



# EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF THE “BORN GLOBALS” – A LITERATURE REVIEW

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**ABSTRACT:** *New theories of internationalization and their methodologies propose the union of two or more companies to satisfy requirements in international markets. Joint ventures, international licenses, foreign investors or even the basic operation of exporting and importing are a clear example of these. Furthermore, these theories aim to carry out processes to insert regions in a more global context. The present work presents a bibliographic review of companies known as “Born Global”. A study of this concept has been developed over time and organized as follows: Beginning of the term in the 90s, evolution in the 2000s, and academic boom between 2010 and 2020. Early results show that Born Globals’ arise to a large extent from companies with high-tech innovation products and software products, productivity and competitiveness level indicators are expected to improve for business and technology.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Born Global; Internationalization; Entrepreneurship.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The study of “Born Global” companies explains new concepts of internationalization through the analysis of various theories addressing the creation of companies in the global sphere. This leads to solve issues only at the global level, since the companies respond exclusively to those markets and are not interested in local or national ones. The present work presents a literature review, divided as follows: Creation, evolution and academic boom of the Born Global concept. The methodology used for this paper was a search of terms in Google Scholar, academic databases such as Scielo, Scopus and Redalyc, with a qualitative and correlational approach, by using words like Born Globals, international entrepreneurship, new international companies. Each section of this paper includes a brief

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literature review, implications, and recent contributions for the definition of Born Global Companies.

## **2. BEGINNINGS OF THE “BORN GLOBAL” TERM: THE 1990’S**

The first attempt to define a global company is found in Ohmae (1991), who indicates that there are global companies which have abandoned their national identity and operate on a world scale as entities without a country. Similarly, Oviatt & McDougall (1994) propose the integration of internationalization, entrepreneurship and strategy, in search for the explanation of an “emerging phenomenon” known today as Born Global companies.

For their part, Madsen & Servais (1997) affirm that the Born Global phenomenon has been part of the literature related to internationalization processes of companies. They indicate that this phenomenon is opposed to the traditional models of internationalization, concluding that the “Born Global” companies grow in a different way.

## **3. EVOLUTION OF THE TERM “BORN GLOBAL”: THE 2000’S**

In this decade we find evolution of the concept by understanding the emergence of Born Global companies, learning from practical cases and considering management models adapted to them. In a first approach, Harveston, Kedia & Davis (2000) studied the leading role of managers of this type of companies. They conclude that Born Global companies have managers with more geocentric mentalities than managers of firms with gradual globalization. Managers of the former have broader international experience than managers of the latter.

In Hodgkinson (2000) we find a practical case of the process of internationalization of small and medium enterprises in Asia, concluding that scarce financial and management resources of SMEs seem to make globalization only possible for large companies. As a result, policies should be focused towards updating of technology and general management skills of SMEs, envisioning Born Global companies as an opportunity.

Similarly, Bell, McNaughton & Young (2001) provide clear evidence of the rapid and dedicated internationalization of Born Global companies. These are generally smaller companies that go international from the start or close to it. At this point, they identify the existence of Born Global companies and explore some of the circumstances that have led to their rapid and dedicated internationalization. Therefore, it may be concluded that the authors seek to clarify the difficulty in understanding Born Global, by also considering “reborn” companies. These last ones explain the transition from a traditional company to a global company.

Rasmussen & Madsen (2002), based on empirical studies on the export behavior of companies, indicate that many companies do not develop in incremental stages with respect to their international activities. Therefore, personality, skills and capacities of the entrepreneurs are included as research topics to examine their impact on the birth and

development of these companies. This study introduces Born Global companies as a type of international companies, rather than being considered a “phenomenon”.

Zahra & George (2002) approximate their definition of global enterprises in a process of discovering and creatively exploiting opportunities outside domestic markets in search for competitive advantage. Hashai & Almor (2004) conclude that the internationalization process of ‘world-born’ companies can be characterized by a gradual increase in their commitment to foreign markets.

Accordingly, Campbell - Hunt & Chetty (2004) carry out a systematic analysis of the degree to which traditional or global companies are moving towards internationalization, and how they differ in strategies, motivations and previous capacities. Knight & Cavusgli (2005) state that these companies are born from the need generated by internationalization looking for quick solutions in a global market, without considering local ones. In the same way, these can be small companies usually oriented towards technology that operate in international markets since their foundation.

At the end of this decade, the literature presents case studies in the United Kingdom and in Central America (Kudina et al., 2008; Lopez et al., 2009). These indicate that a distinctive characteristic of the companies in the study is that they perform most of their research and development at an international level. To a large extent, UK companies considered as Born Global (usually software) have a competitive advantage through differentiation in the global market. One consequence of the role of differentiation is that most companies need to have considerable funds to invest in technology development, which is an additional barrier to new competition. Likewise, an exploratory study of the software industry in Costa Rica was developed to help companies seek business opportunities on being born global versus regional. In that order, the study showed that a Born Global company might be constituted internationally to aim at a market in the United States, but for different circumstances concentrates its efforts mainly towards Central and South America; while at the same time, responding to needs from a local point of view (Lopez et al., 2009).

#### **4. ACADEMIC BOOM OF THE “BORN GLOBAL”: 2010 TO 2020**

This decade saw Born Global at its peak, with summarized information of real cases throughout the planet. At the same time, research articles are presented with literature reviews, state of the art, and managerial profiles, among others.

Tanev (2012) shows recent research on companies that are “Born Global”, providing relevant information for entrepreneurs and senior management of new technology companies. Pettersen & Tobiassen (2012) indicate that most of the research on Born Global companies analyze them from a perspective of their legal foundation, while there are also studies that show that international companies go through long periods of pre-foundation, which probably affect growth and internationalization processes. These companies spent a long time developing their technologies prior to being founded.

Uner et al. (2013) state that the question of whether export barriers present significant differences between companies has not been addressed and conclude that export barriers vary according to the different stages of internationalization.

The results suggest that the perceived barriers differ mainly for companies in the national commercialization stage, versus pre-export stage and Born Global companies.

Cavusgli et al. (2015) make a descriptive research and conclude that Born Global companies represent an optimistic contemporary trend for international business, in which any firm, of any size or base of experience or resources, can actively participate in cross-border trade.

Servantie (2015) demonstrates how an SME can be internationalized from its conception. The author states that SMEs do not find institutional support adapted to their needs and, therefore, seek rapid growth in the market since Born Global companies have an established niche. They tend to solve defined needs or opportunities and maintain close relationships with their clients. In this way, the transition from traditional SMEs to Born Global, becomes a strategy for growth and survival.

Zander et al. (2015) indicate that despite its growing importance, the understanding of Born Global companies remains incomplete. Comprehending how and why these companies develop and implement their internationalization strategies, and what makes them successful, becomes an essential topic. Mendez (2015) makes a parallel between the UPPSALA companies and the Born Global, explaining the “modus operandi” of the internationalization process of the former. The author focuses on the early creation of the global companies, which are oriented towards international markets, omitting stages in the overall process.

Lin et al. (2016) study the evolution of exchange of Born Global companies in the Zhejiang province in China. The main factor analyzed is the relationship of managers with their networking, considered a trigger for growth in the global market. Aspects studied include high level of training, qualifications, experience in the sector and a strong inclination towards innovation of managers. Ughetto (2016) examines the relationship between entrepreneurs’ human capital and their perception of how venture capital can positively affect it.

Saucedo-Espinosa, et al. (2016) explain the primary role that all organizations must fulfill, such as their Corporate Social Responsibility. From this perspective, authors consider the role of Born Global companies, understanding them as a new type of companies.

Etermad (2017) explains the life cycle of international companies, allowing to skip some growth stages (and understanding Born Global as the result of a correct assimilation of stages that respond to the global market). The authors postulate the relevance of broad managerial skills and experience. However, they mistakenly present the Born Global as a stage to evolve towards transnational companies.

García–Cabrera et al. (2017), in a case of Born Global companies in Spain, present a study of 242 young manufacturing SMEs with a successful degree of exporting unique and highly innovative products, and achieving a position in the international market. This study indicates a favorable environment for the creation of Born Global, in such a way as to encourage new ventures on this field. Vargas (2017) presents essential characteristics for companies in the process of internationalization, specifically Born Global. The author indicates that strategic direction must be coherent with the internationalization process, based on the conclusion that you must fully understand the target market you are entering.

In the same way, García–Lillo et al. (2017) present a bibliometric analysis of the study of Born Global companies, indicating the importance of research of this type of companies. They conclude that the symbiosis between Born Global and the internationalization process is considered necessary and key for both parties.

Fong et al. (2017) identify the essential resources and barriers that these companies may have when operating. Among them are high financial resources necessary to smoothly operate and high specialization of the international market. As challenges, they present ignorance of the target market, little logistics structure, high costs inherent to the production process and precarious networking.

Similarly, they dedicate a section to identify the strengths of this study, including product design and quality, a primary intangible indicator, and the creation of clusters at the local level. Lopez (2017) concludes that these types of companies are based on a key variable: TIME, since they show an early and accelerated growth in their process of internationalization.

Øyna & Alon (2018) indicate that Born Global companies will play an active role in the business economy. Hence, understanding their characteristics for the generation of this type of entrepreneurship, and the variables and factors that contribute to success are of great relevance for the academic and productive sectors. Bojorquez & Bojorquez (2018) make it possible to determine whether an SME can be global or achieve the category of global when its operation area's is mainly the local market and its strategic intention is to operate locally.

Chhotray et al. (2018) present a real case example of Born Global in Sweden, making a case about the need for high professional and academic skills in managers of these types of companies. By means of this experience, they have been able to position them with a vision of being world leaders in their field. The relevance about this topic is that it has been proved that productivity and attitude within the labor dynamics is consistent with this vision, thanks to the empowerment of collaborators.

Hull et al. (2019) carry out surveys of 321 startups of Born Global companies in Chinese cities, characterized by their innovation, diversity of information and attractiveness in globalization. They conclude that although there is a large population of incipient entrepreneurs (micro-entrepreneurs), whose businesses pave the way for Born Global Companies, they have a greater probability of not being able to be sustainable over time and increase the mortality rate of companies in this country.

This occurs due to the in-depth lack of awareness of all internationalization processes, allowing a decline that leads to their liquidation. Evers et al. (2019) conclude with a conceptual research framework that permits the understanding of orientations at strategic levels of international companies, compared to Born Global companies.

Finally, Ferguson et al. (2019), analyzing Swedish companies, conclude that the rapid strategy of “aggressive” global internationalization from the beginning of operation does not guarantee a greater constant growth of the organization, versus a gradual entry into global markets,

McCormick & Somaya (2020) present the advantages of promoting Born Global since these ventures overcome the logistical and infrastructure difficulties of their countries of origin. This is because they are strategically located, count with enough resources and tend to export their products instead of producing locally.

Nguyen et al (2020) propose an internationalization model to accelerate new ventures towards the export of their products, with a focus on boosting capacities and improvements in terms of operation within production. Andersson et al. (2020) explain that their basis for achieving sustainable growth “Business Maturity” is characterized by continuous internationalization. Therefore, to maintain a competitive position through products whose niches are international is required, along with a focus in the market, both reactive and proactive.

In this way, the creation of value for customers is facilitated. These activities are financially supported by constant reinvestment in international marketing activities. Romanello et al. (2020) propose a parallel between China and Italy, considering that both countries’ economic approach generates internationalization opportunities. China promotes main internationalization opportunities to present a focus on cluster networks due to their local context. In the Italian economy, these strengths are presented through the innovation of products that become attractive to the global market. They indicate that despite how different these two economies may be, there is an environment conducive to the development of Born Global companies based on government support.

Wadson (2020) concludes that Born Global companies must be studied from the perspective of the internationalization process, in order to transition from its definition as a phenomenon to a type of entrepreneurship, and in coherence with the innovation and development process, access to financial capital and demand in global markets.

Fong et al. (2020) conclude in their work that due to the number of SMEs in Mexico, they see their relevance in the creation of employment, economic innovation, managerial skills and economic development. However, these series of benefits are not perceived at all levels, which leads the authors to propose achieving it from the standpoint of Born Global emergence.

Weerawardena et al. (2020) aim to show that companies in the international market can relate administrative innovation to product innovation. A high correlation that points out to innovation as a main characteristic of Born Global companies. Jakobsson et al.

(2020) indicate, for Born Global companies in Sweden, that these present special skills in topics such as market, strategy, creation of clusters, logistics and marketing. In the same way, they affirm that the managerial skills are not used to the same extent but are necessary for the successful performance of this type of entrepreneurship.

However, their study concludes that the lack of experience in internationalization or the lack of financial resources force these companies to prioritize and promote the development of this type of skills. Lezana et al. (2020) achieve that Born Global companies can have higher levels of success when they satisfy the main foundation of internationalization: nothing more than satisfying the need to eliminate physical distance and allowing psychological distance to generate demand in global markets.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

- At the beginning of the concept, there is a need to continue researching on this topic or “phenomenon”, starting from the facts in history that favored its appearance in the global market.
- In the 2000s period, there is an evolution of the definition of Born Global Companies. At the same time, there are case studies of this type of companies, mostly software companies. These companies are in constant evolution and allow a real application of the term.
- Finally, in the last decade, three perspectives are presented. The first one is the Change of Approach, dedicated to analyzing successful models, or changing the paradigm of analysis of the definition in this type of entrepreneurship. The second is Distinctive Characteristics, oriented towards the relevance of the training and skills in managers, market knowledge, logistics preparation, economic approach and importance of government institutions. The third and last is Living Practice, where the focus is to satisfy the need that originated internationalization. For the last one, one must consider first the distinctive characteristics approach, considered the most efficient path to success. In this sense, Born Global has allowed start-up companies to maintain a boom in terms of innovation, value creation and even to present themselves as an entrepreneurial opportunity. This evolution makes it possible to distinguish clear characteristics of the process and the way in which a company can be born into the global market from its origins.

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