms (Gierczyński/Wójcik 2013; Galas 1998), as well as between firms and other organisations (Guzek 1992), taking into account different aspects, *inter alia* cultural context (Golonka 2013), risk management (Szczepański/Świątowiec-Szczepańska 2012), sources of competitive advantage (Rudawska 2010), as well as marketing alliances (Grębosz 2009, 2010; Sznajder 2007,

¹¹ See e.g. Birkinshaw (1997); Ghoshal (1987) or Rugman and Verbeke (2001).

2009). The underrepresented topics included notably supply chain management (Kisperska-Moron/Swierczek 2006; De Haan/Kisperska-Moron/Płaczek 2007), comparative studies (Duda 2003; Kirby/Jones-Evans/Futo/ Kwiatkowski/Schwalbach 1996; Lascu/Manrai/Manrai/Kleczek 2006), strategic alliances in distribution channels (Mehta et al. 2006), or technological cooperation (Arog-yaswamya/Kozioł 2005; Puślecki 2009). Based on the conducted analysis, it can be observed that there is an urgent need for papers related to technological cooperation, such as strategic technology alliances (STA), different modes of alliances used by Polish firms, alliance portfolios in different sectors, as well as papers focused on alliance management and alliance management tools (Puślecki 2010, 2009). What is also important in updated database after verification of 259 Polish articles in BazEkon related to international alliances and selection of 50 only few articles focused on primary studies (Baskiewicz 2012; Chroszczak/Ujwary-Gil 2003; Chwistecka-Dudek/Sroka 2012; Cygler 2000, 2009; Drewniak 2003, 2004; Galas 1998; Gliszczynski/Wójcik 2013; Grębosz 2009; Kozłowski 2005; Kozyra 2002, 2005; Sroka 1996, 2004; Stachowicz-Kordel 2004; Strzyżewska 2008, 2011). Others are mainly focused on literature reviews or discussions of international alliances theories. Some articles include examples of alliances or more or less developed case studies. At this point it should be taken into account that it is difficult to collect data about alliances from Polish firms. The research topic was addressed by many authors and the effective response rates of selected sample in many research were low. It could be the result of a different mindset of Polish managers, who are not equally open towards sharing knowledge or data about firms as compared to research in the context of Western economies, or in fact not big involvement of Polish companies in domestic and international alliances. Another factor may be the very sensitive nature of this area of research, which in many studies includes success rate of alliances, alliance best practice, partner selection, alliance management or alliance failure. This sort of information is difficult to be collected from firms as its unwanted disclosure could have a negative effect on their entire international strategy. Despite the difficult access to firm data, many Polish researchers tried to conduct different research projects, including for instance alliance management, alliance networks, co-operation, transformation of firms, partner selection or inter-firm cooperation on different levels, including SMS or cross-border relations like Polish-German cooperation. In those cases both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used. It should be also highlighted that the results of these research efforts could be truly interesting for different comparative analyses, especially in emerging regions like CEE (Central and Eastern Europe) or MENA (Middle East and North Africa) as well as could provide some input to the development of both alliance theory and alliance management.

4. Conclusion and future research recommendations

The findings of the present review are one of the few exhaustive summaries of the scope, structure and advancement of international business research in Poland (with the exception of e.g. Puślecki/Staszków/Trąpczyński 2014). One of the main intended contributions of the paper is related to the application of a systematic approach, which allows for analysing the structure of different research issues and their change in relevance throughout the analysed timeframe. Moreover, apart from identifying the main research problems raised so far, the relative paucity of empirical evidence in certain aspects was to be stated, thus indicating promising avenues for future conceptual development and empirical efforts. Following Uhlenbruck and De Castro's (2000) claim that economies under transition provide fascinating grounds for refining existing management theories, international business scholarship in the CEE region could potentially contribute to the development of the discipline and its particular topical areas.

The paper clearly suffers from several limitations. The sample size still requires further enhancement in order to be more representative and avoid the bias in the structure of publication outlets. Furthermore, the coding of specific research them is subject to subjective judgement of researchers, even if it is consistent within research themes. This could possibly potentially make code allocation arbitrary, despite attempts at objectivism. Also, going into breadth obviously sacrifices depth, which one could criticise in the present review.

Nevertheless, this review of the state of the art of international business research in Poland, despite its apparent weaknesses, provides suggestions for future research, in order for the advancement of research to catch up with the rising advancement of the internationalisation process of this emerging market. In fact, the particular location of Poland in the proximity of both advanced economies on the one hand, and emerging markets in Eastern Europe on the other hand, both gaining on importance for Poland's economy and business for different underlying reasons, poses in itself a unique research context, which should be more consciously and purposefully exploited by researchers, especially those focusing on different forms of firm internationalisation, value chain configurations or – at a more macro-level An overarching conclusion is that in line with Poland's increasing internationalisation the related research should progress from a more exploratory and descriptive to a more explanatory and normative research, which bears implications for both the level of analysed contents, and the specific research designs used in present studies (Trąpczyński 2016). In terms of contents, more performance-related variables should be included not only in studies of firms' foreign expansion, but also those related to functional areas of international business operations. Further, performance determinants are crucial not only in regard to corporate choices (such as foreign market entry modes or inter-firm co-operations), but also to institutional arrangements and policy measures. Thereby, a contribution can be made to the understanding of ways in which per-

formance determinants in case of a CEE economy and its meso-systems and firms differ from those studies in advanced economies. Otherwise, if the present descriptive approach continues to prevail, the resulting conclusions will remain at a superficial level, not allowing to seize the specific character of international business in the conditions of a post-communist country, and thus to make a serious contribution to international business research in general.

Moreover, more theory-building contributions should strive to a larger extent than before at highlighting the specific differences in the examined phenomena and their determinants as compared to advanced country contexts. The still nascent scope of certain aspects, such as technology parks and clusters, or the international expansion of different types of businesses, pose potentially promising avenues for theoretical and empirical development, since they allow investigating early-stage phenomena in their genuine contexts, which might not be possible in mature settings anymore. This bears the promise of contributions which go beyond the mere specificity of emerging market settings, but are of more general character. Not least, given the limitations related to collecting data for large-scale studies in emerging markets, where the attitude of businesses towards information sensitivity in general and co-operation with academia in specific is still divergent from those in advanced economies, the potential of exploiting access to a smaller number of firms or institutions, yet at a more intimate level, can be an important research opportunity.

Yet, this theoretical development requires more in-depth focus on management and organisational issues behind the phenomena, rather than a mere description of their underlying motives and forms. Not least, more interdisciplinary contributions seem to be necessary, linking macro-, meso- and micro-level variables, such as the influence of economic policy on a national- or industry-level on firm strategies. This need is reflected by the fact that the boundaries between specific research areas are in fact fluent and do not underlie simplified categorisations, which becomes apparent when comparing the research areas of international entrepreneurship, international marketing, firm internationalisation or international firm competitiveness. This postulate of holism could also be fulfilled by an exchange of conceptual and methodological insights within international research projects. At a technical level, however, a significant issue for the future development of the discipline is that the results are predominantly published in the Polish language and in many cases they are still not available on-line, which makes it far more difficult to be cited by foreign authors. Thus, in order to foster also international research collaboration, it is essential that the number of publications in English with on-line access is increased.

The present paper also bears implications for research support policies in terms of prioritising projects for foremost financing within international business research. In terms of general topics addressed, more attention should be paid to research questions devoted to understanding processes underlying managerial

and entrepreneurial decisions related to international operations, rather than merely describing the scale or types of the latter. This need also refers to understanding the intersections between the macro- and micro-level variables, particularly the effects of policies on firm behaviour in the context of the country's transformation and internationalisation. Thus, holistic research projects integrating approaches and methodologies from several disciplines should be facilitated to go beyond the obvious. This can also be attained by an increased financing of cross-border comparative research initiatives, aiming at analyses of different country samples, which allow contrasting the obtained findings and benefiting from the heterogeneity of the CEE region in economic and institutional dimensions. Currently, the research funding is predominantly focused on national research projects, while not excluding joint research initiatives, yet also not facilitating them. Not least, the aforementioned internationalisation of research findings at the level of communication should further be encouraged by adjusted incentives at the level of scholar evaluation, e.g. by awarding more credits for publications in international journals with regional focus, which can become an important channel for the related research.

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