

**THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING AND THE RESOURCE-BASED THEORY
AN ANALYSIS OF THE THEORY CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING FIELD**

***O MARKETING INTERNACIONAL E A TEORIA BASEADA EM RECURSOS
UMA ANÁLISE DA CONTRIBUIÇÃO DA TEORIA PARA A ÁREA DE MARKETING
INTERNACIONAL***

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ANÁLISIS DE LA CONTRIBUCIÓN TEÓRICA AL ÁREA DE MARKETING INTERNACIONAL***

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Artigo recebido em 10/01/2019. Revisado por pares em 22/04/2019. Reformulado em 25/04/2019.
Recomendado para publicação em 10/08/2019. Publicado em 31/08/2019. Avaliado pelo Sistema
double blind review.

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Revisão gramatical, ortográfica e ABNT de responsabilidade dos autores.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to broaden the analysis of Resource-based theory's contribution to marketing by assessing RBT's specific contributions to International Marketing, expanding on the work of Kozlenkova, Samaha and Palmatier published in JAMS in 2014. Based on desk research, two main reasonings behind the use of RBT in International Marketing were identified: one seeking outcome advantages and another seeking positional advantages. The study provides an original outlook of the resources and capabilities needed for firms' success abroad, considering the desired result, whether it is final performance or a sustained positional advantage.

Key words: Resource-based theory; International Marketing; International Business; Strategic Marketing; Performance.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é ampliar a análise das contribuições da teoria baseada em recursos para o marketing, avaliando as contribuições específicas da RBT para o marketing internacional, expandindo o trabalho de Kozlenkova, Samaha e Palmatier publicado no JAMS em 2014. Baseado em uma *desk research*, dois raciocínios principais para o uso da RBT no marketing internacional são identificados, uma buscando vantagens de resultado e outra buscando vantagens de posicionamento. O estudo fornece uma perspectiva original dos recursos e capacidades necessários para o sucesso das empresas no exterior, considerando o resultado desejado, seja desempenho final ou vantagem de posicionamento sustentada.

Palavras-chave: Teoria baseada em recursos; Marketing internacional; Negócios internacionais; Marketing estratégico; Performance.

RESÚMEN

El objetivo de este artículo es ampliar el análisis de las contribuciones de la teoría basada en recursos al marketing evaluando las contribuciones específicas de RBT al marketing internacional, ampliando el trabajo de Kozlenkova, Samaha y Palmatier publicado en JAMS en 2014. Basado en *desk research*, dos lógicas principales para el uso de RBT en marketing internacional se identifican, una que busca ventajas de resultados y otra que busca ventajas de posicionamiento. El estudio proporciona una perspectiva original de los recursos y capacidades necesarios para el éxito de las empresas en el exterior, teniendo en cuenta el resultado deseado, sea un rendimiento final o una ventaja de posicionamiento sostenida.

Palabras clave: Teoría basada en recursos; Marketing internacional; Negocios internacionales; Marketing estratégico; Desempeño.

1 INTRODUCTION

Resource-based theory (RBT) has been widely used in management and marketing literature. It has been the base for unraveling several aspects of a firm's marketing activities and strategies as well as the difference in firms' performance, including in the international scenario. It is based on the paradigm that the firm is a collection of resources, that determines its ability to design, produce, commercialize and distribute its products and services (BARNEY, 1991; WERNERFELT, 1984).

With the development of the theory, marketing academics have demonstrated a strong effort to integrate RBT into marketing studies and use its comprehensive and flexible framework to understand diverse aspects of the field (KOZLENKOVA; SAMAHA; PALMATIER, 2014), especially the competitive advantage of the firm, resultant from the combination of resources that are valuable, rare, irreplaceable and difficult to copy by competing firms (BARNEY, 1991; WERNERFELT, 1984).

Taking into consideration globalization impacts in global markets, such as the economic growth of transition economies and the opportunities in emerging markets, marketing strategies had to be regarded in the light of the characteristics of the international environment (CAVUSGIL; DELIGONUL; YAPRAK, 2005; CZINKOTA; SAMLI, 2007). Therefore, the contribution of RBT to marketing is particularly meaningful in the international setting.

According to Kozlenkova, Samaha and Palmatier (2014), international marketing studies largely use RBT to investigate the firm's assets: like Relational resources, Experiential resources and Order of entry, including the contingency nature of the resources by the inclusion of factors such as Industry Growth, Market Protectionism and Culture (KOZLENKOVA; SAMAHA; PALMATIER, 2014). In order to expand on their work, this article aims to assess RBT's contribution to the development of the International Marketing discipline as a field of study within marketing literature. Understanding the use of theoretical lenses in the development of a field of study, such as International Marketing, is important to better comprehend the differences in performance and competitive advantage presented by firms acting in different countries. The collection of resources and competencies, that serve as a source of competitive advantage for a firm in a specific market, might not produce the same result in other markets (PETERAF; BARNEY, 2003).

In order to reach the above-mentioned objective, desk research was conducted using the Web of Science database. The literature review followed a grounded theory approach, according to the Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller and Wilderom (2013) explanation. Basically, it starts with the definition of the research question and the progressive refinement of the search results accordingly, in an iterative process (WOLFSWINKEL; FURTMUELLER; WILDEROM, 2013). The search was performed using a combination of the following key words for the article's topic: *Resource-Based View*, *Resource-Based Theory*, *International Marketing*, *Export Marketing* and *Emerging Market*, resulting in 156 articles. The filters used for the refinement of the results were the Social Sciences domain, Document Type (articles only) and a selection of the most important journals for the marketing field, according to Table 6 (p. 20) of the Hult, Reimann and Schilke (2009) ranking (see Table 1 below). These journals are targeted for the publication of innovative and forward thinking ideas that serve as the basis for meaningful and objective contributions, as well as the complementation and knowledge building of specific research streams (HULT; REIMANN; SCHILKE, 2009).

The next step was the analysis, from the 156 papers, of each title, the key words, abstracts and introductions. The resulting selection of 14 articles was the most representative of the use of RBT in International Marketing. In this case, the articles were picked for their explicit use of Resource-Based Theory (RBT) as the most important theoretic lens, with which to investigate each article's main proposal.

Table 1 - List of Journals and articles selected

| | Journal | No. of articles selected | Impact Factor* |
|---|---|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Journal of International Business Studies | 2 | 6.198 |
| 2 | Journal of International Marketing | 3 | 3.600 |
| 3 | International Business Review | 1 | 2.754 |
| 4 | International Marketing Review | 6 | 2.600 |
| 5 | Journal of Business Research | 1 | 2.509 |
| 6 | European Journal of Marketing | 1 | 1.497 |

Source: Developed by the authors, 2019.

*2017 JCR Social Science Edition.

From the analysis, two categories of reasoning behind RBT's use in international marketing investigations were observed. The first one was labeled *Resources – Capabilities – Positional Advantage* and the second was named *Resources – Capabilities – Outcome*

Advantage. This review also exposed the varied resources and capabilities undertaken in international marketing research. However, from their position in the Resources – Capability – Superior Outcome logic was viewed differently by each author.

This article is organized as follows. First, there is an overview of RBT, showing its main theoretical foundations, assumptions and characteristics as well as its insertions into the marketing academic discipline. Then, the International Marketing field is presented and described, followed by the articles selected as examples of RBT use in the International Marketing field. The reasoning behind the use of RBT in International Marketing has been categorized as well as the resources and capabilities studied in each article. These analyses are presented in sections 3.1 and 3.2. At the end, final considerations are presented.

2 RBT IN MARKETING

The first academic work linked to the resource-based paradigm dates back to Penrose (1959), who evidenced the company's organizational resources that are important to success and affirmed that competitiveness is based on competencies. However, it is not until the early 80s that the Resource-Based View became thicker in its fundamental premises and was considered a theory, with the seminal work of Wernerfelt (1984). Another landmark piece that defined the terms and characteristics of the resources and competitive advantages is Barney's paper (1991). RBT's influence in several areas of management, strategy, marketing and international business is emphasized by Wernerfelt himself in a short note on reflections on RBT in marketing (WERNERFELT, 2014).

These authors proposed a definition of the firm as a collection of resources, that determines its ability to design, produce, commercialize and distribute its products and services, and the competitive advantage of the firm results from this combination of resources, which are valuable, rare, irreplaceable and difficult to copy by competing firms (BARNEY, 1991; WERNERFELT, 1984).

The understanding of RBT lies in two basic assumptions. The first is that organizations have different stacks of resources, explaining why some companies are able to achieve a competitive advantage while others don't, under the same market conditions as its competitors. The second assumption is that these different stacks of resources are difficult to

trade or transfer across firms, therefore, they are likely to keep on being the source of a competitive advantage over time (sustained) (PETERAF; BARNEY, 2003).

The literature of the Resource-Based View later provides a framework, including the conditions under which a resource is most likely to generate a sustained competitive advantage. The VRIO framework determined that resources must be valuable (considering that it has the power to lower costs or increase revenue), rare (not common among competing firms), imperfectly imitable and the organization (as an asset) provides the adjustment necessary for the resource to be fully absorbed (BARNEY; HESTERLY, 2012).

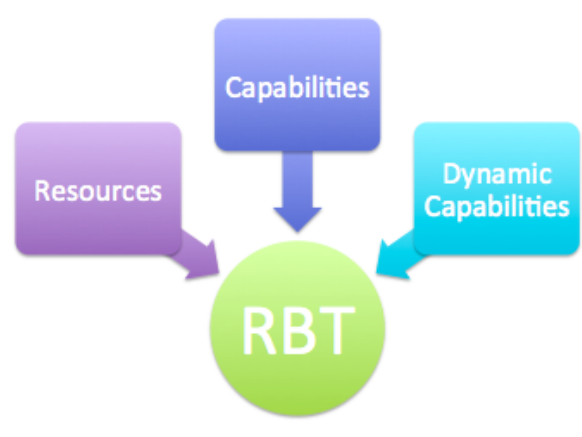
In the Strategic Marketing field, the literature has already considered Customer Orientation as one of a firm's resources that can affect the development of new products at the initiation and implementation stages (IM et al., 2003). The diversity of experience of the top management team of the organization positively affects the Customer Orientation-performance relationship and is also considered a resource (AUH; MENGUC, 2006). The strategic differentiation of the firm by innovation and its unique image in the market are also resources that have the potential to generate a competitive advantage that, in turn, positively impacts on organizational performance (ZHOU; BROWN; DEV, 2009). Other examples of organizational resources considered in the marketing literature are: Customer Management technologies (KIM et al., 2011; RAPP; TRAINOR; AGNIHOTRI, 2010), the company's Adaptive Capacity (ZHOU; LI, 2010) and Marketing capabilities, an extension of RBT (DAY, 1994), taken as mediators of the Strategic Orientation and Performance relationship (THEODOSIOU; KEHAGIAS; KATSIKEA, 2012), among others.

In 2014, Kozlenkova, Samaha and Palmatier published a comprehensive review of RBT focusing on its main contributions to the marketing field. They organized the terms and definitions derived from RBT so as to reconcile the sometimes-untied literature on the subject. The interaction of RBT in marketing has demonstrated the integrative efforts of marketing scholars to use RBT's comprehensive framing to understand diverse aspects of the field. However, Barney (2014) contends that marketing may be used to understand issues of the RBT as well (BARNEY, 2014).

For resources, Kozlenkova, Samaha and Palmatier (2014) use Barney and Histerly's (2012) definition that refers to physical, financial, human or organizational assets that a firm

can call upon to reach its goals. Capabilities are often taken to be processes that enhance other resources in terms of productivity and efficiency, and are also considered as a resource. As for the Dynamic capability, the authors emphasize the ability to keep the company's assets valuable and competitive, under the condition of a changing environment and consider it as part of RBT's theoretical framework (KOZLENKOVA; SAMAHA; PALMATIER, 2014). Figure 1 is a representation of the organization of the terms of the theory, derived from the authors' explanation.

Figure 1 – RBT terms and definitions



Source: Elaborated by the authors according to Kozlenkova, Samaha and Palmatier (2014), 2019.

An important insight from this revision is that the marketing field brings RBT into its research to enlighten long-term performance based on marketing activities that lead to resources. This purpose is hindered by the massive use of cross-sectional data, which does not allow for the investigation of sustained competitive advantage (KOZLENKOVA; SAMAHA; PALMATIER, 2014). The revision of the literature on RBT in marketing revealed that most studies focused on the analysis of the steady position of the resource-performance relationship and stressed the need to examine how resources and capabilities are maintained in a dynamic environment (KOZLENKOVA; SAMAHA; PALMATIER, 2014).

Complementing the revision of Kozlenkova, Samaha and Palmatier (2014), Wernerfelt reaffirms the inspiration behind RBT stating that: *“the actions taken by a firm should depend on its characteristics and in particular, that it should focus on those activities on which it has an advantage (resources) and avoid those where it does not”*(WERNERFELT, 2014, p. 22). A

similar logic can also be observed within the international marketing literature that demands deeper investigation of the deconglomeration topic (when the company releases some of its resources in order to pursue growth in its core businesses in different markets) (CAVUSGIL; DELIGONUL; YAPRAK, 2005). Wernerfelt brings RBT and marketing even closer together by arguing the fundamental tenet of the theory, *“that firms should do what they are relatively good at”* (WERNERFELT, 2014, p. 23) and states that the current marketing literature is already near it. He gives examples of similar thoughts from RBT and current marketing literature such as customer segmentation (where the company selects a unique set of buyers matching its resources instead of competing with better competitors over another set of buyers) and supply chain (where companies seek cooperation and leverage each other’s strengths in order to increase the chain’s advantages in logistics, market research, among other aspects) (WERNERFELT, 2014).

This view opposes the comments of George S. Day in the same issue of the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (DAY, 2014). Day’s outside-in approach differentiates Wernerfelt’s logic in the inception of the fundamental tenet of RBT. As opposed to *“do what they are relatively good at”*, he suggests that the company’s strategic thought should start in the market. They should go to the market environment and look for general knowledge about customers, competitors and their dynamics, without as much concern for the company’s resources or offerings. An important inquiry is also to absorb insights on how the company can help to solve customers’ issues and make money from them. Then, working backwards, the company’s adaptive capabilities strengthen and foster other resources and dynamic capabilities in order to timely adjust to the ever changing market (DAY, 2014).

It is methodologically similar to a grounded theory approach to understanding a phenomenon, where the researcher approaches the data without pre conceptions about what could possibly define and explain its objective of study (GLASER; STRAUSS, 1967). It also resembles the definition of Market Orientation as the understanding and satisfaction of clients, using market sensing abilities to capture market trends before its competitors, as well as creating and managing relationships with the customers (DAY, 1994). However, the Market Orientation construct has received considerable criticism as it focuses on the existing customer base and might hamper the ability of companies to sense opportunities in emerging market segments or ones currently unattended (DAY, 1999; SLATER; NARVER, 1998).

Taking Day's (2014) position, it is possible to imagine that, without the weight of the company's current resources (and the investment made to keep them), the effort of the strategic marketing team to visualize radical turns in marketing capabilities that could lead to a new position of competitive advantage becomes lighter.

3 THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING FIELD

The defining characteristics of this field of study are not to be detached from its context. Therefore, the globalization phenomenon is prominent to this understanding. Globalization is defined as *"The increase in the frequency and duration of linkages between countries, leading to similarities in activities of individuals, practices of companies, and policies of governments"* (CZINKOTA; SAMLI, 2007, p. 317). It has fostered the ability of trade to expand beyond each country's boundaries, presenting new opportunities and challenges to marketers. Marketing strategies have had to be regarded in the light of the characteristics of the international environment (CZINKOTA; SAMLI, 2007).

International marketing activities have been present in management practices for a very long time, but it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that they have been recognized as a distinct field of study. According to Czinkota and Samli (2007), international marketing became a distinct discipline with the systematic comprehension of customers' needs, the consideration of aspects linked to customer satisfaction, the analysis of offer-demand issues connected to cultural diversity and the consolidation of methodological approaches to understand modes of entry, expansion and international market penetration (CZINKOTA; SAMLI, 2007).

According to Cavusgil, Delignul and Yaprak's (2005) critical evaluation of the international marketing literature, the dimensions that have dominated the field in terms of research attention are: the expansion and development of local presence in foreign markets, the ownership structures, and the design, execution and evaluation of strategies abroad. The environmental conditions, that affect and support the existence and essence of International Marketing as a field of study, are the emergence of global as well as regional consumers, the economic growth of transition economies, the inception of global market players from a variety of different countries, and the rising market opportunities in developing countries such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) (CAVUSGIL; DELIGONUL; YAPRAK,

2005).

Common research themes in International Marketing are consumer behavior, the contingent factors that influence companies' strategies, the development of internationalization theory (Johansson and Vahlne, 1977), network structure and organization and equity in different markets. International Marketing scholars have adopted different theories for their studies such as RBT and agency theory (CAVUSGIL; DELIGONUL; YAPRAK, 2005).

The International Marketing field has also been critically evaluated and the development of the discipline requires a debate over the relevance and rigor of the research conducted, in accordance with the analysis evidenced in the Marketing field in general, as well. In 2003 Czinkota and Rokainen published a manifesto with several propositions for the International Marketing field: to reaffirm the field's premises and avoid excessive focus on the methodological complexities, to avoid an over-specialization of academic papers (confronting little of relevance), to take on the relationship between disciplines so as to understand the international issues, to expand the acceptance of research conducted and published outside the main periodicals, to keep in contact with researchers from emerging markets, maintain dialog with the practice community, policymakers and consumers and study the unobserved majority (the cases that do not succeed in the international business) (CZINKOTA; RONKAINEN, 2003).

The environmental conditions and dynamics are predecessors to the future of the International Marketing field; therefore, several research topics are highlighted for a deeper understanding of it: global-local consumers (having a strong definition of their local culture and comfortable in global contexts at the same time) especially in emerging markets, the leverage of global-scale advantages across markets, better framing of marketing strategy in light of cultural, geographic and economic distances, governance of the international channel, definition of the value-adding contributions of international marketing activities in relation to measurable outcomes, coordination of these value-adding activities on a global scale, the interface between corporate strategy and international diversification as well as management of global accounts (CAVUSGIL; DELIGONUL; YAPRAK, 2005).

3.1 INTERNATIONAL MARKETING AND RBT

The use of RBT in International Marketing studies is grounded in the fact that RBT can be used to investigate the use of existing resources in new markets or the expansion into foreign markets to create different resources. The use of existing resources in different international markets implies an assumption that these same resources will behave in the same manner and create a competitive advantage in different markets, perhaps with different conditions of turbulence. This is a risky assumption that has been the main focus of scholarly attention in the field (KOZLENKOVA; SAMAHA; PALMATIER, 2014). According to these authors, most marketing resources that are studied are relational resources, experiential resources and order of entry. Some of the studies investigate the contingency nature of the resources by the inclusion of factors such as Industry Growth, Market Protectionism and Culture (KOZLENKOVA; SAMAHA; PALMATIER, 2014).

Expanding the work of Kozlenkova, Samaha and Palmatier (2014), this section presents the analysis of the rationale behind the use of RBT in the international marketing articles selected and the categories of resources and capabilities investigated in these articles. The methodological treatment applied to the data analysis of these 14 articles followed Bardin's and Gibbs' instructions, including the phases of previous analysis, exploration and the interpretation of the results (BARDIN, 2009; GIBBS, 2009).

From an analysis of the theoretical construction and foundation of each article, it was possible to perceive at least two main reasons for the use of RBT in international marketing investigations. The first one was labeled *Resources – Capabilities – Positional Advantage* and the second was named *Resources – Capabilities – Outcome Advantage*. These two reasons are detailed below.

3.1.1 Resources – Capabilities – Positional Advantage

In this line of thinking, the RBT serves the purpose of evaluating the company's resources in the process of building its competitive advantage position. These studies situate resources as antecedents that help to generate important capabilities for the firm. Capabilities are considered the liaison between resources and consequently, in these cases, reflect an advantageous position for the firm, possibly an intermediary outcome. Table 2 presents the list of articles that have been categorized under this reasoning.

In Loane and Bell (2006), a mixed method approach was adopted to study entrepreneurial firms in four different countries. The article addressed the criticisms and weaknesses of the network theory as an explanation of the internationalization of entrepreneurial firms by using RBT. Therefore, RBT assumed a complementary role to network theory in explaining the internationalization of entrepreneurial firms. International contacts are important resources of a firm. These social connections are strategic assets that are difficult for other firms to copy; therefore, they provide a competitive advantage. As an extension of RBT, the Knowledge-Based View (KBV) adds a dynamic aspect to it, where knowledge and the learning process turn into evolving resources within the firm and sources of competitive advantage. This is especially important for entrepreneurial firms because of their ability to form creative combinations of their assets (technology, routines, management) to take advantage of new opportunities and increase their competitiveness (LOANE; BELL, 2006). They concluded that a great number of companies explore their networks to develop their international capabilities, but an even greater number need to build new networks. 'Strong ties' (family and friends) are important in the start-up phase but 'weak ties' (acquaintances and business contacts) are more useful for international knowledge acquisition and development, and also become thicker over time (LOANE; BELL, 2006).

The development of a multinational corporation's (MNCs) capabilities was investigated in the context of more than 800 Taiwanese multinationals. The authors contend that RBV suggests that MNCs exist to create advantages that will turn into profit. The variables related to RBV (R&D Capability, International Experience and Customer-following) are organizational resources that affect the choice of entry mode by MNCs (wholly owned subsidiaries or joint ventures). The more Customer-following capability an MNC has, the higher the probability of a Wholly Owned Subsidiary choice of entry for a foreign market (CHIAO; LO; YU, 2010).

According to Erdogmus, Bodur and Yilmaz (2010), a firm's resources and characteristics influence the standardization or adaptation of branding. They posit that companies that present capabilities for innovativeness and quality focus, both of which require openness to new ideas and change, flexibility and market sensitivity, are more likely to adapt to local markets. Additionally, customer focused firms are also more likely to customize their marketing practices, resulting in less standardization of their brands. Innovativeness has a positive correlation with standardization (brand core values). However, standardization in

brand management does not have an impact on international brand success (ERDOĞMUŞ; BODUR; YILMAZ, 2010).

In an investigation of 20 case studies in China, RBT was used as a theoretical framework to comprehend the conditions under which firms from emerging markets (EM) can differentiate themselves through marketing in advanced economies (KAUFMANN; ROESCH, 2012). They used the heterogeneity of resources and the conditions of valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable as the foundation for EM companies' differentiation. However, the ability to effectively use these strategic resources and marketing mix elements (marketing capabilities) to successfully reach target markets is imperative in gaining a competitive advantage. Using the Motivation-Opportunity-Ability paradigm (MOA), the authors presented the variables that hindered the effective deployment of marketing capabilities, as well as the evidence for their findings (KAUFMANN; ROESCH, 2012).

Firms that have entered emerging markets (EMs) as well as advanced markets (AMs) show significantly higher levels of marketing capabilities compared to those companies selling only to AMs. International Experience, Managerial capability and Marketing capability were considered as resources or capabilities that could create a competitive advantage for companies facing entry into EM. Marketing capabilities enable the company to gain deeper market knowledge and a better ability to sense and to respond to marketing opportunities (BORTOLUZZI et al., 2014).

As observed in the articles (see Table 2), RBT was taken as an integrative framework, gathering resources and capabilities that resulted in a position of competitive advantage for these firms, compared to their competitors. This advantageous position took the form of market entry choice, according to a combination of assets and resources (CHIAO; LO; YU, 2010), the standardization or adaptation of branding, also dependent on the combination of strategic resources and product and market characteristics (ERDOĞMUŞ; BODUR; YILMAZ, 2010) and the development of marketing capabilities as a strong competitive advantage for companies originally from EMs that export to AMs (KAUFMANN; ROESCH, 2012). Also, the usage and building of networks as a competitive advantage of born-globals in AMs (LOANE; BELL, 2006) and the endowment of international experience and marketing capability as a positional advantage for companies that sell to both EMs and AMs (BORTOLUZZI et al., 2014).

Table 2 - List of Articles on positional advantage

| Nº | Title (Author, Year) | Country - Origin | Method | Unit of Analysis | RBT - references | Performance* |
|----|--|---|---|--|---|--------------|
| 1 | Rapid internationalization among entrepreneurial firms in Australia, Canada, Ireland and New Zealand: An extension to the network approach (LOANE; BELL, 2006) | Australia Canada Ireland New Zealand | mixed methods survey in-depth interviews | international new ventures (born-globals) | Rumelt (1984) Wernerfelt (1984) Barney (1986, 1991) Grant (1991) | O |
| 2 | Choosing between wholly-owned subsidiaries and joint ventures of MNCs from an emerging market (CHIAO; LO; YU, 2010) | Taiwan | Survey | firms | Barney (1991) | O |
| 3 | International strategies of emerging market firms (ERDOGMUS; BODUR; YILMAZ, 2010) | Turkey | Survey | strategic business unit (SBU) | Grant (1991) Penrose (1959) | M |
| 4 | Constraints to building and deploying marketing capabilities by emerging market firms in advanced markets (KAUFMANN; ROESCH, 2012) | China | Qualitative multiple case studies | Chinese exporters | Barney (1991, 2012) Penrose (1959) Wernerfelt (1984) | O |
| 5 | Exporters moving toward emerging markets: a resource-based approach (BORTOLUZZI; CHIARVESIO; DI MARIA; TABACCO, 2014) | Italy | Survey | manufacturing firms (fashion, furniture, engineering sector) | Barney (1991) Tecce et al. (1997) Grant (1991) Oliver (1997) | M |

Source: developed by the author. *Performance type: I (Innovation), F (Financial), M (Market), C (Customer), O (Other).

3.1.2 Resources – Capabilities – Outcome Advantage

Zou, Fang and Zhao (2003) apply RBT to incorporate and connect the marketing capabilities of a firm to export performance through their positional advantage. The authors view RBT as a more recent theoretical development of the field of strategy for considering and defining firms. Considering that resource heterogeneity is the basis for the competitive advantage position, this article assumes that the resources of the firm can be divided into two different categories: assets, i.e. resource endowments collected by the company, and capabilities, i.e. arrangements of accumulated skills and knowledge (DAY, 1994) that bring assets together to be deployed in an advantageous manner. Capabilities are considered as antecedents to advantageous positions in the international markets because they are functional capabilities based on the knowledge and experience of the employees and are not usually imitated or traded among companies. The advantageous positions of low-cost or branding affect the financial performance in exports (ZOU; FANG; ZHAO, 2003).

The article of Filatochev et al. (2009) defends the idea that the company's efforts to increase its capacity to innovate and learn should drive its internationalization, which in turn, leads to foreign sales. The company's R&D activities develop process and product innovation, that help to improve its competitiveness in local markets and also in foreign ones, fostering its export orientation and performance. The presence of a returnee entrepreneur can raise the company's absorptive capacity, enhancing its export orientation and performance. The authors emphasize that their main theoretical argument, that the human and social capital brought by returnee entrepreneurs, is relevant to other EMs other than their research context (China) as well as to policymakers in these countries (FILATOTCHEV et al., 2009).

For Kocak and Abimbola (2009), RBT is the primary theoretical foundation of born-globals. Despite having scarce financial and human resources and defying the traditional internationalization streams of literature, born-globals appear to gather important intangible resources taken from different strategic orientations such as market, entrepreneurial and technological orientations, in order to provide the competitive advantages needed for successful internationalization. The Knowledge-Based View also provides an explanation for this type of company, in which the knowledge and its management within the firm are the most important resources. Additionally, a third explanation comes from the dynamic

capabilities view. It serves to identify the activities and routines that enable the company to rearrange its resources, activities and competencies in order to face its changing business environment. Market and entrepreneurial orientations are considered as organizational capabilities of the firm and both encourage the search for knowledge about international markets (KOCAK; ABIMBOLA, 2009).

To contribute to the export marketing literature, the RBT paradigm of resource heterogeneity and immobility is applied to deepen the understanding of the link between company's characteristics and resources, product strategy and performance outcomes (LAGES; SILVA; STYLES, 2009). The authors place organizational learning capabilities for innovation and relationship capabilities as antecedents of product innovation strategy and relationship and quality capabilities as antecedents of product quality strategy. The firm's strategic product definition of innovation and quality are mediators of the capabilities – performance relationship (LAGES; SILVA; STYLES, 2009).

In Lu et al. (2010), RBT has been used as a starting point for building the research model, placing Institutional Capital and Managerial Ties as the resources that are part of the explanation for the entrepreneurial firm's international performance. They complement this view, bringing information acquisition and adaptive capabilities as mediators of the resource-performance relationship, in line with previous literature that argues that the mere possession of resources is not enough of a condition for the development of sustainable competitive advantages. The capabilities can merge the company's resources, with the employees tacit knowledge, in order to achieve superior performance (LU et al., 2010).

Some resources are part of the formation of capabilities, which turn into resources again. Innovativeness, for example, is one of the firm's capabilities formed by resources such as Customer Orientation and the Technological and Relationship capabilities (KIM et al., 2011). Innovative capability can also be viewed as an organizational resource of born-globals, granting a positional advantage for born-globals in the international market scenario. In this case, the authors position the Customer Orientation construct as one of the organization's resources that leads to a competitive advantage. Customer Orientation is the resource that precedes and enables the company's strategies to sustain its innovativeness, which in turn leads to financial return. Innovativeness, as an organizational culture, is also considered as a

source of competitive advantage for rapidly internationalizing companies such as born-globals, which can be enhanced through strategies of relationship, technology and information processing (KIM et al., 2011).

RBT, in Nemkova, Souchon and Hughes (2012), is used as a complimentary theory to strengthen the link between export-decision orientations and export sales effectiveness in the theoretical framework proposed. The authors consider that planning and also improvising regarding export decision-making are capabilities derived from an arrangement of resources and skills. This arrangement of resources turned into capabilities is in line the notion of strategic fit, derived from RBT and contingency theory (NEMKOVA; SOUCHON; HUGHES, 2012).

In He and Wei (2013), a company's external networks and its absorptive capacity are complementary resources that impact on the internationalization process. In other words, in order to fully benefit from the knowledge and information raised through external networks, a company needs the absorptive capacity to overcome the institutional, economic and cultural barriers of international trade (HE; WEI, 2013). For them, absorptive capacity is considered a moderator of the resources – performance relationship (HE; WEI, 2013), which is different from Javalgi, Hall and Cavusgil's (2014) theoretical paper, where absorptive capacity is a partial mediator of such a relationship.

RBT is considered a backdrop theory for understanding the concept of the firm, mainly from the knowledge point of view. Javalgi, Hall and Cavusgil (2014) emphasize that a company is a collection of resources, increasingly knowledge-based. Therefore, knowledge acquisition and management within the firm play a central role in its ability to create a competitive advantage. They also contend that this knowledge-based advantage may develop in the international scenario as well. In international markets, even with the technology available for communication between the customers and the firm, the salesperson is often the usual primary point of contact for the customer. Therefore, it is likely that the salesperson can gather information about these customers that is unavailable to other points of contact within a firm (JAVALGI; HALL; CAVUSGIL, 2014).

Unlike the first category, the articles named *Resources – Capabilities – Outcome Advantage* have an end construct to their models, usually, some form of measurable

performance. Export performance (FILATOTCHEV et al., 2009; HE; WEI, 2013; ZOU; FANG; ZHAO, 2003), international sales performance (JAVALGI; HALL; CAVUSGIL, 2014), financial return (KIM et al., 2011), international performance (LU et al., 2010), economic and relationship performance (LAGES; SILVA; STYLES, 2009), export sales effectiveness (NEMKOVA; SOUCHON; HUGHES, 2012) and the performance of born-globals (KOCAK; ABIMBOLA, 2009) were all present in these studies, as per Table 3.

If the location of performance in these studies' models was a consensus, the innovation construct was not. It served as a full mediator of the resource – performance relationship, configuring one of the firm's capabilities (KOCAK; ABIMBOLA, 2009). In a more complex setting, innovation can play a more central role, gathering both resources and other capabilities in order to achieve financial returns for born-globals (KIM et al., 2011). A company's product innovation is one of the product strategies that also mediates its capabilities – performance relationship (LAGES; SILVA; STYLES, 2009). This strategic positional advantage has also had its mediator role investigated by Zou, Fang and Zhao (2003), for the same capabilities – performance relationship.

As mentioned earlier, absorptive capacity has been presented both as a partial mediator (JAVALGI; HALL; CAVUSGIL, 2014), full mediator (LU et al., 2010) and as a moderator (HE; WEI, 2013) of the resource – performance relationship. The best example of the Resources – Capabilities – Outcome Advantage framing for the use of RBT within international marketing studies, is the article of Lu et al. (2010).

Table 3 - List of Articles: Outcome Advantage

| Nº | Title | Country – Origin | Method | Unit of Analysis | RBT - references | Performance* |
|----|--|------------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|--------------|
| 1 | The Effect of Export Marketing Capabilities on Export Performance: An Investigation of Chinese Exporters (ZOU; FANG; ZHAO, 2003) | China | Survey | manufacturing exporters | Barney (1991) Peteraf (1993) Wernerfelt (1984) | F |
| 2 | The Export Orientation and Export Performance of High-Technology SMEs in Emerging Markets: The Effects of Knowledge Transfer by Returnee Entrepreneurs (FILATOCHÉV; LIU; BUCK; WRIGHT, 2009) | China | Survey | high-tech firms in emerging and transition economies | Barney (1991) Peteraf (1993) Wernerfelt (1984) | M F |
| 3 | The effects of entrepreneurial marketing on born-global performance (KOCAK; ABIMBOLA, 2009) | Turkey | Qualitative Multiple case studies | born-global SMEs | Knight and Cavusgil (2004) Loane and Bell (2006) | M |
| 4 | Relationship Capabilities, Quality and Innovation as Determinants of Export Performance (LAGES; SILVA; STYLES, 2009) | Portugal | Survey | exporting firms | Barney (1991) | C F |
| 5 | Capabilities as a mediator linking resources and the international performance of entrepreneurial firms in an emerging economy (LU; ZHOU; BRUTON; LI, 2010) | China | survey | entrepreneurial firms | Barney (1991) Grant (1991) | M F C |
| 6 | The innovativeness of born-globals and customer orientation: learning from Indian born-globals (KIM; BASU; NAIDU; CAVUSGIL, 2011) | India | Survey Framework test | Organization (companies that had at least 20% of their revenue from external markets within their first 5 years) | Auh e Menguc (2006) Barney (1991, 2001) Kim et al. (2006) Wu et al. (2006) | F |
| 7 | Export decision-making orientation: an exploratory study | UK | Qualitative In-depth interviews | manufacturing firms | Hoopes et al. (2003) Wernerfelt | O |

| Nº | Title | Country – Origin | Method | Unit of Analysis | RBT - references | Performance* |
|----|--|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|--|--------------|
| | (NEMKOVA; SOUCHON; HUGHES, 2012) | | | | (1984) Barney (1991) | |
| 8 | Export market location decision and performance: The role of external networks and absorptive capacity (HE; WEI, 2013) | China | survey | manufacturing firms | Barney et al. (2001) Brothers et al., 2008; Wei and Lau, 2008 | |
| 9 | Corporate entrepreneurship, customer-oriented selling, absorptive capacity, and international sales performance in the international B2B setting: Conceptual framework and research propositions (JAVALGI; HALL; CAVUSGIL, 2014) | | literature review | B2B setting | Penrose (1959) Wernerfelt (1984) Barney (1991, 1986) Grant (1996) | M |

Source: Developed by the authors, 2019.

*Performance type: I (Innovation), F (Financial), M (Market), C (Customer), O (Other).

3.2.1 Resources in the international marketing field

Table 4 presents the process of data analysis from axial to selective coding, related to the resources investigated in this selection of papers.

Table 4 – Resource categories

| Categories | Resources | Frequency |
|------------------------|--|-----------|
| COMPANY'S CONCEPTIONS | Innovativeness | 3 |
| | R&D | 3 |
| | Quality Focus | 1 |
| NETWORKS AND TIES | Managerial Ties | 1 |
| | Returnee Entrepreneur | 1 |
| | Global Social Networks | 1 |
| | External Networks | 1 |
| | International Contacts | 1 |
| | International Experience | 2 |
| STRATEGIC ORIENTATIONS | Customer Orientation | 1 |
| | Entrepreneurial Orientation | 1 |
| | Customer Focus | 1 |
| | Corporate Entrepreneurship Orientation | 1 |
| | Market Orientation | 1 |
| INFORMATION PROCESS | Knowledge | 1 |

| Categories | Resources | Frequency |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-----------|
| | Learning Process | 1 |
| | Employee Knowledge | 1 |
| | Employee Experience | 1 |
| SALESFORCE BEHAVIOR | Customer Following | 1 |
| | Customer-Oriented Selling | 1 |
| OTHERS | Institutional Capital | 1 |
| | Export Resources | 1 |

Source: Developed by the authors, 2019.

The category named Company's Conceptions refers to the strategic resources of Innovativeness, R&D and Quality Focus. These constructs represent the way these firms are perceived or regarded. Innovativeness was defined as *"the firm's openness to new ideas and new ways of meeting customers' needs"* (KIM et al., 2011, p. 881). Quality Focus is the increased attention to quality to reach a level of international competitiveness (ERDOĞMUŞ; BODUR; YILMAZ, 2010). R&D is the intensity of innovation by the firm (FILATOTCHEV et al., 2009).

The second category is Networks and Ties, a representative group of resources that have been considered in these international marketing articles. The power of existing global networks was explored by two articles (FILATOTCHEV et al., 2009; HE; WEI, 2013) and the knowledge, experience and access provided by Managerial Ties, International Contacts and International Experience have also been explored (LU et al., 2010; ZOU; FANG; ZHAO, 2003).

The Strategic Orientations category is no novelty to the marketing discipline and has been comprehensively investigated since its inception (HAKALA, 2011; NOBLE; SINHA; KUMAR, 2002; SHOHAM; ROSE; KROPP, 2005). It is natural to conceive that it should also represent an important part of international marketing studies. The marketing literature has already seen the study of more than one strategic orientation of the firm in order to achieve superior performance (HAKALA, 2011). In this selection, Market Orientation and Entrepreneurial Orientation were evaluated by the same model (KOCAK; ABIMBOLA, 2009) as well as customer and corporate entrepreneurship orientations (JAVALGI; HALL; CAVUSGIL, 2014). Customer Focus (a similar construct to customer orientation) was also present (ERDOĞMUŞ; BODUR; YILMAZ, 2010).

Information Process involves knowledge, learning processes, employee knowledge

and experience. Salesforce Behavior refers to the conduct and actions of salespeople such as Customer Following, which are the linkages that MNCs have with their clients (such as cooperation in the coordination of processes, logistics, shipments and other arrangements) that increase the company's ability to meet customer needs in the foreign market. Therefore, the more Customer Following capability an MNC has, the higher the probability of a wholly owned subsidiary choice of entry into a foreign market (CHIAO; LO; YU, 2010).

3.2.3 Capabilities in the international marketing field

Table 5 presents the process of data analysis from axial to selective coding related to capabilities investigated in this selection of papers.

Table 5 – Capability categories

| Categories | Capabilities | Frequency |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------|
| INFORMATION PROCESS CAPABILITY | Absorptive Capacity | 3 |
| | Learning | 1 |
| | Knowledge Transfer | 1 |
| | Information Acquisition | 1 |
| | Organizational Learning for Innovation | 1 |
| MARKETING CAPABILITY | Marketing Capabilities | 3 |
| | Export Planning | 1 |
| | Export Improvisation | 1 |
| INNOVATION CAPABILITY | Adaptive Capacity | 1 |
| | Innovativeness | 2 |
| | Innovation | 1 |
| TECHNICAL CAPABILITY | Technology Strategy | 1 |
| | Information Processing | 1 |
| | Quality Capability | 1 |
| RELATIONSHIP CAPABILITY | Relationship Strategy | 1 |
| | Relationship Capability | 1 |
| OTHER | Managerial Capabilities | 1 |

Source: Developed by the authors, 2019.

From the analysis of Table 4 and 5 one can observe that some of the constructs categorized previously as resources are also present, in some form, in the capability categories. The information process resources are part of the information process capabilities, such as Knowledge Transfer (FILATOTCHEV et al., 2009) and the Organizational Learning for Innovation capability, the set of skills that develop and facilitate the use of knowledge to produce insight for innovation (LAGES; SILVA; STYLES, 2009). Knowledge Transfer is based on

contact and experience from international activities by both internationally experienced and local managers (FILATOTCHEV et al., 2009).

Marketing capabilities are also described as the use of existing resources in an effective manner. They refer to the ability to develop an adequate marketing approach to enter and establish a competitive position in EMs. It entails the appropriate deployment of marketing resources and capabilities (BORTOLUZZI et al., 2014; ZOU; FANG; ZHAO, 2003).

Within the Innovation capability category, the Adaptive Capability is defined as *"the firm's ability to coordinate, recombine, and allocate resources to meet the changes required by foreign customers and/or suppliers"* (LU et al., 2010). Also in this category is Innovativeness, which has also been reported as a resource and is defined as the ability of the organization to adopt or implement new ideas, processes, and products successfully (ERDOĞMUŞ; BODUR; YILMAZ, 2010).

Technological capability mainly refers to Technology Strategy, the ability to use technology tools to manage customers relationships in order to overcome international barriers such as language and distance (KIM et al., 2011). It also refers to Information Processing, which is a company's capability of searching, integrating and using information about its customers from sources outside the company (KIM et al., 2011), and Quality Capabilities involving the company's assets that allow them to fulfill customers' needs. They are determinants of competitive advantage and identified as customer focus, commitment to quality, employee quality training, empowerment and involvement (LAGES; SILVA; STYLES, 2009).

The relationship strategies and capabilities of a firm have been investigated both as resources within the Customer Orientation construct (customer relationships) (KIM et al., 2011; LAGES; SILVA; STYLES, 2009) and also as part of Managerial Ties (relationships with other managers) (LU et al., 2010) and extensively as part of International Contacts and Networks Developed by Returnee Entrepreneurs (FILATOTCHEV et al., 2009).

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article aimed to assess RBT's contribution to the development of the international

marketing discipline as a field of study within the marketing literature, expanding on the revision by Kozlenkova, Samaha and Palmatier (2014). To reach that goal, desk research was conducted using the Web of Science database and 14 articles were selected as the most representative of the use of RBT in international marketing studies. The literature review focused on understanding the main logic of the authors in their use of the comprehensive and flexible theoretical framework of the resource-based view in their research propositions and hypotheses.

The first section of this article comprised an overview of the initial foundations and premises of RBT, presented through its seminal works (BARNEY, 1991; WERNERFELT, 1984) that were extensively used, as can be seen by the selection of articles in the 'References' column of Tables 2 and 3. This section also contains the main findings in marketing research, of a recent revision of the interactions of RBT (KOZLENKOVA; SAMAHA; PALMATIER, 2014), which has served as a starting point for this literature review. The revision has also inspired comments and critiques from the most important academics in RBT literature (BARNEY, 2014; DAY, 2014; WERNERFELT, 2014) and their statements are summarized in the first section as well.

The second part of the article addresses international marketing as a field of study, from the early stages of its development, and the context elements that forge its definition and legitimacy as a separate phenomenon from Marketing in general. The evolution of the field is regarded from two different perspectives of the initial descriptive and narrative studies, inquiring about the differences between domestic and foreign markets and on to more methodologically advanced studies, like the investigation of intangible resources and capabilities in the global economy (CAVUSGIL; DELIGONUL; YAPRAK, 2005).

The use of RBT in International Marketing is assessed in the third section of this paper with the analysis of 14 articles that best represent the theory's use in the field. From this selection, two main patterns of reasoning were identified. The first one reflected RBT's use to evaluate a firm's resources that help it to build and leverage capabilities, which, in turn, leads to an advantageous position for the firm. The consequence of the combination of these different resources and capabilities is that the company has a more favorable position compared to its competitors in foreign markets. This finding is in line with previous

assessments of the international marketing field, in which it was observed that there has been a growing interest since the early stages of the field, for intermediary outcomes (CAVUSGIL; DELIGONUL; YAPRAK, 2005; KOZLENKOVA; SAMAHA; PALMATIER, 2014).

Another reason for the use of RBT in International Marketing is as a performance outcome at the consequent position of the model. In these studies, resources are also the basis of capabilities, taken to be a company's processes that lead to superior performance. For this group of authors, the combination of heterogeneous resources and assets leads to improved processes (capabilities) with an important positive impact on their performance in international markets. This implication for the firm's outcome is an important contribution to the international marketing field, as it progresses further by the reassurance of its value and worth within the company's activities (CZINKOTA; RONKAINEN, 2003).

Also in the third section of this article is the categorization of the resources and capabilities observed in these studies. The resources investigated were grouped into six categories (Company's Conceptions, Networks and Ties, Strategic Orientations, Information Process, Salesforce Behavior and others). The capability categories were identified as Information Process, Marketing, Innovation, Technical and Relationship capabilities, plus others).

The evaluation of resources and capabilities in the international marketing studies selected revealed that some of the constructs categorized as resources also appear in the capability categories, such as information process resources and capabilities, innovation and absorptive capacity. This reflection appears conflicting at first look, but it can be comprehensible if there is an understanding of capabilities role in internationally-active companies. As soon as a firm is able to turn its resources into effective processes that grant them some form of benefit through cost reduction or value growth, this ability also becomes a resource for the firm, which will stimulate other sources of advantage leading to superior performances.

The Resource-Based View provides a broad and comprehensive framework for understanding the compilation of assets and tools necessary to achieve superior performance in international markets. Sometimes, the decision to explore different markets represents a bold and risky decision for exporting firms and requires study and preparation in order to

lower the risks and maximize the chances of success. Considering the studies analyzed, it is possible to grasp an idea of the fundamental resources required to make a successful market entry decision. The capabilities explored give a dynamic view to the resources needed, presenting an important liaison between the efforts necessary to reach a firm's goals in different markets.

Considering the practical implications of this analysis, the two conclusions identified could serve as a framework for firms at different stages of their internationalization. At the market entry stage, it is possible that firms look more closely at gaining outcome advantages, considering the high initial costs and risks association with a new market entry. Therefore, the resources and capabilities necessary to gain outcome advantages have a critical role at this phase. In other cases, after the initial market entry stage, a more competitive and sustained position advantage becomes pivotal to the firm's long term performance and growth.

From this analysis and final considerations, future research could investigate resources and capabilities, using RBT as the main theoretical lens to explore their optimal arrangement within the exporting firm using qualitative longitudinal methods. This approach would provide a comprehensive outlook into the resources and capabilities needed in each phase of the firm's internationalization, as the goals change from outcome advantage to sustained position advantage.

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