



# Journal of World Business

A Special Issue on

**“Family business and international business:**

**Breaking silos and establishing a rigorous way forward”**

Submissions open November 1, 2021; submissions due November 15, 2021

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## **Special Issue Overview and Background**

In the last decade, family firms’ internationalization has been intensively investigated through a variety of theoretical lenses and empirical methods, in a variety of contexts, by researchers belonging to different phenomenological fields and theoretical traditions. There has also been a number of positioning and review papers which have, in different ways, tried to consolidate the knowledge produced thus far, and to identify future research directions (e.g., Pukall and Calabrò, 2014; Reuber, 2016; De Massis, Frattini, Majocchi, & Piscitello, 2018). Despite the effort, the substantial and growing body of knowledge on the topic is still not leading the debate into a clear and consistent direction. Extant family firm internationalization research remains fragmented and divided (Arregle, Duran, Hitt, & Van Essen, 2017), putting under severe threat the future development of this stream of research. Part of the failed attempt to move forward in a consistent fashion is related to the following aspects:

- The lack of proper integration between family business and international business theories.
- Inconsistent definitions and measures of both family firms and internationalization.
- The lack of methodological sophistication and variety.
- The need to better frame family firms’ unique features within the debate: (e.g., risk preferences, antecedents of strategic decisions, idiosyncratic biases, family structure and dynamics, etc.).
- The need for greater attention to family firm heterogeneity (e.g., heterogeneity in terms of governance practices, strategies, micro-level features, etc.).
- The need for greater attention to contextual heterogeneity (e.g., contextual features in home and host countries such as formal and informal institutions, technological and economic environments, cultural characteristics etc.).

It has been argued that the above issues are best resolved at the intersection of international business (IB) and family business-centric perspectives (De Massis, Frattini, Majocchi, & Piscitello,

2018). However, family firm internationalization research has not been fully integrated into the broader field of IB. With some exceptions (e.g., Banalieva & Eddleston, 2011; Calabrò, Torchia, Pukall & Mussolino, 2013; Pukall & Calabrò, 2014; D'Angelo, Majocchi, & Buck, 2016; Cesinger, Hughes, Mensching, Bouncken, Fredrich & Kraus, 2016; Hennart, Majocchi, & Forlani, 2019; Bauweraerts, Sciascia, Naldi & Mazzola, 2019; Kano, Ciravegna & Rattalino, 2020; Xu, Hitt & Dai, 2020), the majority of family firm internationalization research is carried out from general management or family business-specific theoretical perspectives, with IB theory notably underrepresented in the field (Kano & Verbeke, 2018). Further, most family firm internationalization studies appear in general management (e.g. Kraus, Mensching, Calabrò, Cheng, & Filser, 2016; Pongelli, Calabrò & Basco, 2019), small business (Sciascia, Mazzola, Astrachan, & Pieper, 2012; Pongelli, Caroli & Cucculelli, 2016), family business (Pukall & Calabrò, 2014), and entrepreneurship (e.g. Arregle, Duran, Hitt, & Van Essen, 2017; Reuber, 2016), rather than IB, journals. As a result, fruitful cross-pollination of ideas between family business and IB fields has not yet occurred: family business scholars have not fully benefitted from the sophisticated theoretical treatment of internationalization that is characteristic of IB research, and IB scholars, in turn, have not adapted unique insights developed in family firm internationalization studies to the broader context of IB.

### **Aim**

*The aim of this special issue is to push the debate on family firm internationalization forward in a consistent, rigorous, and theoretically sophisticated way. We are seeking articles which are ambitious in defining their scope, and attempt to advance certain aspects of family firm internationalization while at the same time contributing to the broader field of IB.*

### **Illustrative Topics**

We welcome submissions that attempt to develop a holistic and integrative model of family firm internationalization at different levels of analysis by addressing one or more of the following topics and research questions (the list is not exhaustive).

#### *The individual and family levels*

- Microfoundations of family governance and internationalization: How do individual-level features of family and nonfamily members of family firms (e.g., individual values, biases, cognitive make-ups, risk preferences) affect these firms' international trajectories?
- The role of family in family firm internationalization: How do different types of family structures, relationships, and dynamics impact international choices of family firms? What is the role of family identity in family firms' international strategies?

#### *The firm level*

- Family firms' heterogeneity and internationalization: What are the sources of heterogeneity within family firms that influence international decisions and their outcomes? To what extent does the pursuit of family-related goals influence the internationalization processes of family firms?
- Determinants of successful family firm internationalization: What is a definition of success when it comes to international strategy of family firms? Does a paradox exist between what family firms prefer to do internationally, and what they do best?
- Managing the multinational network: Are the headquarter-subsidiary relationships different in the context of family firms? How do family firms maintain control, allocate resources, and manage knowledge flows in a multinational enterprise (MNE)?
- Family firms and global value chains (GVCs): How do family firms make offshoring and re-shoring decisions? More broadly, what drives international governance decisions in family firms? What is the role of lead firm ownership (family versus non-family) in the context of GVC governance?

- Family firms and cross-border mergers and acquisitions (M&A)s: How do family firms make M&A decisions? What can we learn from the family firm context about both hostile and friendly cross-border take-overs and mergers?

#### *The macro level*

- The role of external context in shaping family firm internationalization: How do different cultural and institutional settings influence internationalization processes and outcomes in family and non-family firms or across different types of family firms?
- Family business in the changing international context: What is the role of family ownership and control in firms' adaptation to the changing global environment, i.e., renewed protectionism, push-back against globalization, and external shocks such as the global pandemic? How does digitization affect internationally operating family firms?
- The internationalization of firms from emerging and transition economies: Are there any unique features that determine internationalization paths of family firms from emerging and transition economies?

#### *The chrono level*

- The role of time in family firm internationalization: How does the family's influence on the firm's internationalization processes and outcomes change over time? Are there any distinctive features that make family firms more or less timely in selecting/executing international strategies?
- Long-term orientation and internationalization: How are unique features of family governance, such as, e.g., the focus on transgenerational wealth transfer, resilience, patient capital, and long-term orientation, linked to family firms' international strategies?

We are interested in papers that use diverse theories, including theories from related/adjacent research fields, and we encourage a multidisciplinary approach. Moreover, we welcome conceptual, qualitative and quantitative submissions and are open to new research methods that could help advance our understanding of family firm internationalization.

#### **Submission Process and Suggested Deadlines**

Submissions should be prepared using the [JWB Guide for Authors](#). Manuscripts should be submitted online via the Journal of World Business submission system and will be subject to the JWB double-blind review process. Submissions open November 1, 2021; submissions due November 15, 2021.

#### **Special Issue Workshop**

To help authors advance their manuscripts, the proponents of the Special Issue will organize a two-day special issue workshop at IPAG Business School, Nice, France. Authors of R&R manuscripts will be invited to present their papers during the workshop. Neither attending the workshop nor presenting the paper will be a precondition for acceptance into the Special Issue.

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