

## Foreword

With the process of retail internationalization gaining momentum since the 1990s, retailing is more and more becoming an international industry. Indeed, many of the world's prominent retailers already derive a significant proportion of their sales from international operations. This occurs for leading grocery retailers (e.g., Walmart, Carrefour and Tesco) in the largest retail sector according sales volumes, for leading fashion retailers (e.g., Inditex, Hennes & Mauritz and The GAP) in the second largest retail sector, and also for service retailers (e.g., McDonald's, KFC and Starbucks). Those retailers face specific challenges when going abroad, which are not relevant if a retailer works in its home country only. For example, they have to choose a general international strategy, country markets for foreign expansion, they have to decide on the market entry mode, the market servicing or on the coordination of foreign units or foreign activities (across countries) in general. These decisions could be done in different manners what significantly determine the performance of firms in international markets. However, research on retail firms' internationalization is still limited, especially compared to the research on internationalization of manufacturing firms.

The study by Dr. Stefan Elsner analyzes empirically three important decisions in the retail internationalization process:

- The choice of the market entry strategy,
- the successful transfer of the retail format from home to host countries and
- the standardization of marketing-mix/ marketing strategy and the centralization as well as formalization of international decision making.

All three topics are under-researched in the literature on retail internationalization in general or in particular concerning their specific research questions, analyzing, for example, institutionalized entry strategies as basis for the choice of current entry modes or analyzing the relationship between the transfer of visible marketing mix instruments and internal processes (supply chain and marketing) with retailers' performance in a host country. Scholars and managers could learn about the relevance of institutionalized entry modes for the subsequent entry mode choice and how processes and marketing elements interact.

Managers could learn how competitors and successful retailers operate abroad and what the central parameters are in order to archive success in foreign countries.

With his work Dr. Stefan Elsner makes a significant contribution to international retailing and international business research. He advances knowledge on international retailers' core decisions and significantly disentangles the interrelation of important decisions and retail firms' performance in foreign countries. On the one hand, his work impresses with the extent of attention paid to the conceptualization and sample design in a difficult field of research. On the other hand, he derives valuable insights for future research as well as for retailing expansion managers. Finally, he presents a dissertation in one of the core research fields of my chair in Trier.

I am particularly pleased with Dr. Stefan Elsner work, as he presents the ninth dissertation at my chair for Marketing & Retailing at the University of Trier. I am especially thankful for over three years of working as a research assistant at my chair for Marketing & Retailing. In those years Dr. Stefan Elsner worked very hard, overcame many challenges and used all the freedom as well as financial and personal resources I was able to offer him. At the end of this time, he is able to present this outstanding piece of work. I thank him very much for his time and I wish Dr. Stefan Elsner all the best for his future professional endeavors as well as his private life.

Trier, November 2012

Prof. Dr. Prof. h. c. Bernhard Swoboda

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Coordination of Retail Activities

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