Family Business Internationalisation: What We Know From 20 Years of Research

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of 42 peer-reviewed journal articles on family business internationalisation scanning a 20 year period. Findings include that family businesses (1) are less prepared for internationalisation and exhibit lower levels of international and "cultural distant" diversification, (2) have a smaller proportion of their assets in overseas locations, and (3) have a long-term orientation, high concentration of power in management and search for working opportunities abroad, which positively influence internationalisation. The publications used both quantitative and qualitative methods with a stronger emphasis on quantitative methods in recent years. Future research directions that are likely to advance this research area are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

An international focus is becoming an increasingly important aspect in a firm's strategy. As the pace of economic change has accelerated and the operational time-span in all fields of activity has shortened, it has become increasingly evident that markets are tending toward a greater level of globalisation (Pinho, 2007). At a company level, internationalisation is important because it gives an organisation more flexibility for undertaking diversified business risks. In addition, it enhances the managerial skills and capabilities and thus helps to better use a firm's resources (Katsikea & Skarmeas, 2003). With internationalisation companies can access a larger market, benefit from international competition, and thereby become a stronger player in the home market (Lages & Montgomery, 2004). As well as enhancing revenues, internationalisation offers opportunities to benefit from specialisation and adaptive flexibility. Companies achieve economies of scale and scope, increase manufacturing efficiencies, recoup investments faster, and gain access to foreign technological, marketing, and management know-how (Zhou, Wu, & Luo, 2007). On a national level, internationalisation contributes to the socio-economic development by increasing employment opportunities, generating foreign exchange and reducing national deficits (Katsikea & Skarmeas, 2003; Leonidou, Katsikeas, & Piercy, 1998). Internationalisation generates social wealth and helps national industries to boost productivity (Lages & Montgomery, 2004). Not surprisingly, public policy makers at the national and supranational level, including NAFTA and the European Union actively promote and support firms' internationalisation.

What is surprising, however, is that this discourse has not addressed the family business (FB) genre in an analogous manner. FBs dominate the economic landscape in most developed countries (Morck & Yeung, 2003; Poza, 2007) and recently, a rising number of researchers have taken an interest in this type of business (Craig, Moores, Howorth, & Poutziouris, 2009). Across Europe, FBs constitute about 70 to 80 percent of all businesses, accounting for 40 to 50 percent of employment (Mandl, 2008). Similarly, in the United States, FBs constitute around 90 percent of businesses and account for 60 percent of employment ("Family Business Statistics," 2009). Although it is well recognised that most FBs are small or medium sized, many of today's largest companies have originated, or are still operated as family businesses, notable examples being Wal-Mart, BMW and Samsung (Hoy & Sharma, 2006). However, the complexities associated with managing a FB are not fully addressed by classical management theory (Anderson & Reeb, 2003; Davis & Stern, 1980; Moores, 2009).

Among the different streams of FB literature, the internationalisation of FBs is evolving into a significant research area (Sciascia et al., 2010). Evidence suggests that the complexities unique to family businesses distinguish them, from firms with different ownership structures in their internationalisation behaviour (e.g., Bell, Crick, & Young, 2004; Fernandez & Nieto, 2006; George, Wiklund, & Zahra, 2005; Graves & Thomas, 2006; Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). In theory, being a family business can confer specific competitive advantages (Habbershon & Williams, 1999), but also brings some particular problems for internationalisation. The advantages include flexibility and speed in decision making, a strong supportive family culture and a long-term orientation (Zahra, 2003; Fernandez & Nieto, 2006; Poza, 2007). On the other hand, there are problems inherent with family businesses that restrict them in their access to resources necessary for internationalisation. Most of the owner's or family's capital is usually invested in the family business. Since this investment strategy is not very risk diversified, the strategy of FBs is expected to be risk-averse (Demsetz & Lehn, 1985; Fernandez & Nieto, 2006). This makes the owners of family businesses reluctant to lose control or to pursue expansive growth strategies such as

internationalisation (Storey, 1994). As a result, family ownership may negatively influence the internationalisation of the firm (Fernández & Nieto, 2005; Bhaumik, Driffield, & Pal, 2010). Similarly, as family involvement in management restricts the number of countries entered by FBs (Zahra, 2003) their strategy is usually domestically oriented (Basly, 2007; Graves & Thomas, 2008).

Though 20 years have passed since Gallo and Sveen (1991) published the first paper on FB internationalisation, the accumulated body of knowledge on FB internationalisation remains narrow (Kontinen & Ojala, 2010). Only a limited number of studies have analysed the strategic approaches of FBs and even fewer have examined the internationalisation strategies adopted (Fuentes-Lombardo & Fernandez-Ortiz, 2010). It is not clear how internationalisation is initiated and further developed, what factors unique to family businesses distinguish their internationalisation behaviour from non-family businesses, and what resources need to be invested to instigate their international venturing (Wang, 2009).

With the aim of providing additional clarity, this current paper provides an extensive review of this research area by addressing the following broad research question: How does being a family business impact internationalisation? A review of 42 peer-reviewed journal articles and conference papers beginning from the publication of the first article in 1991 until 2011 is presented. In doing so, a contribution is made by building on previous similar projects (e.g., Casillas et al.'s (2007) review of 12 articles and Kontinen and Ojala's (2010) review of 25 articles) on FB internationalisation.

METHODOLOGY

The extensive literature collation followed accepted guidelines for a systematic review i.e., (1) planning the review, (2) conducting the review, and (3) reporting and dissemination (Tranfield, Denyer, & Palminder, 2003). At the first stage, all relevant family business and internationalisation articles were identified by conducting a keyword search in scientific databases such as Business Source Complete (EBSCO), Google Scholar, Sage Journals Online and Science Direct. The relevant key words were drawn from the literature on family business and internationalisation and included combinations of 'internationalisation' 'entry mode' 'entry process' 'international trade' 'international operation' 'globalisation' 'family firm' 'family business' 'family-owned business' 'ownership' 'family involvement' and 'family corporation'. To be accepted, the articles had to be published in peer-reviewed academic journals or had been presented at blind-reviewed academic conferences. In all, 42 articles were accepted for the final review.[1] The articles accepted for the analysis (n=42) were published in 22 different academic journals and at four conferences. Most articles were published in the following academic journals: Family Business Review (n=11), International Journal of Globalisation and Small Business (n=3), Journal of International Business Studies (n=2), Journal of Business Venturing (n=2) and Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development (n=2). The majority (24 of 42) were published between 2006 and 2011 with a peak of interest between 2008 and 2010, which indicates the contemporary nature of family business internationalisation research and the growing interest in this phenomenon.

FINDINGS

This section explores the impact of "family" on the internationalisation of firms. First, positive and negative aspects of family management and ownership are addressed. Further,

[1] Full list of articles available from the author

managerial strategic issues of being a family firm are examined, followed by the internationalisation process and networking behaviour of family businesses.

Impact of Family Management and Ownership on Internationalisation

Ownership and governance structure influence the way companies define, coordinate and address business and family related objectives (Corbetta & Montemerlo, 1999; Zahra, 1996), and thereby influence internationalisation strategy (Sanders & Mason, 1998). The concept of family involvement in management is thereby distinct from family involvement in ownership of the firm, given that family-owned companies can be managed by family or non-family members (Corbetta & Montemerlo, 1999).

Studies have shown that family involvement in management restricts the number of countries entered by FBs, but at the same time boosts international sales (Fernández & Nieto, 2005; Zahra, 2003). This implies that family members approach internationalisation with caution, trying to maximize revenues from particular markets rather than targeting a broad range of markets. Casillas and Acedo (2005) proposed that family involvement in management should lead to a higher perception of risks arising from international expansion. Surprisingly, results showed the opposite, indicating that family-managed businesses may perceive the risk of internationalisation as less daunting as previously expected. However, other studies have shown that FBs experience the risks connected to internationalisation more strongly than non-FBs (Claver, Rienda, & Quer, 2008). In FBs the division between business and personal objectives often becomes blurred (Davis & Tagiuri, 1991). A high proportion of the owner's or family's wealth is often invested in the business and as a result, FBs usually have a more risk-averse strategic approach.

The impact of family ownership on internationalisation has been a controversial issue. On the one hand, several studies have revealed that family ownership negatively influences the internationalisation of the firm (Bhaumik, Driffield, & Pal, 2010; Fernandez & Nieto, 2006; Fernández & Nieto, 2005; Gallo & Sveen, 1991). In their seminal work, Gallo and Sveen (1991) identified family ownership as a restraining factor. The same conclusion is drawn by Fernandez and Nieto (2006, 2005) using a sample of 6,000 Spanish FBs. Furthermore, the proportion of a FB's assets held overseas declines with the concentration of ownership (Bhaumik et al., 2010). Similar to the increased risk perception with family management, this was justified by the higher perceived risk of internationalisation with higher shares of family ownership (Claver et al., 2008). Corresponding findings exist in the SME literature. George et al. (2005) confirm the risk aversion tendency of SME owners by demonstrating that internationalisation declines as the management's ownership in the firm increases. On the other hand, a number of studies have identified a positive relationship between family ownership and internationalisation (Puig & Perez, 2009; Strange, Filatotchev, Lien, & Piesse, 2009; Wang, 2009; Zahra, 2003). Puig and Perez (2009) pointed out that family ownership is not in itself an obstacle for growth and internationalisation, as neoclassical economists (Casson, 1999, 2000; Castells, 1996) have indicated in the past. In fact, FBs are more likely to search opportunities actively in the international market space to ensure the sustainability of the business for future generations. FBs have a patient outlook to capital, which is linked to their focus on generational sustainability, and are therefore more willing to commit financial resources to long term strategies, such as internationalisation (Sirmon & Hitt, 2003; Wang, 2009). Strange et al. (2009) associated high levels of family ownership with foreign direct investment (FDI) locations that offer both high risk and potential reward, due to superior monitoring abilities and longer time horizons of family shareholders in comparison to more diffused shareholders.

While extant empirical studies are conflicted regarding the role of family ownership, Sciascia et al.'s (2010) study provided possible explanations for these opposite findings. They suggest an inverted U-shaped relationship between family ownership and internationalisation, where moderate levels of family ownership are associated with the highest level of internationalisation. They interpret these findings as followed:

> *"We believe that the stewardship effect that family ownership has for continuity, employees, and customers confirms the earlier findings of Zahra (2003). However, when family ownership becomes excessive, negative effects predicted by stagnation in terms of reduced resource base, risk-aversion, and conflicts among family members reduce the positive effects of family ownership predicted by stewardship. Hence, our findings reconcile the previous and conflicting results of Zahra (2003) and Fernandez and Nieto (2005, 2006)"*

Despite the controversial discussion about family ownership, it appears undisputed that corporate ownership in the FB facilitates internationalisation (Bhaumik et al., 2010; Elango & Pattnaik, 2007; Fernández & Nieto, 2005). This is due to two reasons. Firstly, the corporate investor can help the FB accumulate necessary resources for their intended internationalisation. Secondly, the new shareholders will be keen to introduce formal governance mechanisms aimed at resolving the conflicts of interest emerging from the coalescence of family and business systems. Therefore, the FB may be encouraged to hire more qualified external managers and implement structures and systems best suited to the firm's strategy. These two reasons help the FB to create and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage in the international market place, which it can leverage through venturing abroad (Fernandez & Nieto, 2006). Hence, with the introduction of institutional investors and venture capitalists to the ownership registry, the international operations increase significantly. It can be stated, therefore, that corporate (i.e., non-family) ownership offsets the partially found unwillingness of FBs to invest overseas.

Impact of Family Business Managerial Issues on Internationalisation

Resulting from the mixture of business and personal interests, FBs may suffer from high agency costs rooted in altruism and self-control (Schulze, Lubatkin, & Dino, 2003). A conflict of interest arises when both family and business objectives need to be addressed while preserving family harmony (Davis & Tagiuri, 1991; Schulze, Lubatkin, & Dino, 2002). This has the potential to lead to management decisions that are beneficial for the family, but unfavourable for the business (Andersen & Buvik, 2002; Fernandez & Nieto, 2006; Schulze, Lubatkin, Dino, & Buchholtz, 2001).

The reviewed published articles demonstrate that FBs are less prepared for exporting and other internationalisation strategies. They are less likely to internationalise their operations when compared to non-FBs (Donckels & Froehlich, 1991; Graves & Thomas, 2004) and their strategic focus is typically domestically oriented (Basly, 2007; Gallo & Pont, 1996; Graves & Thomas, 2008). Okoroafo (1999) suggests that FBs monitor the international environment irregularly and do not pay enough attention to global developments in strategic decision making. There is further evidence that FBs are less inclined to invest overseas and have a smaller proportion of their assets invested in other countries than non-FBs. If an "average" family business, with its strategic simplicity and attachment to its home business culture, is not given an impetus to invest overseas by factors such as size of the domestic market and accessibility of resources in the home market, it would be reluctant to internationalise (Bhaumik et al., 2010). In effect, to grow the business internationally,

different strategic resources such as management and financial capital are required. FBs appear to have greater difficulties than non-FBs in securing these necessary resources (Graves & Thomas, 2008).

FBs were found to have a low level of qualified staff (Gallo & Pont, 1996), a critical resource for internationalisation (Hitt, Bierman, Uhlenbruck, & Shimizu, 2006). They often solely rely on familial ties for their upper management positions, thereby restricting growth ambitions to the limited pool of resources of their descendents (Yeung, 2000). The difficulties for non-family managers to develop a career in competition with family members diminishes FBs attractiveness (Poza, 2007). The incentive and promotion systems are strongly biased toward family members (James, 1999; Lansberg, 1983). Consequently, they suffer from an adverse selection problem, making it more difficult to attract qualified, professional managers (Schulze et al., 2003). This scarcity of qualified people negatively influences the rate at which FBs grow internationally (Child, Ng, & Wong, 2002; Graves & Thomas, 2008). In cases where the internationalisation venture is blocked by unwilling or incapable family managers, the introduction of a non-family executive on the board may facilitate this process (Thomas & Graves, 2005).

The decision making in FBs is often centralised around the owner-manager (Sharma, Chrisman, & Chua, 1997). Control systems are not in place or very informal, lines of authority are not clear and information systems are poorly developed (Daily & Dollinger, 1993; Geeraerts, 1984). These factors facilitate FBs in responding to contingencies, however they restrict their ability to pursue a national or international expansion strategy (Fernandez & Nieto, 2006). Internationalisation requires the implementation of more formal structures and controls (Fernandez & Nieto, 2006) leading to a decentralisation from the owner-manager. Yet, they are often reluctant to relinquish control and have a preference for privacy and nepotism (Boeker & Karichalil, 2002; Gersick, Davis, Hampton, & Lansberg, 1997; Graves & Thomas, 2006). In addition, many FB owner-managers lack the knowledge in the international market space and do not possess the necessary foreign contacts, international experience or language skills to expand their business across borders (Okoroafo, 1999). This lack of managerial capabilities has been particularly evident at high levels of internationalisation. Still, despite lacking those capabilities, FBs were still able to achieve a high degree of internationalisation. Graves and Thomas (2006) suggest that this might be due to their more efficient use in managing and leveraging their limited managerial resources.

FBs were also found to be unwilling to access external capital for their growth strategies, self-financing appears to remain the first option (Myers & Majluf, 1984). This aspiration is a consequence of the family's long term commitment to the business and ensures that the family heritage can be passed on to the following generations. The risk averse behaviour in combination with the objective to maintain total control over the business, restrict FBs to raise financial capital through loans from lending institutions or by bringing in outside equity (Graves & Thomas, 2008). This financial policy, which incorporates low debt and high dependency on self financing, reduces expansion chances and decreases the probability of using high-level equity modes (Claver, Rienda, & Quer, 2009; Mishra & McConaughy, 1999). Therefore, FBs are highly dependent on their access to financial resources and the family's willingness to commit those to internationalisation-related activities. The family business CEO needs to gain the consensus of family owners and management. This commitment is largely influenced by his vision and objective to grow the firm domestically or aspiration to "conquer the world" (Graves & Thomas, 2008). In sum, FBs avoid sources of funding that undermine the identification of ownership with control and

their potential for growth depends on internally generated funds (Romano, Tanewski, & Smyrnios, 2001).

In contrast, several studies have revealed management attributes common in FBs, which favour the internationalisation of these firms. FBs have a long-term strategic orientation, which is manifested in long CEO tenures, concern for subsequent generations and discretion of family owners and CEO (Le Breton-Miller & Miller, 2006). Since most internationalisation intentions are taken for longer term reasons, this strategic orientation facilitates FB's intention to look for further options to expand their operating horizon. The concentration of power in management and hence the speed in decision making is another favourable factor. FB leaders interested in expanding the business internationally can pursue this strategy relatively independently from formal structures as they often exist in non-FBs (Gallo & Pont, 1996).

Moreover, many FBs aim to offer career opportunities for subsequent generations. As the major management positions are usually already occupied by the incumbent generation, Gallo and Pont (1996) have shown that FBs pursue an internationalisation strategy in order to open work opportunities for their successors. Succession generally means the transfer of ownership and management from the incumbent to the succeeding generation (Lee, Lim, & Lim, 2003) and can impact internationalisation differently (Claver et al., 2008; Fernandez & Nieto, 2006; Graves & Thomas, 2008; Okoroafo, 2010). Succession may initiate the internationalisation process, due to successors' ambitions to look for new responsibilities within the FB (Gallo & Pont, 1996). Subsequent generations have often more information and are better prepared and qualified to implement the internationalisation process (Fernández & Nieto, 2005). However, succession can also restrict internationalisation (Graves & Thomas, 2008). Following generations perceive internationalisation often as more risky than previous generations (Claver et al., 2008) and have a sceptical attitude towards export participation (Okoroafo, 1999). During the generational transfer process, the search for union and harmony within the family is likely to become a factor which hinders the internationalisation process (Gersick et al., 1997). Okoroafo (1999) states that if a FB does not become involved in foreign markets in the first or second generation, it is unlikely to do so in later generations.

Additionally, another group of studies postulates that being a family firm does not limit nor facilitate internationalisation. Although the extent of FB internationalisation is less than that of non-FBs, the difference was not persistent over time (Graves & Thomas, 2004). This implies that the greatest challenge faced by FBs is initiating the internationalisation process. FBs are not limited by their resources and capabilities in comparison to non-FBs. Further, FBs do not have a positive determinant in their altruism in relation to strategies abroad. Pinho's comparative study (2007) could not find any differences between FB and non-FB and their preference towards choosing equity-entry modes such as wholly owned subsidiaries and non-equity modes such as exports and licensing. In contrast, the study of Abdellatif et al. (2010) identifiy that FB are more likely to establish wholly owned foreign subsidiaries than are non-FB for low and medium risk countries. However, when risk is high in a given country, FBs and non-FBs make similar decisions with regard to establishing wholly owned subsidiaries.

In sum, the majority of studies have found negative impacts of being a family firm on internationalisation. Some studies have shown that being a family firm facilitates internationalisation and a further smaller group did not find any differences in the internationalisation between family and non-family businesses. It can be concluded that three

key determinants shape the internationalisation pathways of FBs to a great extent. Firstly, the managerial capabilities available to execute internationalisation. Secondly, the financial resources accessible to fund internationalisation. Thirdly, the (the family owner and manager characteristic linked) willingness toward international strategy (Chen, Dong, & Xu, 2009; Davis & Harveston, 2000; Fernández & Nieto, 2005; Gallo & Pont, 1996). In their meta analysis, Kontinen and Ojala (2010) report that all these findings need further verification and that studies describing the management process of FBs in the context of internationalisation are almost non-existent.

The Internationalisation Process of FBs

Most FBs follow a sequential internationalisation process, as stated by the Uppsala School (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977; Johanson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 1975), where firms usually start the process of internationalisation in countries that are physically and culturally close to the domestic market (Claver, Rienda, & Quer, 2007). As a result, physical distance appears to be a relevant and salient factor. However, it can be compressed substantially by institutional convergences and mutual benchmarking between societies in an age of globalisation. Therefore, not only the physical distance, but also the role of institutional compatibility as a strategic factor has influenced the FBs decisions on locations for foreign expansion (Child et al., 2002). The pace of a FB's expansion is slow and gradual, focusing on one market at a time, and tends to be financed out of retained earnings and owner contributions rather than external funding. FB owner-managers may seek to maximize revenues from a limited number of foreign markets rather than aggressively venturing abroad on a broader front (Zahra, 2003). They commonly start with conventional market entry strategies such as direct sales and the use of agents as well as distributors and their international strategy tends to remain ad hoc, opportunistic and reactive to particular opportunities. As FBs gain more experience and confidence in foreign markets, their international commitment increases over time.

Other research suggests that FBs do not follow a sequential path of international expansion, but instead internationalised rapidly to multiple markets concurrently (Graves & Thomas, 2008). These firms have engaged in international operations from the early days of their establishment and are described as "born globals" in the literature (Lopez, Kundu, & Ciravegna, 2009; Sharma & Blomstermo, 2003). Usually, through domestic operations, these firms establish strong ties with internationally active firms. Such firms are client followers and may start their internationalization process despite a substantial cultural distance (Majkgard & Sharma, 1998).

In their FDI behaviour, FBs have a less formal and structured way of collecting information and conducting analysis to initially evaluate an FDI project (Tsang, 2002). FBs are often considered to possess a long term vision, relinquishing short term profits for the goal of sustainable growth over generations (Harris, Martinez, & Ward, 1994; Tagiuri & Davis, 1992). Long-term vision therefore appears as a driving factor behind the internationalisation process and increases the likelihood of using entry modes that involve a high level of resource commitment.

International involvement is also encouraged if the firm has networks with other companies around the world (Fernández & Nieto, 2005; Thomas & Graves, 2004, 2005). In comparison to non-FBs, FBs need fewer socioeconomic networks, are less involved in collaborating with other firms and make less use of subcontracting. FBs are often not aware of networks, such as governmental programmes, that would assist them in venturing abroad

(Okoroafo, 1999). It was further shown that the willingness to resort to public entities decreases with the manager's experience in the FB (Casillas & Acedo, 2005). FB managers are, in most cases, also the owners of the business and thus more independent from the environment-culture and macroeconomic situation than managers in non-FBs (Donckels & Froehlich, 1991). As a consequence, they establish fewer joint ventures with other firms (Abdellatif et al., 2010). The lack of knowledge and involvement in networks suggests that FBs may have greater difficulty in internationalising their operations when compared to non-FBs. Drawing upon the relational perspective of internationalisation, this could be a key reason why FBs struggle in internationalisation i.e., they are more inward looking and lack the relationships required to venture abroad (Graves & Thomas, 2004).

However, FBs that enter joint ventures with other family-owned businesses may find commonalities extending across several key areas of business and share some very important values even between different cultures. These values, which include trust, loyalty and continuation of family, make international joint ventures between FBs more likely to succeed (Swinth & Vinton, 1993). If a FB is able to identify these common characteristics in other countries and make them common ground, then it can be easier for the FB to form strategic alliances and enter foreign markets (Gallo & Sveen, 1991). Hence, FBs prefer to enter psychic distant countries by using joint ventures with other FBs (Harris et al., 1994). Although many FBs desire to develop ties with foreign family businesses, the reality is that only a small number have been able to do so successfully (Okoroafo, 1999).

FUTURE RESEARCH

This review demonstrates that the knowledge of FB internationalisation is still narrow. The number of articles published is relatively small and the majority of articles are descriptive, laying nothing more than the foundation for research in the sub-field of FB internationalisation (Kontinen & Ojala, 2010). Scholars of past studies reported several research areas that need to be investigated in future research.

For example, because networks play a crucial role in the internationalisation of companies, several studies call for more research into the networking relationships of FBs (Donckels & Froehlich, 1991; Fernandez & Nieto, 2006; Graves & Thomas, 2004; Kontinen & Ojala, 2010; Mustafa & Chen, 2010). Kontinen and Ojala (2010) identified a significant research gap concerning FB networks in the process of internationalisation. They suggest performing studies based on the network theory of internationalisation (Johanson & Mattson, 1988) as well as clarifying the kinds of networks FBs use when they venture abroad and examining how these networks evolve during internationalisation. Also, the number of generations owning the business could be an important driver behind the decision to take the family business international (Mustafa & Chen, 2010). If generational differences in views are obtained, emphasis should focus on the younger generation (Okoroafo, 2010). By investigating the role of predecessors and the succession process in future studies differences between family and non-family businesses could be better understood (Segaro, 2010). Future research should further investigate the growth path of FBs and their timing of internationalisation relative to other strategic alternatives (Mustafa & Chen, 2010). The international business literature highlights the multiplicity of the dimensions of the internationalisation construct. Other dimensions include diversity of industries and market segments, dispersion versus integration of international operations and timing of international entry. Examining these and other dimensions will improve our understanding of the approaches FBs use to internationalise their operations (Zahra, 2003).

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the FB literature by identifying past research findings in the sub-field of FB internationalisation. Since there is a dearth of research in this area, this overview provides information about the current state of knowledge. This study also has important policy implications. FBs play an essential role in most economies, and since exporting is often a key element in the strategy of such firms (Musteen, Francis, & Datta, 2010), policy makers need to actively consider ways of facilitating internationalisation. This study also highlights that research examining the internationalisation behaviour of FBs is warranted in future research. In particular, research needs to examine the effects of different network structures on the internationalisation of FBs, the role of succession and the multiplicity of internationalisation.

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