

Foreword

The objective of *Julia Christofor's* thesis is to analyze and explain the propensity of firms and their respective entrepreneurs to internationalize. The focus of this thesis is primarily on firms with information-technology-based business models, i.e. Electronic-Business-Firms, which create value via digital networks. Such firms are often referred to as „Born Globals“. It can therefore be assumed that on the basis of the distinct characteristics of the world wide web and because the market participants are globally interconnected via digital networks, these newly founded firms are more likely to internationalize early in their life cycle.

Furthermore, because there have been fundamental changes in the technological, economic and societal spheres, the internationalization process and the propensity of these firms to offer their products on international markets may not necessarily be explained with the help of classical theories of internationalization. At the same time, the management of the newly founded E-Business firms, which are active in and pressured to thrive in a global competitive environment, are confronted with completely new challenges. The theoretical foundations presented from the academic internationalization literature stream only go some way to explaining the internationalization behavior of young E-Business-firms. This is especially due to the fact that these approaches basically relate to international, multinational and established firms.

Julia Christofor approaches these extensive shifts in internationalization behavior by integrating both the entrepreneurship and internationalization literature streams: Firstly, the basic parameters of the internationalization decision of newly founded firms are identified. Secondly, a theoretical framework of internationalization propensity is derived and, lastly, the theoretical propositions are empirically assessed. In this manner, prototypical profiles of entrepreneurs, who react differently with respect to the internationalization decision, are highlighted. By means of a comprehensive statistical methodology and based on a representative sample of Net Economy firms, the joint influence of international market orientation, protection of proprietary rights, resource commitment, scalability and digitalization of products and processes as well as the international personal network of the

parties are pointed out. In addition, this thesis combines the new research field “International Entrepreneurship” and “Corporate Entrepreneurship” for testing the hypotheses and an exploratory analysis of the impact of the “Entrepreneurial Orientation” on parameters of internationalization propensity is carried out. It is demonstrated that different levels of entrepreneurial orientation, i.e. a different relation of innovation, risk and proactivity of firms, also comprise different levels of internationalization propensity.

In summary, with her thesis *Julia Christofor* attempts and accomplishes a contribution which is highly significant for newly found Electronic Business firms as well as for entrepreneurship and computer sciences theories. I believe this doctoral dissertation deserves to capture a broad readership and attention in science as well as in practice and I wish *Julia Christofor* all the best in her future endeavors.

Prof. Dr. Tobias Kollmann