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**Barriers to the internationalization of Polish enterprises in the field of medical equipment manufacturers**

Doctoral dissertation written at the College of Management and Finance at the Warsaw School of Economics, under the scientific supervision of dr hab. Mirosław Jarosiński, prof. SGH and dr hab. Wioletta Mierzejewska, prof. SGH.

**Summary**

Internationalization barriers are an important element of the foreign expansion process. Barriers to internationalization have been studied and classified since the 1960s, but few studies have focused on Polish enterprises, and a thorough review of the literature has shown a research gap on internationalization barriers among Polish firms. The main objective of the dissertation was to identify significant barriers to the internationalization of Polish enterprises in the medical equipment industry. In addition to the main objective, auxiliary sobjectives were formulated: cognitive, methodological and application, and research questions were posed. A literature review, in-depth interviews and a multiple case study analysis were conducted to find answers to the questions posed in the thesis.

 The dissertation consists of four chapters preceded by an introduction and summarized by the conclusion. The first chapter is of a theoretical nature, in which the author, based on the subject literature, presents theories and models of internationalization and discusses enterprise development strategies. The author also discussed the relationship between the size and experience of the company and the internationalization process. At the end of the chapter, the process and consequences of deinternationalization, i.e. complete withdrawal from a given market, and reinternationalization, understood as a return to a foreign market after a temporary cessation of international activity, are presented.

In the second chapter, the author discussed and classified export barriers. Referring to research in this area, he singled out internal barriers: the company's level of experience in this type of activity, personnel competences, the specificity and type of organizational culture of the company and its financial capabilities. On the other hand, external barriers were divided by the author into political and legal barriers and obstacles related to the creation of forms of cooperation between enterprises. Barriers to internationalization in the study of Polish enterprises were also presented. The author proves that overcoming barriers is a necessary and indispensable element of the internationalization process and presents ways to overcome them. The author noted that among all the barriers, the most frequently mentioned by entrepreneurs is the financial barrier, including the difficulty in obtaining capital for foreign expansion.

In the third chapter, the author reviewed and briefly characterized the medical equipment market in countries with the largest share in the global market and in Europe. The author discussed the situation of the Polish market of medical devices and legal regulations. The main directions and export markets of Polish manufacturers of medical equipment were also discussed. The author pointed out that the development of the medical industry in Poland has been accelerated thanks to the use of EU funds for the purchase of new medical devices, as well as for the promotion of Polish exporters.

The fourth chapter is devoted to own research on the barriers to internationalization among manufacturers of medical equipment in Poland. Using the multiple case study method, the author examined what barriers to internationalization are the most important for Polish producers, what is the specificity of these barriers, discussed the geographical conditions and the relationship between the advancement of internationalization and the types and significance of internationalization barriers. Using an interview script consisting of 26 questions, the author conducted an interview with 5 respondents - owners of Polish enterprises in the medical equipment industry, exporting products to foreign markets. The author, using the respondents' statements, discussed the barriers faced by Polish entrepreneurs and the ways in which they overcame them. The impact of the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 epidemic on the internationalization process was also discussed separately.

The dissertation ends with a summary of the research and conclusions. Indications for further research in this area were also formulated, as well as recommendations for entrepreneurs.