

SPECIALIZED MARKETING CAPABILITIES AND FOREIGN EXPANSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL NEW VENTURES

Abstract

The study examines specialized marketing capabilities' role in the early internationalization of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Emphasis is put on sales and communication capabilities and on contrasting International New Ventures (INV) from the mature economy of Italy and the post-transformation economy of Poland. Individual expert interviews, including a card-based game, as well as an entrepreneurial marketing conceptual framework were conducted with representatives of seven manufacturing INVs. The findings obtained through content analysis of interviews with specialized CAQDAS software show how the main specialized marketing capabilities contribute to early expansion of INVs through an interaction with architectural marketing capabilities.

Keywords: *International New Ventures, specialized marketing capabilities, entrepreneurial marketing, two-country study.*

Introduction

Different authors have analyzed the importance of marketing capabilities for International New Ventures (INVs) (Yang and Gabrielsson 2017; Laurell et al. 2017; Hallbäck and Gabrielsson 2013; Ripollés and Blesa 2012). While early studies have shown that such firms lack these capabilities, and are therefore at a disadvantage compared to their larger counterparts (Luostarinen and Gabrielsson 2006), more recent reports have shown that SMEs leverage and enrich their scarce resources by adopting new ICT tools (Bocconcelli, Cioppi, and Pagano 2017), which help to overcome their earlier deficiencies. Recently, Hagen and Zucchella (2018) have also proposed a conceptual framework describing the role of marketing in four key business processes that lead to SMEs' early internationalization. They adopted the perspective of entrepreneurial marketing (EM) and focused on the specific abilities connected with this view. This concept seems appropriate to apply to the context of internationalization of small entrepreneurial ventures, such as new technology ventures (Ahmadi and O'Cass 2016), born

global ventures (Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena, and Liesch 2012), and International New Ventures (Oviatt and McDougall 1994), because it is characterized by high levels of risk, proactiveness, and the innovation propensity of the enterprises' founders.

Within the context of EM, the particular sales and promotion tools' influence on early internationalization of INVs has not yet been thoroughly studied. So far, studies on marketing capabilities' role in internationalization of SMEs have concentrated mainly on strategic and architectural marketing capabilities. In this respect, Bocconcelli *et al.* (2018), after an extensive literature review concerning SMEs and marketing, called for research on the specific marketing-mix practices in the area of communications and sales management. Moreover, the studies concerning the international marketing strategies of startups from post-transformation markets are also scarce (Caputo et al. 2016). Among these markets, the Central and Eastern European region deserves more attention from researchers, as these new EU-member economies have been growing at a faster pace over the last several years than the old-EU member countries (Kacprzyk and Doryń 2017). For instance, Polish SMEs have made up a substantial share of the country's exports (42 percent of the 2016 value of exports according to Eurostat (2018)). Among all Polish exporting firms, 92 percent were SMEs (Eurostat 2018). The highest export dynamics characterized small Polish companies, whose exports doubled in the years 2007-2014 (PARP 2017). Despite this evident success, some specialists admit that the international marketing skills and strategies of SMEs need substantial improvement (Canowiecki 2018).

Similarly, in the mature economy of Italy, SMEs also represent the overwhelming majority of exporters (Cassa Depositi e Prestiti 2018). Of 222,000 exporting firms, at least 87 percent are SMEs. Previous studies on Italian markets (Bocconcelli et al. 2018; Camuffo, Furlan, and Grandinetti 2007) have highlighted the importance of studying such firms' marketing capabilities because this area is still underdeveloped, especially in the industrial market context.

Therefore, this study aims to explore more detail, the nature and role of INVs' specialized marketing capabilities in early internationalization. Specifically, the communication and sales capabilities of these small entrepreneurial ventures from Poland and Italy will be explored, against the background of other marketing capabilities of such firms. Comparing the activities of SMEs based in a mature economy versus those in a post-transformation market may lead to finding out some universal features of INVs, but also to showing the unique characteristics of companies from post-transformation markets that enable their expansion despite their lack of experience and resources.

To generate theoretical insights, a qualitative research methodology has been chosen, using individual semi-structured expert-interviews conducted in four Polish and three Italian INVs. The sample firms fulfilled the born global criteria, which permitted the study of early internationalization processes, as well as the two-country comparison of findings, which are based on quantitative and qualitative content analysis.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, to provide the context for study, a literature review on entrepreneurial marketing and capabilities of INVs is presented, together with the research questions. An explanation of the research methodology follows. After presenting the findings and discussing their implications, the paper concludes with a discussion of key contributions, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

International New Ventures and entrepreneurial marketing

The phenomenon of early and instant internationalization of INVs or born globals has been studied for over two decades (Øyna and Alon 2018). Such SMEs are distinguished by leapfrogging the traditional stages in international development and following an accelerated expansion path (Oviatt and McDougall 1994). They usually enter several foreign markets in the first years of existence and develop a substantial share of exports in their total sales during the

initial period after establishment (Knight, Madsen, and Servais 2004). Moreover, they are characterized by quick learning (Pellegrino and McNaughton 2015), which enables them to establish a so-called Learning Advantage of Newness (Sapienza et al. 2006) and to overcome their resource-poverty. Despite these features, INVs face numerous challenges during their expansion. Among them are managerial challenges, including lack of experience and skills, often resulting from the technical background of the founders.

In a bibliographic analysis regarding the domain of international entrepreneurship, Jones et al. (2011) have identified early internationalization as a phenomenon belonging to this discipline. In line with this, the entrepreneurial marketing approach has recently been gaining popularity among international business scholars (Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena, and Liesch 2012; Hallbäck and Gabrielsson 2013; Miles et al. 2015; Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena, and Liesch 2012). While during the first period entrepreneurial marketing was considered as the interface between entrepreneurship and marketing (Morris, Schindehutte, and LaForge 2002), researchers have recently attempted to develop a more comprehensive concept that permits exploration of EM in a small business context (Hills and Hultman 2011; Bocconcelli et al. 2018; Kolongahapitiya 2018). Sethna and colleagues (Sethna 2013, XIX) have described entrepreneurial marketing as “a spirit, an orientation, as well as a process of passionately pursuing opportunities and launching and growing ventures that create perceived customer value through relationships by employing innovativeness, creativity, selling, market immersion, networking, and flexibility.” In another definition Kraus, Harms, and Fink (2010, p. 27) emphasize the specific characteristics of EM, which are innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, and lack of resources currently controlled, as “an organizational function.”

In entrepreneurial marketing, sales and promotion tools are treated differently than they are in the classical “textbook” marketing literature (Stokes 2000; Ionita 2012). In EM, interactive promotional tools, WOM, direct sales, and recommendations play key roles. As Martin (2009)

pointed out, the “marketing mix” of entrepreneurial marketing can be described as the “New 4 P’s,” i.e. person, process, purpose, and practices, where each of these elements is grounded in relationships and networks. These “practices” also concern an innovative use of communication tools, which well suits companies that have a small budget to spend on promotion (Reijonen 2010) and try to use it as efficiently as possible. Creativity is often connected with new technologies and low-cost ways to reach customers (Gilmore 2011). As O’Dwyer and colleagues (2009) described, SMEs often engage in a continuous “stream” of innovative marketing, including incessant supplemental adjustments to the marketing-mix, which enables them to differentiate their products and services in a niche market separate from the offerings of larger firms. The skillful use of marketing communication can be connected with social media presence, especially because social media permits sharing information in a business context (Hajli 2014; Lu and Hsiao 2010), thereby enabling word-of-mouth communication (Chen, Fay, and Wang 2011) and increasing sales (Agnihotri et al. 2012). Within EM, sales and promotion tools are also directed at “bonding” the partners in networks together, and they have a primary aim of relationship nurturing. Thus, Hagen and Zucchella (2018) claim that one of the core elements of EM that contributes to early internationalization is the ability to build long-lasting customer relationships and to develop products in co-creation with customers. To operationalize the concept, Jones and Rowley have developed a qualitative research framework based on the entrepreneurial marketing orientation model (Jones and Rowley 2011, 2009). It includes such elements as: entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, innovation orientation, and customer orientation, which, when pursued jointly by SMEs, should lead to superior performance (Lonial and Carter 2015).

Marketing capabilities of SMEs

Recently Hagen, Zucchella and Ghauri (2019), after reviewing the past studies on the marketing of the early internationalizing ventures, have stated that this topic has still received

little attention, despite its importance. To understand how marketing contributes to export effectiveness, the nature and role of the firm's marketing capabilities need to be explored. Marketing capabilities are *the processes by which firms select intended value propositions for target customers and deploy resources to deliver these value offerings in pursuit of desired goals* (Morgan, Katsikeas, and Vorhies 2012; Vorhies and Morgan 2005). Two types of higher-order marketing capabilities have been described: architectural (market information gathering, distribution and strategic analysis) and specialized marketing capabilities (Vorhies, Morgan, and Autry 2009). The latter type concerns individual marketing-mix processes (Morgan, Vorhies, and Mason 2009) needed to implement export venture marketing strategies (Vorhies et al. 2009). These processes include the marketing communications and selling processes that a firm may need to transform its available resources into planned value offerings for target customers in the export venture market. As there is a lack of consensus in the previous studies that classify the capabilities referring to the communication sphere, in this study we would like to define the communication capabilities after Zou, Fang and Zhao (2003) as the extent to which the company can effectively use and manage marketing communications with its customers. Morgan, Katsikeas, and Vorhies (2012) specify communication capability measures, such as: developing effective export advertising and promotion programs, advertising and promotion creativity, skillfully using marketing communications, and effectively managing marketing communications programs overseas (p.287). Thus, effectively conducting promotion and advertising contributes to communication capability. Tan and Sousa (2015) have referred to communication capability as the skills and accumulated knowledge that exporters use to effectively deliver marketing messages.

On the other hand, selling capabilities, also included in the domain of marketing capabilities, are exemplified by: the selling skills of salespeople, retaining good export salespeople and sales managers, providing effective sales support to the sales force and distributors, and export sales

management skills (Morgan, Katsikeas, and Vorhies 2012, p.287). Overall, these specialized communication and selling capabilities are necessary for firms who want to obtain a differentiation advantage, among them INVs, and to be able to clearly communicate their value offerings (Vorhies, Morgan, and Autry 2009).

Skillfully using marketing communication (Martin, Javalgi, and Cavusgil 2017) and using promotional activities to gain international market shares (Weerawardena et al. 2015) are also capabilities mentioned in the context of INV activity. For INVs, providing support to the salesforce is often directed at enabling quick responses to customer requests, which may be the decisive factor in their success in international markets (Danik and Kowalik 2015). Salesforce support is often channeled through well-developed networks (Bocconcelli, Cioppi, and Pagano 2017). On the other hand, the quick response to customers' requests is a result of following the EM strategies of co-production and so-called "customer intimacy" (Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena, and Liesch 2012).

The studies of marketing capabilities' role in the internationalization of SMEs from developed markets have so far concentrated mainly on architectural marketing capabilities (such as applying a differentiation strategy) and on the adoption of ICT/web technologies for access and interaction in foreign markets (Francioni, Pagano, and Castellani 2016; Mathews et al. 2016; Gregory, Ngo, and Karavdic 2019). The architectural capability of market sensing has been proven to influence the international opportunity recognition and expansion of emerging-market SMEs (Miocevic and Morgan, 2018). Furthermore, there have been several important analyses concerning the effects of learning capabilities on the growth possibilities in the early internationalization process (Baum and Sui 2013; Bruneel, Yli-Renko, and Clarysse 2010; Zhou, Barnes, and Lu 2010). These studies generally support the idea that marketing capabilities stimulate international market entry by SMEs.

Moreover, it has been found that the specialized marketing capabilities, such as effective export advertising and promotion, had an impact on the positional advantages of brand image, awareness and personality of the high-tech born-global firms (Martin et al., 2017). However investing in developing such capabilities was advised to firms with high levels of ambidextrous innovation. Furthermore, high ambidexterity in both customer management capability and new product development capability led to an improvement of performance of manufacturers serving B2B customers (Mehrabi, Coviello, and Ranaweera 2019). Superior product innovation capabilities, coupled with market-responsiveness capabilities, led to improved export market performance of African manufacturing SMEs, although it was hindered by the hostile environment conditions of the target emerging markets (Boso et al. 2019). Overall, an interplay between architectural and specialized marketing capabilities is most advised by scholars, especially for obtaining advantages in the export markets.

The Polish SMEs put a lot of effort into having high quality relationships with their foreign partners (Danik 2017). Contrary to the results from more mature markets, however, previous quantitative studies conducted on large samples of Polish SMEs (both gradual exporters and INVs) in 2013 and 2014 indicated that their managers did not perceive marketing as a source of their international competitive advantage. Surprisingly, only about half of the companies studied had been actively promoting their products abroad. The most popular tools mentioned by the “active promoters” were conferences and fairs, internet web pages, and direct contacts with clients (Danik and Kowalik 2015; Kowalik 2015). The creativity of these tools was rather low, and as the respondents admitted, the lack of managerial skills was an international expansion barrier (Kowalik and Baranowska-Prokop, 2013). Similar results were also confirmed in a recent quantitative study (Danik and Kowalska 2018). Therefore, checking why seemingly successful exporters display low creativity and limited use of sales and promotional tools becomes worthwhile.

The studies of the Italian SMEs' marketing capabilities show a slightly different picture, which may be connected with the context of economic activity. For instance, a qualitative study conducted by Bocconcelli and colleagues (2017) has shown that social media adoption in sales activities helped the company to enter into new markets and thus deal with the downturn of its original market. Another study concerning the Italian wine sector (Fait et al. 2013) analyzed the widespread usage of social media and other IT tools (social CRM) for developing and maintaining relationships between wine producers and retailers or caterers, to promote events, and to exchange information and build relationships. These specialized marketing capabilities of the Italian INVs seem therefore more advanced and applied in a planned way.

Recently, however, Cortez and Johnston (2018) have stated that there were few analyses concerning the marketing capabilities of companies in B2B markets, especially those located in emerging economies. There are also hypotheses indicating that marketing could be one of the neglected explanations for the superior performance of internationalized SMEs (Hagen and Zucchella 2018; Hagen, Zucchella, and Ghauri 2019). As the results of previous studies on this topic are mixed, in this paper we decided to focus on a particular element of INVs' activity. This study aims to analyze especially the capabilities of INVs in the communication and sales sphere and to find out about their role in the early internationalization. The specific research questions are:

RQ1: How do the Polish and Italian INVs apply the marketing communication tools?

RQ2: What role do the Polish and Italian INVs attribute to the overseas salesforce support?

RQ3: Is there any relationship between the specialized marketing capabilities and the foreign expansion of INVs?

Methodology

Research design and case selection

The principal aim of this study is to explore the role of communication and sales capabilities of International New Ventures in early internationalization in different national contexts. To achieve our objective, we decided to adopt a qualitative study method that allows for a holistic and in-depth understanding of complex phenomena and processes that could not be disassociated from the context (Bonoma, 1985; Bluhm et al. 2011; Narooz and Child 2017; Leppäaho et al., 2018), as well as for a comparison of new empirical findings with those of prior studies (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018; Francioni, Vissak and Musso 2017). Moreover, responding to a call for more research on international entrepreneurship across countries (Terjesen, Hessels and Li 2016; Leppäaho et al., 2018), a cross-country sample was selected because an examination of both similarities and differences allows us to reinforce our findings and increase their validity (Nummela et al. 2014; Terjesen, Hessels and Li 2016). In addition, according to the international entrepreneurship literature, the firm's geographical location could largely dictate their export activity and the number of foreign market entries, and the domestic base could also influence their promotion and sales capabilities (Zander, McDougall-Covin and Rose, 2015; Leppäaho et al., 2018). Finally, as previous studies highlighted, to carrying out more research from different social, economic, and cultural contexts is a necessity (Biley 1985; Leppäaho et al., 2018). Our research setting fits with this call, as the SMEs in question are located in two countries that differ in their levels of institutional and economic development.

Purposive sampling has been applied to select the study participants, due to its exploratory nature. The population was chosen based on the knowledge, that it fulfills the study goals (Silverman 2008, p. 272). The enterprises were chosen according to the following criteria: (i) located in Italy or Poland; (ii) SMEs with less than 250 employees and an annual turnover value equal or below €50 million¹; (iii) they generated at least 25 percent of total sales abroad (Knight,

¹ According to the European Union's SMEs definition their annual turnover is equal to or below €50 million and a balance sheet total is equal to or below €43 million (https://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_en, accessed on: May 15th 2019).

Madsen, and Servais 2004); and (iv) they internationalized within three years from founding, and were engaged in outward internationalization. We have focused on SMEs because among this type of company, the phenomenon of instant internationalization has been described the most often (Knight and Liesch, 2016). To facilitate theory building, we aimed to achieve saturation (Lamb, Sandberg and Liesch, 2011), which means “to have a sufficient number of cases to identify recurrent patterns and the contrasting circumstances in which such patterns were evident” (Narroz and Child 2017, p.687). Therefore, after identifying the repetition of patterns through a comparison of the collected data from different firms, we stopped conducting additional interviews.

The final sample included four INVs of Polish origin and three INVs of Italian origin, representing medium-tech manufacturing branches, and mostly dealing with B2B clients. Three of the Polish companies under study were Export Start-Ups (one to three foreign markets entered within three years after inception, one to two value chain activities coordinated across border within three years after inception, Madsen 2013), and one of them was classified as a Multinational Trader (more than three foreign markets entered within three years after inception, one-two value chain activities coordinated across border within three years after inception). Among the Italian companies, two were Export Start-Ups, and one was a Multinational Trader. The studied Export Start-Ups were also experienced in international provision of after-sales services. To investigate companies at different development stages, companies from seven to 25 years of age were studied. To assure the reliability of the study all the company data are kept in the case study protocol (Tables 1 and 1A).

In order to capture different dimensions of international marketing phenomena, and to increase theoretical validity, data triangulation was performed (Denzin 1978) by interviewing two respondents from every company. Moreover, companies’ promotional materials (leaflets, brochures, web pages), as well as their sales data, were examined. In line with Yin’s suggestions

concerning conducting qualitative studies, the field research was based on individual interviews, with the majority of the questions being open-ended (Yin 2011, p. 30–32). Semi-structured individual interviews are not only appropriate for exploring the experience of respondents and the meanings they attribute to concepts, but are also suitable tools for gaining an understanding of people’s behavior and in-depth exploration of specific topics (Fontana and Frey 2000). Such interviews are especially applicable for encouraging well-informed practitioners to give an account of their attitudes, lived experiences, knowledge, and perception of work practices, programs, and processes (Rowley et al. 2012; Webb 2014). In each company, the first interviewee was the owner/CEO or sales director, knowledgeable of the company’s beginnings, as well as its marketing experience and strategy. The second interviewee was a manager/employee from the marketing or sales departments, depending on the firm’s organizational structure. The interviewees were experts, that is, persons responsible for the development, implementation, or control of solutions/strategies connected with international expansion (Meuser and Nagel 2002). Thus, the expert interview approach was used, which, when used in the exploratory phase of research, offers quick access to new or unknown fields because experts are characterized by aggregated and specific knowledge and great insight into processes, group behaviors, and strategies. Furthermore, they are often networked persons who can easily direct to other interviews for research (van Audenhove 2007; Bogner, Littig, and Menz 2002).

Data preparation and analysis

Within the individual expert interviews, the card-based game method (Müthel and Saunders 2008) was used, and the transcripts were later analyzed using specialized software, implementing the content analysis guidelines (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014). The card-based method was identified as particularly useful in establishing facts from intangible notions,

and it had previously been used to study SME marketing (Jones and Rowley, 2012). Therefore we assumed that its application could contribute to the development of rich research insights.

The interviews lasted between 30 minutes (interviews with sales/marketing staff) to over one hour (interviews with CEOs). They were recorded and transcribed verbatim. After transcribing, the records were sent to participants for approval to increase theoretical validity. As a result, 105 pages of transcripts and photographs of concept-maps were obtained. The analysis of the collected text was conducted with the use of qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS MAXQDA). The CAQDAS software allowed us to formalize the international business qualitative research, and has been described as offering greater trustworthiness and quality of inquiry (Sinkovics, Penz, and Ghauri 2008). To gather knowledge regarding the meaning, importance, and relationships between the different elements of INVs' marketing, we applied the card-based game method, which had been previously used for capturing both the participants' and intra-firm attitudes and behaviors (Müthel and Högl 2007). It consists of using cards with main concepts, which are ordered into a hierarchy and grouped according to the similarity of topics by the respondents. This technique has been used to study topics such as: the security, privacy, and personalization aspects of user interaction in interactive TV (Bernhaupt et al.); place brand management (Hanna and Rowley 2011); and international innovation management (Müthel and Saunders 2008). It can also be used to provide qualitative validation of theoretical models and to elicit and explore definitions, priorities, processes, challenges, issues, difficulties or views on the future, and on critical success factors (Rowley et al. 2012, p. 93–110). In the presented study the cards contained concepts derived from Jones and Rowley's (2009) EMICO framework, describing the types of marketing activities that would be likely to take place in small firms².

² EMICO – an acronym of Entrepreneurial, Market, Innovation and Customer Orientation (Jones and Rowley 2009).

The sequence of steps in each interview was as follows: 1) the respondents were shown 15 cards from the EMICO framework and asked to explain each term, and to assess its importance for domestic and international marketing of their companies; 2) they were asked to group the cards with similar labels and to arrange them in order of importance for their foreign expansion, in a concept-map form; 3) the respondents compared the importance of arranged concepts for foreign and domestic marketing; and lastly, 4) they were asked if any omissions were made and if these concepts are suitable for studying the international marketing of export ventures. As such, some cards were excluded from later discussions, and some new concepts were suggested.

The data gathered from the transcripts and photographs of the concept-maps were later analyzed in the following stages. The first step was coding the data, which is a crucial step in the content analysis process, as it comprises an ongoing interpretation and examination of textual data from different perspectives (Sinkovics, Penz, and Ghauri 2008, Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). We began with a-priori categorization, creating categories based on the literature (a deductive approach). This approach is in line with Miles et al.'s deductive procedure, which recommends creating a start list of codes based on a conceptual framework (Miles et al., 2000; Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014). As a next step, the category set was complemented with some concepts that spontaneously appeared in the interviews (Table 6), thus adopting a mixed inductive-deductive approach (Müthel and Saunders, 2008).

A precise system of categories derived from literature was developed, and later it was supplemented with codes based on the concepts appearing in the interviews (Table 6). The transcripts were coded with use of this system as well as MAXQDA software, which enables a systematic interpretation of the collected data (Kuckartz 2007; Miles, Huberman, and Zabielski 2000; Silverman 2008). 17 superior categories representing main topics (such as: "Company beginnings," "Market orientation"), 44 main categories representing questions/concept cards (such as: "Communication with customers," "Experience in working abroad"), and 103

subcategories, corresponding with the smallest coding units (such as: “High importance of communication with customers”) were used. To assure reliability, special attention was paid to the reproducibility of the data. Thus, the analysis and coding of the data was performed by two different coders, each coding the same set of content (Potter and Levine-Donnerstein 1999, Neuendorf, 2002). Both coders were experienced in the field of international marketing and coding procedures. The intercoder consistency assessment resulted in a level of agreement between coders that spanned from 64 percent to 78 percent for the Italian interviews, and from 58 percent to 89 percent for the Polish ones. Therefore, a correction of the initial coding was carried out, and resulted in final sets of 1,141 quotations (PL sample) and 822 quotations (IT sample). As a next step, the frequency of occurrence of specific codes was calculated for each company to evaluate the importance of the categories (Srnrka and Koeszegi 2007). This approach is based on the assumption that the repetition of words or expressions reveals the centers of interest and preoccupations of the actors (Thiéart 1999). Consequently, the common occurrence of codes was also analyzed, with the adoption of a code relations browser, to check their interrelations (Tables 2 and 3).

As part of the qualitative content analysis, the study of respondents’ interpretation of cards containing the marketing dimensions was also conducted independently by two researchers, who later compared the results based on the examination of interview transcripts. The coding priorities were plotted on respondent coding matrices (Miles, Huberman, and Saldana 2014), which enabled the researchers to discover the hierarchy of elements according to each interviewee. Later, the researchers compared the individual coding matrices with the composed conceptual maps, examined the interviews again, and determined the EMICO core and peripheral dimensions separately for both the Polish and Italian INVs. The results obtained by each researcher were compared and consulted for discrepancies to increase reliability and validity of the findings (Jones, Suoranta, and Rowley 2013b).

To operationalize the marketing capabilities from the sales and promotion sphere, the main categories of interviews' content representing customer orientation in the EMICO framework were used. Namely, they included: "Communication with customers," "Promotion and sales," "Understanding and delivering customer value," and "Responsiveness towards customers" (Table 6). To operationalize the capability of supporting the salesforce overseas, the subcategory of content named "Networking with intermediaries" (N 1.5) was used. All these main categories were accompanied by subcategories of content representing "meaning" (coding the description of the category given by respondents), "importance" (coding its low or high significance, according to respondents' opinion), "experience/activities" (code applied when examples of using a concept were mentioned) and "key success factors" (Tables 2 and 3).

Furthermore, to assess the capability of using promotional activities to gain international market shares, the co-occurrence of the mentioned categories of content, along with the categories concerning overseas expansion, was analyzed. Namely, we checked if the main categories as the "Speed of market entry" (code E2), "Market exploitation" (G1), and "Geographical markets" (S6), were quoted together with the categories concerning the capabilities from the sales and communication sphere. Assuming that the INVs engage in networks and relationships mainly on an international scale, the co-occurrence of this category (code G5) with promotion and sales category (H4) was also analyzed.

Findings

Sales and communication capabilities of INVs

The analysis of interview transcripts reveals that the most frequently applied promotion tools are within direct sales (see: Tables 4 and 5). All the companies were also actively participating in local and international trade fairs, which are helpful not only for engaging first contact with

potential clients, winning sales leads, and promoting the company, but also for managing relationships and gaining a good reputation.

The role of trade fairs as a communication tool is described in the following quotation:

Company F (R2) *A lot of importance is given to the trade fairs and all that is being communicated to the trade fairs through stands, brochures, pictures, photos, exhibitions. This is crucial for knowing each other. According to me, trade fairs, combined with communication and website activities, make it possible for any customer worldwide to reach us shortly, because thanks to just a quick internet search that the customer can say: we identify [our company] as a potential provider through Internet, and then I can meet them at the trade fair - for asking as much information as possible, and for trying to figure out if I can get support from [this company] during and after sales. Therefore trade fairs are at the first place, followed by company-level communications like brochures, web activity, gadgets.*

Company websites were perceived as important communication and sales tools by both the Polish and Italian companies, although the number of language versions was a point of concern for all of them. All the companies were also actively using social media, but only a few (two Polish, one Italian) admitted that they were using it creatively, as described in the quotation:

C(R1): *Every manufactured machine is being filmed before delivery to the client. Then we make a short film out of it, which as I said, is training support for the salespeople and partners on the one hand, and on the other hand, it is on the website, so the clients from a given industry can learn it.*

Some companies (e.g. B) admitted using modern promotional solutions for marketing automation. These solutions, however, were still being developed, and some were introduced too late, as some managers confirmed:

B(R1) *So (in our company) the part of knowledge connecting the lead qualification and the concrete project is missing- so this is important knowledge- and without it one can get lost in this information. So now we will be introducing a sales force (information) system to integrate the marketing automation, applying a new tool, instead of the older one...*

Contrary to the Italian INVs, the Polish INVs mentioned frequent use of traditional leaflets and press advertisements, translated into many languages. Moreover, participation in contests and applying for certification was important; some companies boasted: (F)R1: *We won the first*

edition of Klimahaus, although our start-up does not produce technology for homes, we were really far ahead of others

Two of the Polish companies admitted they did not use promotional tools in a professional way: A (R2) *Our advertising sensu stricte is “down.” It’s because we – as a group of engineers - have employed two marketers, but during training, we instilled the technical thinking in them. So they were supposed to bring a „fresh view” - they were supposed to explain what we were doing in a non-technical language. (...) So when one comes to the fair, when talking with our company, the client is asked first “what thermal transmittance value they would like”? So when training our marketers we instilled this kind of technical thinking – but we are learning to communicate all the time (among others we built a special web page with a building-costs calculator). So we are learning this communication – but we are rather [emphasizing on] striving to build good relationships.*

D (R1) *For the current moment we have neglected the proper promotion (I know we should be more visible outside, but..). We prefer to spend this money on purchasing new machinery when we still have lots of orders.*

The skillful use of communication tools was described by the president of company G, who, when asked about the missing concepts in the EMICO framework, answered: *Money! There’s nothing on financial problems (...) Where is money? And added talking about other marketing tools: When you have no money you have to be clever. All of the companies referred to networking with intermediaries and word-of-mouth recommendations as low cost promotional tools. Another Italian manufacturer mentioned a contest, organized by the company, for co-designing promotion with clients: E (R2) ...So we also made in 2017 a promotion proposing our customers to take a picture, oh basically it was directed at the private customer, to take a picture of our products inside their house, and put it in our social (media). And in the end – it was one year I think – the whole promotion – the best picture – should have been chosen, and the winner was invited in Italy, here in our country, for one week – hotel and flight paid – for vacations or visiting our country, our neighborhood.*

Later, the manager emphasized that this form of promotion was successful, as it increased brand visibility at a low cost, connected only with financing the winner’s trip to Italy.

Although the creativity of tools used by INVs was not very high, they did place emphasis on frequent personal communication with distributors and clients, to provide support, and to answer changing requests faster than their competitors. One Polish company representative

mentioned that (C, R1): *For us, the basis is that the client does not forget about us – we also do not forget the client. Therefore we need the dealer – to enable quick response – and to make the brand “X” worth buying, to make the machinery under this name worth purchasing, or anything under this brand being valued.*

To build direct relationships with clients, the Polish INVs used simple tools, but they paid attention to their “bonding role”: D (R1) *There are the phone calls, e-mails, and a group of clients who like to talk with me [company president]. There is another group talking only with Ilona and another – talking with Iza, and this is how we divided that. When clients call, they sometimes ask me for something but later they talk with the sales department, and finally make the order. All this is good because it created a sort of ties between the clients and [the company].*

Overall in the whole sample the approach to the traditional communication is unplanned, with an emphasis put rather on its frequency, than on an innovative character.

Providing support to the overseas salesforce

Most of the companies claimed to have high-quality distribution partners responsible for foreign sales. They were chosen very carefully, trained, and the relationships with them were managed with great attention. The role of dealer selection and provided support is described in such way: G (R1) *We have selected a specific type of collaborators: mainly Italians, working and living in our area of interest, with a strong passion for the project and a strong desire to grow with us. So we can say that it's an original selection.*

C (R2) *This year we have organized a first training session designed for dealers. The priority is for dealers... Because the holiday time was coming, it was not convenient for customers to be invited, but we plan to prepare the same training with the knowledge adjusted for customers, more of a „marketing training”.*

A (R1) *We need the dealer to tell us, which [magazine] is better [to promote the company]. Or to go together with him and promote ourselves on the exhibition, distributing small leaflets [with website address].*

The specialized CRM tools to support communication with partners were also applied, but not by all companies. A Polish INV manager mentioned one of the more advanced applications:

B (R2) *At this moment the basic infrastructure to store and disseminate marketing materials is the webpage with different forms of access. It is a form of usual visit-card – which presents what we do in a short content – we*

show the flagship products, filmed. Then for the clients who are more interested in a given solution, we have a second level of webpage access. And the third level is for salespersons and distributors, where there is information not accessible for clients.

Such tools were mainly applied to improve cooperation and create bonds with the sales partners, or to permit quick response to the needs of foreign customers (see also: Tables 4 and 5). Unlike the communication tools, the approach to selecting the salesforce was planned and the respondents emphasized its role. A lot of authority was delegated to the overseas agents, and their role was considered fundamental for expansion.

Marketing capabilities and international expansion

To assess the importance of sales and communication activities for expansion, quotation frequency was analyzed, the maps obtained during the card-based game were compared by preparing coding matrices, and the code co-occurrence was studied (see: “Methodology” section). The frequency analysis included the following categories of content: “Sales and promotion,” “Communication with customers,” “Understanding and delivering customer value,” “Responsiveness towards customers,” and “Networking with intermediaries.” These categories represented 11.4 percent of all main categories in the initial coding tree; however, the quotations ascribed to these categories represent 20.4 percent of all quotations in the Polish subsample, and 17.9 percent of all quotations in the Italian subsample, which confirms the high level of interest in these topics from the respondents.

To verify the frequency analysis results, the card-based game outcomes, where cards were laid out in such a way to group those with similar labels and to arrange them in order of importance for foreign expansion, were analyzed. The cards layouts were compared by two independent coders, who later prepared coding matrices, and on their basis the concept maps were prepared. The cards were divided into three categories “core concepts,” or the most important tasks and goals, leading to gaining competitive advantage; “peripheral concepts,” the

less important concepts (see also: Jones and Rowley 2011); and “underlying values,” those accompanying and inspiring INV activity (see: fig. 1, and fig 2.).

Insert Figure 1.

Judging by the structure of the concept maps prepared based on the respondents’ designs, the role of promotional tools in the Polish firms was less pronounced than other elements of the EM framework (see: fig. 1). The core concepts for the Polish companies are: “Understanding and responsiveness to customers,” “Propensity to innovate,” “Communication with customers,” and “Networks and relationships.” The card “Communication with customers” is positioned as a tool for helping to develop new products at the beginning of the marketing process, and “Promotion and sales” are positioned at its end. In the Polish sample “Understanding and responsiveness to customers” is dominant within the customer orientation (CO) dimension, whereas “Promotion and sales” has a peripheral role.

Insert Figure 2.

In the Italian firms, the core concepts are “Proactiveness,” “Propensity to innovate,” “Understanding and responsiveness to customers,” “Exploiting markets,” “Promotion and sales,” “Networks and relationships,” and “Market intelligence generation.” They include three of four cards describing sales and communication capabilities. When asked about the importance of promotional activities for expansion, the Italian companies assessed it as comparable to the other core elements of the EMICO framework. The “Promotion and sales” card was either placed close to “Exploiting markets” and “Speed of entry,” or at the end of the whole marketing process (see: fig. 2).

Overall, as a result of the analysis of transcripts, and the maps laid out by the respondents, the EMICO conceptual framework (Jones and Rowley, 2011) was found applicable to analyze INVs’ marketing (Kowalik and Danik 2019). However, regarding the sales and communication capabilities, we suggest renaming the card “Promotion and sales” to become “Salesforce

selection and support” and joining the “Communication with customers” concept with “Promotion” into a common card called “Communication activities”. These suggestions result not only from the quotation analysis, but also from the respondents’ remarks about a “missing card” with the concept of agents/intermediaries. Moreover, the “Communication activities” concept can be used to describe both the nature of INV communication, and the tools used by such firms.

The perceived connections between the coded categories representing sales and communication capabilities and those representing internationalization are visible in Tables 2 and 3. The numbers in cells represent the frequency of common occurrence of categories shown in rows and columns, i.e. how many times the category in a row and the category in a column were mentioned together during the interviews.

As can be seen from Table 2, the “traditional” promotion and sales tools (code H4 and subcodes) are of little importance in increasing the speed of foreign market expansion of the Polish companies. However, these tools are important in shaping relationships with intermediaries and clients. Participating in networks with intermediaries co-occurs with the “Foreign market entry” and “Market exploitation” categories. Moreover, traditional communication is mentioned together with forming the networks and relationships necessary for success in foreign expansion (codes G 5.1, G 5.2 and G 5.3).

As can be seen from Table 3, the Italian companies’ experience in communication (code H2) and promotion and sales activity (code H4 and sub-codes) were also co-occurring with participation in networks. Moreover, these companies mentioned the need to adjust to the differences between local and foreign markets in terms of communication and the value offered to customers. Finally, in the Italian sample, “Understanding” (code H3) and “Responsiveness towards customers” (code H1) were mentioned in the context of “Exploiting markets.”

Such findings point to the role of the bonding and responsiveness capabilities, coupled with superior market sensing of INVs, in their expansion. These capabilities are supported by sales and communication capabilities, but they also act reciprocally, that is – the superior customer relationships improve communication and sales processes.

Discussion

The presented study, by providing a comparison of INVs from distinct economic backgrounds and finding common patterns in their marketing activity, enables the determination of their key specialized marketing capabilities in the sales and communication sphere, which are: understanding and responsiveness to customers/intermediaries' needs, and providing support to the overseas salesforce. The marketing communication capabilities of INVs are aimed at connecting these firms with the foreign markets, through the partner/customer networks, and enabling the customer “intensity”, leading to opportunity recognition and co-production (Hagen, Zucchella, and Ghauri 2019). Our findings show that the communication tools, adequately adapted to the foreign partners' needs, are used by the INVs as “bridges” to the foreign markets using the partner/customer networks. Consequently, the communication directed at partners does not have to be “advanced” in terms of the tools' selection – but rather able to frequently transmit the responses to appearing issues. Moreover, in studied INVs the customer “intensity” is set as an overarching aim in order to be able to maintain the ability of market sensing and co-production. This finding is in line with studies concerning redefined strategic agility (Hagen, Zucchella, and Ghauri 2019; Doz and Kosonen 2010). Therefore the communication tools may also serve as channels facilitating co-production with B2B customers via continuous incremental innovations.

Thus the communication tools are low-cost and skillfully applied, and they match with the entrepreneurial marketing “4Ps” framework (Martin 2009), where marketing “processes” directed at flexible reactions to market needs assure foreign market “exploitation,” i.e.

discovering opportunities and acting upon them. On the other hand, the findings provide evidence of “purpose and practices” focusing on superior customer/partner service, leading to quick and early expansion of INVs. Thus, referring to the research question 2 - the role of proper training of the salesforce overseas increases.

Moreover, as Hagen and Zucchella (2018) claim, the ability to build long-lasting customer relationships, also called customer relationship capability (Morgan and Kaleka 2019), is among the marketing elements contributing to early internationalization. Such relationships are mainly based on superior customer/partner service, which was exhibited by the companies participating in this study. The co-occurrence of categories related to internationalization and networking indicates that the development of networks is a necessary factor for further expansion. In a study by Laurell, Achtenhagen and Anderson (2017), networking activities in early stages of expansion lead to later development of marketing capabilities during an INV’s stages of commercialization and sales growth. Similarly, in the present study, networking activities later resulted in developing the capability of superior customer service, which then led to a sustainable advantage abroad. This is confirmed by findings of O’Dwyer et al. (2009), who found that the key characteristics that impact innovative marketing in SMEs include the importance of promotion and networking, with particular reference to the owner’s/manager’s own network(s) and the critical role of customization/flexibility in serving customers. Therefore there seems to exist a reciprocal relationship between customer relationship ability and sales and communication capability in the INVs.

However, as the studied INV managers’ comments have suggested, the capability of using creative promotion tools played a secondary role in their international marketing. As Cummins et al. (2000) claimed, SME marketing activities are not necessarily based on originality and are more likely to be an adaptation of an existing concept or practice. Therefore, the innovativeness of communication and sales capabilities may lie in their unique application to a particular

company or situation, or their skillful use. Another justification of our findings may be that in some cases, highly developed communication capabilities are not necessary in order to obtain a competitive advantage. Martin et al. (2017), who examined over 200 high tech born global companies from Mexico, also concluded that under conditions of low ambidextrous innovation, lower levels of marketing capabilities could provide a competitive advantage. Similarly, Zhou, Wu, and Barnes (2012) demonstrated that new ventures' marketing capabilities were important for the international growth of firms targeting developed foreign markets, but they were not related to the international growth of firms targeting emerging foreign markets. The majority of Polish INVs had strong ties with post-transitional Eastern European or Asian developing markets. The customers in these markets might not require so many modern, advanced communication tools as the Western ones because those business cultures are based more on direct personal relations. Moreover, providing support for overseas agents often replaces the role of traditional promotion tools in the sense that it enables the flexibility to meet customers' needs to be maintained, thus becoming an element of differentiation. Similarly, in another study of B2B exporters, "traditional" marketing communication tools were among the least important for firms from the U.S., and fell in the middle of a hierarchy of marketing capabilities among Latin American companies (Cortez and Johnston 2018).

Another study concerning specialized marketing capabilities' role in improving US- based companies performance showed that these capabilities were beneficial for firms who also had strong innovation capabilities (Jeng and Pak 2016). Marketing capabilities' support for innovations was needed to "monetize" the new product ideas. Thus, the authors indicated that efforts should be focused on integrating innovation and marketing capabilities, in line with the dynamic capabilities approach (Teece 2014). In that study, advertising capabilities alone were neutral to medium companies' performance and tended to decrease small firms' performance. This finding is also similar as in a study of INVs from the U.S and Australia (Weerawardena et

al. 2015), which showed that their marketing capabilities contributed to the early and successful internationalization of INVs via increased innovativeness. In our study the sales and communication capabilities were also connected with market intelligence generation and understanding the customers (see: fig.1, 2), which means that they contributed to the firms' market learning (Yeoh 2004). Thus, in line with the above findings, sales and communication capabilities may contribute to innovativeness in the form of customized products development.

In previous studies on internationalized SMEs of Italian origin, the means of applying sales and promotion tools was related to the type of industry. For example, luxury market players studied by Simoni *et al.* (2010) invested very little in developing marketing capabilities, nor were the tools used in foreign markets customized, and marketing success depended on the country-of-origin effect. On the contrary, Bocconcelli *et al.* (2017) analyzed social media adoption by an internationalized SME from the manufacturing industry to show that it helped the firm tap into a new market and survive the economic downturn. In that case, social media presented a strategic resource for an effective business networking effort. For "late starter" SMEs in the wine industry, however, informal networks with foreign tourists, friends and relatives, Italian expatriates, and other business partners helped advance the firms' internationalization (Francioni, Vissak, and Musso 2017). In the present study, Italian manufacturing INVs attached an important role to social media tools during exploitation and fast entry into the markets abroad, but they also took advantage of these informal network relationships over the course of further internationalization. Such a conscious use of modern sales and promotion tools was an important point of difference between the Italian and Polish samples. These tools' use was backed by earlier networking activities (as in the example of the solar pump producer "G"), which prepared ground for the development of further marketing capabilities (see also Laurell *et al.* 2017). Therefore, referring to research question 1, the main difference between the Italian and Polish companies lies in the Italian INVs' greater

comprehensiveness of their communication capabilities. The Polish INVs treated frequent communication as a tool for interaction with customers within a constant process of market sensing, and for providing offerings based on “customer intimacy,” which is described as one of the key EM strategies (Sullivan Mort, Weerawardena, and Liesch 2012), as well as an element of the INVs’ strategic agility (Hagen, Zucchella, and Ghauri 2019). On the contrary, the Italian INVs chose seven concepts in the EMICO framework as crucial for foreign expansion, and moreover, they saw a strong link between “Market intelligence generation,” “Market exploitation,” and “Responsiveness to competitors,” which was not visible in the Polish sample. This implies a greater role of architectural marketing capabilities for the Italian companies’ expansion as compared to the Polish ones. Nevertheless, despite different backgrounds, both the Polish and Italian firms put in the center of marketing framework “Understanding and responsiveness to customers”, proving the paramount role of customer relationships capability, backed by customer communication.

So, to answer research question 3, companies coming from both studied markets recognized that propensity to innovate and to maintain close relationships in networks were essential for international marketing. For the Polish INVs, however, networks were necessary for communicating with partners and clients to understand and respond quickly to their needs. For the Italian INVs, networks were also important in the generation of diverse types of marketing intelligence. Thus, the marketing communication skills and processes could guarantee differentiation, and building an advantage based on the “bonding” role and high brand awareness in the partners’ minds (see also: Martin et al. 2017).

These results are similar to Jones et al.’s (2013a) findings regarding technology SMEs from the U.S. In those software firms, similar to the Polish manufacturing ones, the focus was on the product and its constant development. As Hagen and Zucchella (2018) claimed, the ability to develop products in co-creation with customers is another core EM element contributing to

early internationalization. So-called customer intimacy is a distinctive characteristic of SMEs as the source of their competitive advantage (Hagen et al. 2012). Marketing capabilities may support early internationalization by creating a capacity to build and reconfigure strategic marketing tools to effectively identify, access, and deliver value in international markets (Weerawardena et al. 2007). In the studied companies from Poland, the value delivery function was supported by marketing capabilities, while in the Italian INVs, both value assessment and delivery were supported by them.

Overall, the other types of marketing capabilities should be connected with sales and communication ones in crafting the SMEs advantage in foreign markets. The market-sensing capability, by involving substantive activities and routines needed to obtain knowledge from various sources (Salojärvi et al., 2015), together with market learning, are classified as “informational” capabilities of exporting manufacturers (Kaleka and Morgan 2019). These authors have shown that the firm’s market-learning capability may draw on the combined activities in selling, and customer response (apart from other capabilities, such as e.g. brand development). The capability of customer relationship development may be an “avenue” for learning about the industrial products, by giving access to informal market knowledge. And vice-versa, Wilden and Gudergan (2015) have confirmed that sensing and reconfiguring capabilities are important for improving marketing capabilities in dynamic environments. Similarly, Iyer et al. (2019), who concentrated on B2B marketing, have confirmed that market orientation, including constant information gathering, can support the development of other marketing capabilities, such as developing the positioning strategy. Therefore we could suppose that the interplay between such specialized and architectural marketing capabilities created possibilities for the expansion of INVs in our study.

Generalized findings

To summarize, the following propositions are offered on the basis of our study's findings:

Proposition 1: The skillful use and frequency of marketing communication provide information about customers and thus stimulate INVs' responsiveness to the foreign market needs.

Proposition 2: The selection, training and support for salesforce replace the basic promotion tools of INVs, by enabling customer bonding and co-creation.

Proposition 3: The combined capabilities of selling and communication interact in a reciprocal way with the informational capabilities of INVs, which results in a combination of capabilities stimulating foreign expansion.

These findings contribute to the international entrepreneurship theory by showing how specialized marketing capabilities can support the architectural capabilities in the early internationalization of INVs. They also extend the theory, showing that the marketing tools discussed in the classical marketing literature are not universal.

Implications for practice

The presented empirical analysis offers further implications. First, the successful international operations of the Polish INVs, who attributed little importance to "modern" promotional tools, indicate that in this industry and business context, they are not indispensable. Instead, the startups in such branches may concentrate on developing the architectural marketing capabilities necessary for gathering and dissemination of market intelligence and on superior salesforce management. Of course, INVs could also take advantage of available automation tools and creatively engage in social media. As the literature suggests (Vorhies and Morgan 2005), a combination of different marketing capabilities is most beneficial for performance. So, developing complementary sets of marketing capabilities from the beginning of the marketing process is even more important than their innovative character.

Second, the development of sales and communication capabilities should be supported with and by earlier networking activities. This also means that at earlier stages of international development, INVs first need to pay attention to developing strong client and partner ties. Then, at later growth and maturity stages of company's life cycle, sales and communication capabilities are developed through leveraging these ties, which is in-line with the EM approach.

Third, although the findings highlight a greater level of understanding among Italian SMEs regarding the importance of developing and exploiting marketing capabilities, European institutions should provide help and funding to smaller firms to develop both sets of marketing capabilities, especially considering how crucial covering R&D costs and provision of export information are for their successful expansion. Moreover the assistance in developing salesforce management skills, and especially training international intermediaries would contribute to internationalization of SMEs.

Study limitations and implications for research

A few limitations of this study may offer suggestions for future research. For instance, the study covers two European markets and concentrates on companies serving B2B clients. Future studies could be extended to other countries and other markets, which would provide the possibility for comparison with the role of marketing capabilities in SMEs operating in other branches and serving different target markets. The collection of additional case study and survey data would enhance the generalizability of the results. A longitudinal study of International New Ventures could also provide some interesting results regarding the development of sales and communication capabilities in different phases of foreign expansion.

Finally, the other methodological approaches to study the SMEs' marketing capabilities (e.g. of Zhou, Wu, and Barnes 2012) might be applied to future studies on INVs, and the results could be compared with the classification applied in the present study.

References

- Agnihotri, R., P. Kothandaraman, R. Kashyap, and R. Singh (2012). "Bringing "Social" Into Sales: The Impact of Salespeople's Social Media Use on Service Behaviors and Value Creation," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* 32(3), 333–348.
- Ahmadi, H., and A. O'Cass (2016). "The role of entrepreneurial marketing in new technology ventures first product commercialisation," *Journal of strategic marketing* 24(1), 47–60.
- Baum, M., and S. Sui (2013). "Learning by exporting: short term vs. longer term effects of export duration on product innovations. Do Born globals learn differently?," *European International Business Academy*, Conference paper.
- Bernhaupt, R., A. Weiss, M. Pirker, D. Wilfinger, and M. Tscheligi. (2010) "Ethnographic insights on security, privacy, and personalization aspects of user interaction in interactive TV", *Proceedings of the 8th international interactive Conference on interactive TV & Video - EuroITV '10*, Tampere, Finland, New York: ACM, 187-196
- Bocconcelli, R., M. Cioppi, F. Fortezza, B. Francioni, A. Pagano, E. Savelli, and S. Splendiani (2018). "SMEs and Marketing: A Systematic Literature Review," *International Journal of Management Reviews* 20(2), 227–254.
- Bocconcelli, R., M. Cioppi, and A. Pagano (2017). "Social media as a resource in SMEs' sales process," *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* 32(5), 693–709.
- Bogner, A., B. Littig, and W. Menz (Ed.) (2002). *Das Experteninterview. Theorie, Methode, Anwendung*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Bonoma, T. V. (1985). "Case Research in Marketing: Opportunities, Problems, and a Process," *Journal of Marketing Research* 22 (2), 199–208.
- Bluhm, D. J., W. Harman, T.W. Lee, and T. R. Mitchell (2011). "Qualitative research in management: A decade of progress", *Journal of Management Studies* 48(8), 1866– 1891.
- Bruneel, J., H. Yli-Renko, and B. Clarysse (2010). "Learning from experience and learning from others: How congenital and inter organizational learning substitute for experiential learning in young firm internationalization," *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal* 4(2), 164-182.
- Camuffo, A., A. Furlan, and R. Grandinetti (2007). "Knowledge and capabilities in subcontractors' evolution. The Italian case," in *Small and medium-sized enterprises and the global economy*. Ed. G. I. Susman, Cheltenham: Elgar, 125–139.
- Canowiecki, Z. (2018). *Pomeranian Employers' Association - Conference Presentation*. Gdansk: University of Gdansk..
- Caputo, A., M. M. Pellegrini, M. Dabic, and L. Paul Dana (2016). "Internationalisation of firms from Central and Eastern Europe," *European Business Review* 28(6), 630–651.
- Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (2018). <https://www.cdp.it/media/studi/altri-studi/internationalisation-of-european-smes.kl>, 19 September 2018.
- Chen, Y., S. Fay, and Q. Wang (2011). "The role of marketing in social media. How online consumer reviews evolve," *Journal of Interactive Marketing* 25(2), 85–94.
- Cortez, R. M., and W. J. Johnston (2018). "Needed B2B marketing capabilities: Insights from the USA and emerging Latin America," *International Business Review* 27(3), 594–609.
- Cummins, D., A. Gilmore, D. Carson, and A. O'Donnell (2000). "What is innovative marketing in SMEs? Towards a conceptual and descriptive framework", *AMA Conference Proceedings*, July.
- Danik, L. (2017). *Wpływ kultury na jakość relacji w międzynarodowej współpracy przedsiębiorstw*. Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza SGH Szkoła Główna Handlowa.

- Danik, L., and I. Kowalik (2015). "Success factors and development barriers perceived by the Polish born global companies. Empirical study results," *Journal of East European Management Studies* 20(3), 360–390.
- Danik, L., and K. Kowalska (2018). "Promotion tools applied by Polish INVs on foreign markets," *Journal of Economic Behavior* 8, 101–115.
- Dant, R. P., and J. R. Brown (2008). "Bridging the B2C and B2B research divide: The domain of retailing literature," *Journal of Retailing*, 84(4), 371-397.
- Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The research act*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Doz, Y.L., and M. Kosonen (2010). "Embedding strategic agility: a leadership agenda for accelerating business model renewal," *Long Range Planning* 43 (2/3), 370-382.
- Eurostat (2018), https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/International_trade_in_goods_by_enterprise_size#Shares_by_size_class_at_Member_State_level_for_total_trade, 17 June 2019.
- Eisenhardt, K.M. (1989). "Building theories from case study research," *Academy of Management Review* 14(4), 532–550.
- Fait, M., A. Lazzi, O. Trio, and L. Iaia (2013). "Social Web communication and CRM in the marketing strategies of wine enterprises," *Journal of Economic Behavior* 3, 103–116.
- Fontana, A., and J. Frey (2000). "The interview. From structured questions to negotiated text," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Ed. Y. Lincoln, N. K. Denzin, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 645–672.
- Francioni, B., A. Pagano, and D. Castellani (2016). "Drivers of SMEs' exporting activity: a review and a research agenda," *Multinational Business Review* 24(3), 194–215.
- Francioni, B., T. Vissak, and F. Musso (2017). "Small Italian wine producers' internationalization: The role of network relationships in the emergence of late starters," *International Business Review* 26(1), 12–22.
- Gilmore, A. (2011). "Entrepreneurial and SME marketing," *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship* 13(2), 137–145.
- Gregory, G. D., L.V. Ngo, and M. Karavdic (2019). "Developing e-commerce marketing capabilities and efficiencies for enhanced performance in business-to-business export ventures," *Industrial Marketing Management* 78, 146–157
- Hagen, B., A. Zucchella, and P.M. Ghauri (2019). "From fragile to agile: marketing as a key driver of entrepreneurial internationalization," *International Marketing Review* 36(2), 260-288.
- Hagen, B., and A. Zucchella (2018). "Entrepreneurial marketing as key driver of early and sustained internationalisation," in *Key Success Factors of SME Internationalisation: A Cross-Country Perspective*. Ed. N. Dominguez, U. Mayrhofer, Bingley: Emerald Publishing Limited, 25–40.
- Hagen, B., A. Zucchella, P. Cerchiello, and N. de Giovanni (2012). "International strategy and performance—Clustering strategic types of SMEs," *International Business Review* 21(3), 369–382.
- Hajli, M. N. (2014). "A study of the impact of social media on consumers," *International Journal of Market Research* 56(3), 387–404.
- Hallböck, J., and P. Gabrielsson (2013). "Entrepreneurial marketing strategies during the growth of international new ventures originating in small and open economies," *International Business Review* 22(6), 1008–1020.
- Hanna, S., and J. Rowley (2011). "Towards a strategic place brand-management model," *Journal of Marketing Management* 27(5-6), 458–476.

- Hills, G. E., and C. Hultman (2011). "Research in marketing and entrepreneurship: a retrospective viewpoint," *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship* 13(1), 8–17.
- Hsieh, H.-F., and S.E. Shannon (2005). "Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis," *Qualitative Health Research* 15(9), 1277–1288.
- Ionita, D. (2012). "Entrepreneurial Marketing: A New Approach for Challenging Times," *Management & Marketing Challenges for the Knowledge Society* 17(1), 131–150.
- Iyer, P., A. Davari, M. Zolfagharian, and A. Paswan (2019). "Market orientation, positioning strategy and brand performance," *Industrial Marketing Management* 81, 16–29.
- Jeng, D.J.F., and A. Pak (2016). "The variable effects of dynamic capability by firm size: the interaction of innovation and marketing capabilities in competitive industries", *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* (12), 115–130.
- Jones, M. V., N. Coviello, and Y. K. Tang (2011). "International entrepreneurship research (1989 - 2009). A domain ontology and thematic analysis," *Journal of business venturing* 26(6), 632–659.
- Jones, R., and J. Rowley (2009). "Presentation of a generic "EMICO" framework for research exploration of entrepreneurial marketing in SMEs," *Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship* 11(1), 5–21.
- Jones, R., and J. Rowley (2011). "Entrepreneurial marketing in small businesses: A conceptual exploration," *International Small Business Journal* 29(1), 25–36.
- Jones, R., and J. Rowley (2012). "Card-based game methods: exploring SME entrepreneurial marketing practice," *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business* 16 (4), 485-503.
- Jones, R., Suoranta, M., and J. Rowley (2013a). "Strategic network marketing in technology SMEs," *Journal of Marketing Management* 29 (5-6), 671-697.
- Jones, R., Suoranta, M., and J. Rowley (2013b). "Entrepreneurial marketing: a comparative study," *The Service Industries Journal* 33 (7–8), 705–719.
- Kacprzyk, A., and W. Doryń (2017). "Innovation and economic growth in old and new member states of the European Union," *Economic Research-Ekonomska Istraživanja* 30(1), 1724–1742.
- Kaleka, A., and N.A. Morgan (2019). "How marketing capabilities and current performance drive strategic intentions in international markets", *Industrial Marketing Management* 78, 108–121.
- Knight, G. A., and P. W. Liesch (2016). "Internationalization: From incremental to born global", *Journal of World Business* 51, 93-102.
- Knight, G. A., T. K. Madsen, and P. Servais (2004). "An inquiry into born-global firms in Europe and the USA," *International Marketing Review* 21(6), 645–665.
- Kolongahapitiya, K.H.M.A.R. (2018). "Progression of theory of entrepreneurial marketing (EM)," *International Journal of Engineering Technologies and Management Research* 5(5), 41-57.
- Kotler, P. (2005). *Marketing*, Warszawa: Rebis.
- Kowalik, I. (2015). "Marketing Activity of the International New Ventures. Results of Empirical Studies from Poland," *Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska, sectio H, Oeconomia* 49(3), 71–80.
- Kowalik, I., and L. Danik (2019). "Marketing activity of international new ventures – application of the EMICO framework," *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* 34(4), 779-791.

- Kraus, S., R. Harms, and M. Fink (2010). "Entrepreneurial Marketing: Moving beyond marketing in new ventures," *International journal of entrepreneurship and innovation management* 11(1), 19–34.
- Kuckartz, U. (2007). *Einführung in die computergestützte Analyse qualitativer Daten*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften / GWV Fachverlage GmbH, Wiesbaden.
- Lamb, P., J. Sandberg, and P.W. Liesch (2011). "Small firm internationalisation unveiled through phenomenograph," *Journal of International Business Studies*, 42(5), 672-693.
- Laurell, H., L. Achtenhagen, and S. Andersson (2017). "The changing role of network ties and critical capabilities in an international new venture's early development", *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal* 13, 113–140.
- Leppäaho, T., S. Chetty, and P. Dimitratos (2018). "Network embeddedness in the internationalization of biotechnology entrepreneurs", *Entrepreneurship & Regional Development* 30(5-6), 562-584.
- Lonial, S. C., and R. E. Carter (2015). "The impact of organizational orientations on medium and small firm performance. A resource-based perspective," *Journal of small business management* 53(1), 94–113.
- Luostarinen, R., and M. Gabrielsson (2006). "Globalization and marketing strategies of Born Globals in SMOPECs," *Thunderbird International Business Review* 48(6), 773–801.
- Lu, H.P. and Hsiao, K.L. (2010). "The Influence of Extro/Introversion on the Intention to Pay for Social Networking Sites", *Information and Management* 47, 150-157.
- Madsen, T. K. (2013). "Early and rapidly internationalizing ventures: Similarities and differences between classifications based on the original international new venture and born global literatures," *Journal of International Entrepreneurship* 11(1), 65–79.
- Madsen, T. K., and P. Servais (1997). "The internationalization of Born Globals: An evolutionary process?," *International Business Review* 6(6), 561–583.
- Martin, D. M. (2009). "The entrepreneurial marketing mix," *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 12(4), 391–403.
- Martin, S. L., R. G. Javalgi, and E. Cavusgil (2017). "Marketing capabilities, positional advantage, and performance of born global firms: Contingent effect of ambidextrous innovation," *International Business Review* 26(3), 527–543.
- Mathews S., C. Bianchi, K. J. Perks, M. Healy, and R. Wickramasekera (2016). "Internet marketing capabilities and international market growth," *International Business Review* 25, 820–830.
- Mehrabi, H., N. Coviello, and C. Ranaweera (2019). "Ambidextrous marketing capabilities and performance: How and when entrepreneurial orientation makes a difference," *Industrial Marketing Management* 77, 129–142.
- Meuser, M., and U. Nagel (2002). "Experteninterviews – vielfach erprobt, wenig bedacht. Ein Beitrag zur qualitativen Methodendiskussion," in *Das Experteninterview. Theorie, Methode, Anwendung*. Ed. A. Bogner, B. Littig, W. Menz, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 71–94.
- Miles, M. B., A. M. Huberman, and J. Saldana (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis. A Methods Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Miles, M. B., A. M. Huberman, and S. Zabielski (2000). *Analiza danych jakościowych*. Białystok: Trans Humana.
- Miles, M. P., A. Gilmore, P. Harrigan, G. Lewis, and Z. Sethna (2015). "Exploring entrepreneurial marketing," *Journal of strategic marketing* 23(2), 94–111.

- Miocevic, D., and R. E. Morgan (2018). "Operational capabilities and entrepreneurial opportunities in emerging market firms," *International Marketing Review* 35(2), 320–341.
- Morgan, N. A., C. S. Katsikeas, and D. W. Vorhies (2012). "Export marketing strategy implementation, export marketing capabilities, and export venture performance," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 40(2), 271–289.
- Morgan, N. A., D. W. Vorhies, and C. H. Mason (2009). "Market orientation, marketing capabilities, and firm performance," *Strategic Management Journal* 30, 909-920.
- Morris, M. H., M. Schindehutte, and R. W. LaForge (2002). "Entrepreneurial Marketing: A Construct for Integrating Emerging Entrepreneurship and Marketing Perspectives," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice* 10(4), 1–19.
- Müthel, M., and M. Högl (2007). "Initial distrust. On the role of perceived dishonesty in international innovation teams," in *Open innovation between and within organizations*, Wiesbaden: Gabler, 103–124.
- Müthel, M., and M. Saunders (2008). *Enhancing the value added of mixed method designs: on the use of card based games for simultaneous hybrid data collection*, Paper presented at the European Academy of Management Conference, Ljubljana, Slovenia.
- Narooz, R., and J. Child (2017). "Networking responses to different levels of institutional void: A comparison of internationalizing SMEs in Egypt and the UK". *International Business Review* 26(4), 683–696.
- Neuendorf, K.A. (2002). *The Content Analysis Guidebook*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Nummela, N., S. Saarenketo, P. Jokela, and S. Loane (2014). "Strategic Decision-Making of a Born Global: A Comparative Study From Three Small Open Economies." *Management International Review* 54(4), 527–550.
- O'Dwyer M., A. Gilmore, and D. Carson (2009). "Innovative marketing in SMEs", *European Journal of Marketing* 43 (1/2), 46-61.
- Oviatt, B. M., and P. P. McDougall (1994). "Toward a Theory of International New ventures," *Journal of International Business Studies* 25(1), 45–64.
- Øyna, S. and I. Alon (2018). "A Review of Born globals", *International Studies of Management & Organization* 48 (2), 157-180.
- PARP (2017). *Raport o stanie sektora MSP w Polsce, Polska Agencja Rozwoju Przedsiębiorczości*. Warszawa.
- Pellegrino, J. M., and R. B. McNaughton (2015). "The Co-evolution of Learning and Internationalization Strategy in International New Ventures," *Management International Review* 55(4), 457–483.
- Potter, W. J., and D. Levine-Donnerstein (1999). "Rethinking validity and reliability in content analysis," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 27(3), 258–284.
- Reijonen, H. (2010). "Do all SMEs practise same kind of marketing?," *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* 17(2), 279–293.
- Rennie, M. W. (1993). "Global Competitiveness: Born Global," *McKinsey Quarterly* 4, 45–52.
- Ripollés, M., and A. Blesa (2012). "International new ventures as "small multinationals": The importance of marketing capabilities," *Journal of World Business* 47(2), 277–287.
- Rowley, J., R. Jones, M. Vassiliou, and S. Hanna (2012). "Using Card-Based Games to Enhance the Value of Semi-Structured Interviews," *International Journal of Market Research* 54(1), 93–110.
- Salojärvi, H., A. Tarkiainen, P. Ritala, and L.-M. Sainio (2015). "Antecedents and consequences of business model innovation capability", Paper presented at the *Shaping the Frontiers of Innovation Management Conference*, 14-17 June, Budapest, Hungary.

- Sapienza, H. J., E. Autio, G. George, and S. A. Zahra (2006). "A Capabilities Perspective on the Effects of Early Internationalization on Firm Survival and Growth," *Academy of Management Review* 31(4), 914–933.
- Sethna, Z. (2013). *Entrepreneurial marketing. Global perspectives*. Bingley: Emerald.
- Silverman, D. (2008). *Interpretacja danych jakościowych*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.
- Simoni, C., S. Rabino, and L. Zanni (2010). "Italian and Indian gold and jewelry SMEs, marketing practices in the USA: A comparative case study," *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* 17(3), 403–417.
- Sinkovics, R. R., E. Penz, and P. N. Ghauri (2008). "Enhancing the Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research in International Business," *Management International Review* 48(6), 689–714.
- Srnka, K. J., and S. T. Koeszegi (2007). "From Words to Numbers: How to Transform Qualitative Data into Meaningful Quantitative Results," *Schmalenbach Business Review* 59(1), 29–57.
- Stokes, D. (2000). "Entrepreneurial marketing: a conceptualisation from qualitative research," *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* 3(1), 47–54.
- Sullivan Mort, G., J. Weerawardena, and P. Liesch (2012). "Advancing entrepreneurial marketing," *European Journal of Marketing* 46(3/4), 542–561.
- Tan, Q., and C. M. P. Sousa (2015). "Leveraging marketing capabilities into competitive advantage and export performance," *International Marketing Review* 32(1), 78–102.
- Teece, D. J. (2014). "A dynamic capabilities-based entrepreneurial theory of the multinational enterprise," *Journal of International Business Studies* 45, 8–37.
- Terjesen, S., J. Hessels, and D. Li (2016). "Comparative International Entrepreneurship: A Review and Research Agenda," *Journal of Management* 42(1), 299–344.
- Thiétart, R.-A. (1999). *Méthodes de recherche en management*. Paris: Dunod.
- van Audenhove, L. (2007). *Expert Interviews and Interview Techniques for Policy Analysis. presentation at Vrije Universitaet Brussel*.
- Vorhies, D. W., and N. A. Morgan (2005). "Benchmarking Marketing Capabilities for Sustainable Competitive Advantage," *Journal of Marketing* 69(1), 80–94.
- Vorhies, D. W., R. E. Morgan, and C. W. Autry (2009). "Product-market strategy and the marketing capabilities of the firm: impact on market effectiveness and cash flow performance," *Strategic Management Journal* 30(12), 1310–1334.
- Webb, D. G. (2014). *Minority Business Enterprise Programs: Bridging the Gap in Purchasing Practices. PhD. thesis*. Minneapolis.
- Weerawardena, J., G. S. Mort, P. W. Liesch, and G. Knight (2007). "Conceptualizing accelerated internationalization in the born global firm: A dynamic capabilities perspective," *Journal of World Business* 42(3), 294–306.
- Weerawardena, J., G. S. Mort, S. Salunke, G. Knight, and P. W. Liesch (2015). "The role of the market sub-system and the socio-technical sub-system in innovation and firm performance: a dynamic capabilities approach," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 43(2), 221–239.
- Wilden, R., and S.P. Gudergan (2015). "The impact of dynamic capabilities on operational marketing and technological capabilities: investigating the role of environmental turbulence," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 43, 181–199.

- Yang, M., and P. Gabrielsson (2017). "Entrepreneurial marketing of international high-tech business-to-business new ventures: A decision-making process perspective," *Industrial Marketing Management* 64, 147–160.
- Yeoh P.L. (2004). "International learning: antecedents and performance implications among newly internationalizing companies in an exporting context," *International Marketing Review* 21(4/5), 511-535.
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Yin, R. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Zander, I., P. McDougall-Covin, and E.L. Rose (2015). "Born Globals and International Business: Evolution of a Field of Research," *Journal of International Business Studies* 46(1), 27–35.
- Zhou, L., A. Wu, and B. R. Barnes (2012). "The Effects of Early Internationalization on Performance Outcomes in Young International Ventures: The Mediating Role of Marketing Capabilities," *Journal of International Marketing* 20(4), 25–45.
- Zhou L., B. R. Barnes, and Y. Lu (2010). "Entrepreneurial proclivity, capability upgrading and performance advantage of newness among international new ventures," *Journal of International Business Studies* 41, 882–905.
- Zou, S., E. Fang, and S. Zhao (2003). "The Effect of Export Marketing Capabilities on Export Performance: An Investigation of Chinese Exporters," *Journal of International Marketing* 11(4), 32-55.

Table 1.
Characteristics of the studied International New Ventures from Poland

Company	(A)^a	(B)	(C)	(D)
Respondents	R1-vice president R2-marketing specialist	R1-president R2-mark. spec.	R1-sales direct. R2-mark. spec.	R1-president R2-sales specialist
Industry (specialization)	Manufacturing (technology for the construction industry; building materials)	Manufacturing (packaging lines for cosmetics)	Manufacturing (sorting and packaging lines for food products; fruit)	Manufacturing (plastic packaging-bags and packaging foils)
Main customers	B2B: Building companies	B2B: Cosmetics producers	B2B: Food producers	B2B: Retailers and food manufacturers
Year of establishment	1991	2000	2010	2007
Internationalization beginning	3	2-3 years after establishment	1-2 years after establishment	2-3 years after establishment
Level of exports compared to total turnover	over 90%	over 25%	50-70%	over 30%
Time to reach 25% share of export sales in total sales volume	Within 3 years from inception	Within 4-5 years from inception	Within 5 years from inception	Within 3 years from inception
INV type	Export Start-Up	Export Start-Up	Export Start-Up	Multinational trader
Company size	medium	medium	medium	small

Source: Own elaboration. Note: ^a Vice-president of company A was interviewed in 2015 and 2017.

Table 1A.
Characteristics of the studied International New Ventures from Italy

Company	(E)^a	(F)	(G)
Respondents	R1- export and mark. manager R2-export manager	R1-export & communication manager R2 – sales manager	R1- president R2- assistant manager
Industry (specialization)	Furniture	Heat exchangers	Solar engines and thermodynamic systems
Main customers	B2B: Agents and distributors selling to foreign individual and industrial buyers	B2B: manufacturers of household appliances (e.g. boilers)	B2B: municipalities, schools in developing markets; B2C: individual farmers' enterprises in developed markets
Year of establishment	1998	1999	2014
Internationalization beginning	1 year after establishment	1 year after establishment	1 year after establishment
Level of exports compared to total turnover	98%	60%	100%
Time to reach 25% share of export sales in total sales volume	Within 1 year from inception	Within 1 year from inception	Within 1 year from inception
INV type	Multinational trader	Export Start-up	Export Start-up
Company size	small	medium	micro

Source: Own elaboration. Note: ^a This company was dealing mainly with distributors and retailers in its activities abroad. Such relationships are classified as B2B relationships (Dant, and Brown, 2008), so it was included into the sample.

Table 2.

Co-occurrence of categories describing communication and sales capabilities with categories describing the internationalization process – Polish companies

Code tree	H1.2 Responsiveness Towards customers - Experience /H1.3 Key success factor	H2.2 Communication with customers - Experience	H3 Understanding and delivering customer value	H4.2 Promotion and sales - Experience and H4.3 key success factor	N1.1 Types of networking / with clients	N1.5 Types of networking / with intermediaries
E2 Speed of market entry\E2.2 Experience	1	0	0	1	0	0
G1.1 Exploiting markets \ Meaning\G1.1. High importance	0	0	0	0	1	1
G1 Exploiting markets\G1.2 Experience	0	0	0	0	0	1
G1 Exploiting markets\G1.3 Key success factors	0	0	0	0	0	2
G5 Networks and relationships\G5.1 Meaning and G5.1.1 High importance	0	3	0	1	4	3
G5 Networks and relationships\G5.2 experience	0	2	0	4	2	4
G5 Networks and relationships\G5.3 Key success factors	0	1	0	0	2	2
S3 Forms of entry	4	0	2	1	0	3
S6.1 Geographical markets	0	0	0	2	1	7
Total	5	6	2	8	10	23

Source: Own elaboration. Note: In Table 2 the frequencies of codes co-occurrence from columns and rows are shown. The code N1, used for networks categorization, was included, as it describes the capability to support overseas salesforce understood as “intermediaries” or “clients” - by companies active on B2B markets.

Table 3.

Co-occurrence of categories describing communication and sales capabilities with categories describing the internationalization process – Italian companies

Code tree	H 1.1.1 Responsiveness towards customers - high importance	H2.1.1 Communication with clients - high importance and key success factor	H2.2 Communication with clients - Experience	H3 Understanding and delivering customer value	H4.1.1 Promotion and sales - High importance and key success factor	H4.2 Promotion and sales - Experience	N1.1 Types of networking / with clients	N1.5 Types of networking / with intermediaries
E2 Speed of market entry\E2.2 Experience	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
E2 Speed of market entry\E2.3 Key success factors	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
G1 Exploiting markets (in general)	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
G1 Exploiting markets\ G1.1 Meaning	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
G5 Networks and relationships\G5.1 Meaning and G5.1.1 High importance	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	1
G5 Networks and relationships\G5.2 Experience	0	0	2	0	0	3	3	1
G5 Networks and relationships\G5.3 Key success factors	1	2	1	1	0	2	4	0
I Differences between local and foreign EMO	1	2	2	1	3	1	2	1
S6.1 Geographical markets	1	1	0	1	2	1	0	1
Total	5	6	6	5	6	9	12	4

Source: Own elaboration. Note: In Table 3 the frequencies of codes co-occurrence from columns and rows are shown. The code N1, used for networks categorization, was included, as it describes the capability to support the overseas salesforce understood as “intermediaries” or “clients” by companies active on B2B markets.

Table 4.

Cross-case examination of the INVs' specialized marketing capabilities (Polish sample)

Examples of specialized export marketing capabilities	Company A – construction industry	B – packaging lines	C– sorting machinery	D – plastic packaging for retailers
Capability type: Communication				
<p><i>Advertising and promotion creativity and skillful use of marketing communication (Morgan et al., 2012)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct meetings of dealers with potential customers, sending of inquiries, - actively participating in major local and international trade fairs, - company website with a building costs simulation tool, - traditional leaflets and press advertisements, translated to many languages, - obtaining certification - word-of-mouth recommendations (WOM) by distributors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct meetings of dealers with potential customers, sending of inquiries, - actively participating in local and international trade fairs, - company website with Video case studies with the new machines, - marketing automation solutions, e.g. client scoring, automatic lead generation. - mailing campaigns, - obtaining certification, - WOM by distributors, - short films with new machinery demonstrations for the sales people and partners, - tools to search e-mail addresses, new leads, LinkedIn, - CRM/project management platform; system for analysing website activity and marketing automation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct meetings of dealers with potential customers, sending of inquiries, - frequently and actively participating in local and international trade fairs, - modernized company website – not concentrated on machinery but on support (information) for partners/clients - emphasis on social media presence: preparing product demonstrations and films available for clients, -traditional leaflets and press advertisements, translated to many languages, - obtaining certification - WOM by distributors - organizing client training (also for foreign clients) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -direct meetings of dealers with potential customers, sending of inquiries, -film presentations for local and international trade fairs, - company website - traditional leaflets and press advertisements, translated to many languages, - participation in contests, obtaining certification - some radio advertising - WOM by distributors
<p><i>Using promotional activities to gain international market share (Weerawardena et al., 2015)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understanding and responsiveness to customers is key. Everyday communication with clients helps to organize response. - The main promotional effort is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - client and distributor relations enable quick response to foreign market changes (competitive moves) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - translating promotional leaflets, webpages to different languages, adjusting promotion form to country markets, - using initial large clients as recommendation sources in the new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - traditional promotion tools used to establish networks with partners. - understanding and responsiveness to customers” is dominant in maintaining the foreign market relationships.

	moved to the distributors.		markets, - understanding and responsiveness to customers' needs	
Capability type: Sales				
<i>Quick response to customer requests (Morgan et al., 2012)</i>	- frequent personal communication of the company with clients, to answer the changing requests	- emphasis on frequent communication of the dealers with clients, - reference visits for new customers - in the factory of the other customer, with whom the INV has good relationships	- frequent personal communication with clients, to answer the changing requests, - dealer relationships based on frequent communication	- bonding role of traditional communication tools (phone calls, emails), - frequent personal visits of the management at client offices, - clients invited to the company headquarters
<i>Overseas salesforce support (Morgan et al., 2012)</i>	- emphasis on choosing high-quality distribution partners, - organizing dealer training, - participating in fairs together with the dealers, - support by specialized websites in the foreign language versions	- emphasis on choosing high-quality distribution partners. - bonding between marketing, sales department and distributors, - CRM platform for salespersons, - a short training film with new machinery for the salespeople	- emphasis on choosing high-quality large distribution partners, well known by the local industry, - organizing trainings for dealers	no overseas personnel – direct export by the own salesforce

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 5.

Cross-case examination of the INVs' specialized marketing capabilities (Italian sample)

Examples of specialized export marketing capabilities	Company E - furniture	F – heat exchangers	G – solar pumps
Capability type: Communication			
<i>Advertising and promotion creativity and skillful use of marketing communication (Morgan et al., 2012)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct meetings of dealers with potential customers, - sending of inquiries, - actively participating in local and international trade fairs, - company websites, - contests for clients, - WOM by distributors, social advertisements, catalogs, leaflets, - Cooperation with chamber of commerce in organizing b2b meetings with operators coming from abroad, - CRM, with developed database 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct meetings of dealers with potential customers, - sending of inquiries, - actively participating in local and international trade fairs, - company websites, - company participation in contests, - WOM by distributors, - developing modern promotion tools – videos, user demonstrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct meetings of dealers with potential customers, sending of inquiries, - actively participating in local and international trade fairs, - company website; social media sites - sparticipation in contests, - emphasis on low-cost promotion and WOM by distributors
<i>Using promotional activities to gain international market share (Weerawardena et al., 2015)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - speed of market entry – with being the first who has the place to put his good on display and (..) places in showroom, - communication intended both as a real relation with the customer, but also – to be always honest and reliable. Trying to build a relation that will go on and keep the foreign customer loyal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - foreign market entry is connected with promotion and sales, but “R&D” and “technology” are the key positioning arguments, - promotion and sales used to speed up entry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - foreign market entry is connected with promotion and sales as key success factors
Capability type: Sales			
<i>Quick response to customer requests (Morgan et al., 2012)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - striving to create not only a business relationship, but stronger bonds with the customer, - paying attention to the after-sale service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - special policy for returns and complaints, - emphasis on efficient after-sales service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - partner company performing the after-sales service, an emphasis on after sales service quality
<i>Overseas salesforce support (Morgan et al., 2012)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasis on choosing high-quality distribution partners, - partners appreciation of the way their e-mails are quickly answered, of the way the problems are solved, - importance of focus on the retailer, establishing clear communication messages, showing the unique selling points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emphasis on choosing high-quality distribution partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - choosing distribution partners who have “passion for the project”, not too large firms, but capable of serving the local market, - emphasis on constant networking with sales representatives

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 6.
Categories of content covered by the code co-occurrence analysis

Major categories	Main categories
E Entrepreneurial orientation	E1 Research and development E2 Speed to market E3 Risk-taking E4 Proactiveness
F Innovation orientation	F1 Propensity to innovate F2 Knowledge infrastructure F3 Innovation types ^a F4 R&D expenditures ^a
G Market orientation	G1 Exploiting Markets G2 Market intelligence generation G3 Responsiveness towards competitors G4 Integration of business processes G5 Networks and relationships
H Customer orientation	H1 Responsiveness towards customers H2 Communication with customers H3 Understanding and delivering customer value H4 Promotion and sales
I Differences between the local and foreign entrepreneurial marketing orientation	I1 On strategic level I2 On tactical level
N Networking ^a	N1 Networking types ^a N2 Relation effects ^a
S Company description	S1 Share of exports in total sales S2 Time to the export start S3 Forms of entry S4 Lifecycle stage S5 Company age S6 Foreign markets

Note: ^a Categories added to reflect the respondents' statements, in line with the inductive approach.
Source: Own elaboration.