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Article

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International ambidexterity future research based on bibliometric analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to improve the understanding of the scientific contributions to international ambidexterity and identify possible lines of research. We conducted a systematic literature review of 193 articles on international ambidexterity published from 2003 to 2023 that are indexed in Scopus. The publications were systematically analyzed, and scientific mapping was carried out with the VOSviewer and ATLAS TI tools. The study reveals that research in this field focuses on multinational companies from developing countries, dynamic capabilities, internationalization, innovation, and business performance. The United States, the United Kingdom, and China lead research in this area, with the most prominent journals being the International Business Review, the Thunderbird International Business Review, and the Journal of Business Research. Based on the findings, the article suggests seven categories for future research: types of ambidexterity, organizational factors, internationalization, contextual factors, effects, relationships and capabilities, innovation, and networks. We encourage academics and practitioners to contribute to this area of research and deepen our understanding of international ambidexterity.

IMPACT STATEMENT

This article delves into the notion of 'international ambidexterity', or a company's capacity to balance exploration and exploitation in foreign markets. The study focuses on multinational corporations from developing countries through a comprehensive examination of literature, highlighting dynamic capacities, internationalization, innovation, and company performance. According to the research, the United States, the United Kingdom, and China are the leaders in this sector, with magazines such as the International Business Review and the Journal of Business Research playing important roles. Future study should focus on nine areas, including ambidexterity kinds, organizational characteristics, and environmental impacts, according to the findings. The paper urges researchers and practitioners to contribute to the changing knowledge of international ambidexterity, so encouraging additional research in this dynamic and essential field.

AUTHORS RESEARCH GROUP INFORMATION STATEMENT

The dedication of the ECGESA research group to understanding social and economic phenomena is consistent with the larger purpose of contributing to human, social, and economic development. Their multidisciplinary approach, which included scholars from other faculties, connects with the discussion of 'international ambidexterity'. Both emphasis on macro and micro dynamics within varied contexts demonstrates a similar commitment to solving difficult challenges. The research described in the abstract, which emphasizes the relevance of dynamic capacities, internationalization, innovation, and firm performance in multinational enterprises from developing countries, is consistent with ECGESA's mission of understanding economic and organizational dynamics. The ECGESA group's collaborative attitude and search of answers to greater social concerns resonates with the appeal for scholars and practitioners to contribute to understanding international ambidexterity. Both highlight the need of multidisciplinary collaboration and ongoing investigation to enhance knowledge in their respective domains and contribute to the larger landscape of research and development.

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1. Introduction

The internationalization of multinational companies in emerging countries has experienced a notable increase in recent decades. However, uncertainty remains to be made about whether these companies have solid and specific advantages that allow them to successfully face an international environment characterized by turbulence. Researchers have focused on examining the motivations and antecedents that drive internationalization, as well as analyzing how different entry modes can influence the performance of these companies (Luo & Rui, 2009). Current theoretical perspectives on internationalization have undergone a significant transformation, incorporating concepts such as exploration and exploitation and the balance between the two, that is, international ambidexterity.

International ambidexterity is a dynamic capability of multinationals to manage conflictive and contradictory international activities (Pinho & Prange, 2016). For Roth and Corsi (2023), it represents the ability of multinationals to explore and exploit resources in the process of internationalization and choice of entry modes and forms of organization. This capability allows multinationals to consolidate their presence in the domestic market while exploring new opportunities in international markets (Prange, 2012).

In recent years, researchers (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008) have focused their attention on the concept of organizational ambidexterity, focusing primarily on its application within the confines of the company. However, a growing relevance has emerged in considering context (Roth & Corsi, 2023). Pinho and Prange (2016) maintain that the value of dynamic capabilities lies in their intrinsic relationship with the environment, which allows these capabilities to evolve significantly in various contexts, such as the international one, where uncertainty and constant technological change are characteristic.

The literature has highlighted the importance of multinational companies adopting an ambidextrous perspective to meet the challenges of foreign markets and prosper (Prange & Verdier, 2011). Consequently, context plays a fundamental role in determining the most appropriate strategy (Prange, 2012). Therefore, developing international exploitation and exploration capabilities in international markets is critical in establishing a competitive advantage.

However, it is vitally important to note that the area of research in question has seen relatively limited exploration and is dispersed compared to studies that focus on organizational ambidexterity (Roth & Corsi, 2023). Although it has been argued that international ambidexterity, considered a dynamic capability, could improve the competitive position of multinational companies in international markets, the consequences of this claim have yet to reach a definitive consensus (Khan et al., 2022). In the specialized literature, results have been identified that vary between positive, negative, and non-significant (Ciasullo et al., 2020; Hsu et al., 2013; Peng & Lin, 2021; Wu & Chen, 2020). These results depend on mainly the specific combination of activities related to international exploration and exploitation (Zhou et al., 2020).

This scenario poses a significant challenge for academics and managers of international companies since it confronts them with a dilemma between organizational demands and the resources available to implement exploration or exploitation strategies or the search for a balance in the form of international ambidexterity (Amankwah-Amoah & Osabutey, 2020). Given this paradox, there is a growing need for additional research that can validate how international ambidexterity (Prange & Verdier, 2011) could generate and maintain a sustainable global competitive advantage (Ciasullo et al., 2020), especially in the context of multinational companies—originating from emerging countries. In this sense, it is relevant to note that, according to Deng et al. (2020), the knowledge available about the dynamic capabilities that influence the internationalization strategy of multinationals from emerging countries is still scarce and requires further analysis.

Luo and Rui (2009) point out that multinationals from emerging countries must be ambidextrous to counteract the lack of resources and their late entry into international markets. Some scholars (Hsu et al., 2013; Sousa et al., 2020; Wu & Chen, 2020; Zhou et al., 2016) have found that an ambidextrous approach can improve their operating conditions in domestic and international markets. For example, Bandeira-de-Mello et al. (2016) used the case of a successful multilateral to understand how the ambidextrous implementation process occurs. In China, Prange and Bruyaka (2016) study how companies use ambidextrous strategies to integrate both inside-out and outside-in internationalization, positively impacting firm performance. As evidenced, research in developing countries has focused on specific samples, which does not allow the results to be generalized (Roth & Corsi, 2023). Therefore, international ambidexterity is a

promising field of study for researchers and companies in developing countries seeking to succeed in international markets.

On the other hand, studies related to international ambidexterity have diversified into various approaches, including geographical ambidexterity (Roth & Corsi, 2023), international expansion (Ahsan & Fernhaber, 2019), and ambidextrous international culture (Bruyaka & Prange, 2020). Therefore, it is imperative to understand the concept in its entirety, examine its evolution, analyze the distribution of research, identify its main exponents, and outline future lines of research. This approach will allow us to contribute to the theoretical development of the concept of international ambidexterity. With this purpose in mind, we propose to address three key questions:

What has been the evolution and productivity of the investigations? What are the intellectual interactions and structural connections of authors and themes? Moreover, what are the potential areas for future research?

In order to address this question and identify missing areas of research, this study employs a systematic literature review approach. Only a recent literature review by Roth and Corsi (2023) has explored the geographical implications of ambidexterity, identifying how strategic aspects, entry modes, and environmental factors influence exploration activities and international exploitation. Most existing bibliometric analyses in the literature have focused on organizational ambidexterity (Batra & Dhir, 2022; Chakma et al., 2021; Popadić & Milohnić, 2016).

However, it has been found that there is yet to be a comprehensive review of the literature that covers international ambidexterity in detail and, in particular, that provides clear directions for future research in this field. To fill this gap, this article performs a bibliometric analysis of the literature generated in almost two decades. It is based on a sample of 193 articles from the Scopus database up to February 2023. This study contributes to improving our understanding of how international ambidexterity enables multinationals to expand in foreign markets and points to possible directions for future research, especially in the context of developing countries.

The results of this research have significant implications for both the academic community and managers of international companies. The conceptual framework and categories we have developed for future lines of research can serve as a guide to address the gaps identified in the literature. Furthermore, the bibliometric tools used in this study highlight the topics addressed and point out the most relevant articles, making it easier for scholars to identify areas of contribution and develop additional analyses. Since international ambidexterity is an emerging field, it offers theoretical and empirical opportunities for exploration and development.

The document is structured as follows: first, a review of the concept of international ambidexterity, followed by a bibliometric analysis to identify state of the art and future lines of research, and ending with some conclusions and discussions about the field of study.

1.1. International ambidexterity

Ambidexterity is related to the skill of using both hands equally. The concept was introduced in organizations for the first time at the end of the 1970s by the theorist Robert Duncan. It refers to various management paradoxes that involve innovation, strategies, resources, and capacities, among others (Prange, 2012). Numerous researchers have studied organizational ambidexterity as the ability of firms to exploit, explore, and enhance firm performance with competitive advantage (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). Ambidexterity is the ability of the companies to perform strategic acts that are different and competitive with each other, causing trade, such as stability vs. flexibility, scope and depth, exploration and exploitation, and incremental and discontinuous innovations. However, the most used is the notion of exploration and exploitation (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008).

While Duncan (1976) is credited with pioneering the concept of organizational ambidexterity, March (1991) brought the idea to wider attention. March emphasized that exploitation and exploration represent two contrasting types of learning that necessitate different resources and attention. Exploitation is linked with refining, streamlining, and implementing existing knowledge, while exploration involves seeking, experimenting, and discovering new knowledge.

The synchronization of exploitation and exploration can enable ambidexterity to operate as a dynamic capability (as proposed by Teece et al., 1997), which guarantees the advancement and sustainability of firms in dynamic contexts (as pointed out by Luo & Rui, 2009). The combination of exploration and exploitation can supplement each other and enhance the competitive edge of multinationals in international markets, leading to international ambidexterity (Prange & Verdier, 2011). Prange (2012) considers international ambidexterity as an entrepreneurial capacity that balances paradoxical internationalization activities. According to Luo and Rui (2009), international ambidexterity optimizes the benefits and opportunities of globalization.

There are several definitions of international ambidexterity, which different theories have addressed. **Table 1** presents three definitions of the concept based on the most used theories in the literature: the theory of resources and capacities, dynamic capacities, international strategy, and business theory.

International ambidexterity is a new paradigm, mainly for multinationals from emerging countries. Because these companies face several challenges due to the lack of resources to face the international environment, that is why academics emphasize the need for these companies to be ambidextrous so that they pursue contradictory objectives or strategies that allow them to grow and at the same time preserve their stability (Luo & Rui, 2009). Ambidexterity allows multinationals from emerging countries to explore opportunities in developed economies while exploiting their home territories or other emerging countries (Ahsan & Fernhaber, 2019).

Furthermore, ambidexterity as a dynamic capability aims to generate a sustainable competitive advantage internationally (Peng & Lin, 2021). Empirical research (Hsu et al., 2013; Luo & Rui, 2009; Peng & Lin, 2021; Wu & Chen, 2020) shows that international ambidexterity significantly encourages foreign market expansion. However, more is needed to know about how multinationals from developing countries carry out exploration and exploitation activities, whether they implement ambidexterity, and whether there is a balance between them. To face international contingencies, these companies must examine, benefit from, assimilate, and carry out internal and external activities (Deng et al., 2020). Therefore, internationalization ambidexterity is a key dynamic capability for emerging countries to adopt different types of strategies where they can balance exploitation and exploration (Luo & Child, 2015).

The increasing importance of international ambidexterity for emerging market multinationals has led scholars to conduct literature reviews and identify 16 antecedents of ambidexterity in emerging markets. These antecedents include company age, size and performance, R&D intensity, TMT size, environmental instability, ownership, technological turbulence, resource scarcity, new product development, the social orientation of TMT, the market, competitive intensity, risk aversion and international experience (Batra & Dhir, 2022). Likewise, an innovation model can be found in the literature where ambidexterity, open

Table 1. Definition of ambidexterity and theories of reference.

Definition	Theory	Authors
The concept of international ambidexterity involves maintaining alignment and efficiency in managing international demands while adapting to environmental changes. Exploitation involves deploying resources overseas to capitalize on existing capacities, whereas exploration involves acquiring foreign resources. When combined, exploration and exploitation reinforce the competitiveness of firms in international markets, thereby promoting the idea of international ambidexterity	Resource and capability theory	Luo and Rui (2009); Hsu et al. (2013).
International business ambidexterity refers to the ability of a company to reconcile seemingly opposing perspectives and achieve balance in conflicting internationalization activities.	International business theory	Prange (2012); Prange and Bruyaka (2016).
Exploration seeks to develop new activities and strategies abroad, while exploitation seeks to extend existing skills. International ambidexterity seeks to balance these two strategies.	Strategy theory	Bandeira-de-Mello and et al. (2016)
Ambidexterity is a dynamic capability that needs to perform detection, seizure, and processing activities internationally and requires managers who can manage conflicting exploration and exploitation capabilities.	Dynamic capabilities theory	Dolz et al. (2019); Ciasullo et al. (2020).
When exploration and exploitation are balanced, ambidexterity becomes a dynamic capability that aids survival and growth in the international marketplace.		

Source: Own elaboration.

innovation, and agility strategy are combined (Ragazou et al., 2022a). However, studies on international ambidexterity and future research are just beginning. This article addresses this research gap through biometric analysis.

2. Methodology

This research is descriptive, using bibliometric analysis as a research method. This concept was introduced by Pritchard (1969), who argued that through this analysis, the most representative authors are identified, how the publications have evolved, the most outstanding articles and authors, and the topics most related to a specific set of publications studies, particular research fields are also identified (Milian et al., 2019). Lim et al. (2022) have highlighted the importance of literature reviews for several significant reasons. First, these reviews provide a basis for proposing new research directions, which enriches the work of researchers. Additionally, they play a crucial role in preventing plagiarism and research duplication by highlighting relevant previous studies. Also, they allow evidence of the appropriate application of theories and the use of previous results, thus contributing to the development of new knowledge in the field. Finally, a systematic literature review offers a comprehensive overview of a specific topic, such as international ambidexterity.

This systematic review was carried out in four clearly defined stages. First, the objective of the research was established. Second, the search strategy was outlined, and relevant data sources were identified. Thirdly, the inclusion and exclusion criteria and the software used for data analysis were established. Finally, the results were analyzed, and a detailed evaluation of the information collected was carried out. The specific details of each phase are presented in the following subsections.

2.1. Keyword selection and data source

Several keywords related to international ambidexterity were identified in a preliminary literature review. The authors discussed and reached a consensus regarding the keywords that would make up the search equation, which was structured as follows. ((TITLE-ABS-KEY (international AND ambidexterity) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (ambidextrous AND internationalization) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ((international AND exploitation AND international AND exploration))). Choosing keywords is a fundamental step in any systematic review, as it determines which articles will be retrieved. The search will be carried out in February 2023 in the Scopus database. This database stands out for its exhaustiveness and broad coverage, as it indexes 66.07% more journals than Web of Science (WoS) and covers a greater spectrum of knowledge areas (Singh et al., 2021). Scopus is one of the main databases, characterized by its rapid growth and academic and scientific quality (Singh et al., 2021). After the initial exploration, a total of 1310 articles available in Scopus were identified.

2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

To ensure high objectivity, defining data quality assessment criteria is essential before carrying out literature selection (Pittaway et al., 2014). Following this premise, we followed the methodology proposed by Soll and Larrick (2009), through which all inclusion and exclusion criteria were determined jointly. The first inclusion criterion established was the literature search published between 2003 and 2023 to cover all relevant articles since the first article related to international ambidexterity, which was the work of Hohenthal et al. (2003). This process resulted in the identification of a total of 1121 documents.

Subsequently, upon examining the titles and summaries of these documents, it was found that several were related to the exploration and exploitation of natural resources. As a result, only those documents were published in Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Decision Sciences, and Psychology. In this way, a final sample of 261 documents was obtained.

Then, to ensure the quality of the review, only peer-reviewed articles published in English were included, excluding other types of documents such as Book Chapters, Books, Conference papers, Review, Conference Review, Erratum, Notes, and Editorial. It was decided to select empirical and conceptual articles to analyze the concept's theoretical development and applicability (Sivarajah et al., 2017). Through extensive review, 193 articles were determined to be suitable for inclusion in the study, and a detailed analysis was carried out, covering aspects such as frequency of publication, annual publications, type of publication, and its source, as well as the geographical distribution. Analysis of authors by document citation, keyword co-occurrence, co-authorship, and bibliographic coupling were also carried out.

In order to identify future research areas in international ambidexterity, a content analysis was carried out using articles belonging to the areas of Business, Administration, and Accounting. To ensure the quality and relevance of the sample, articles from journals located in Quartile 1, according to Scimago, were selected. Therefore, the analysis of future research is based on a set of 91 articles, for which an exhaustive review of the full text was carried out. It is important to note that this review study's search and refinement stages were carried out following the Preferred Reporting for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Moher et al., 2009), as shown in Figure 1.

2.3. Analytical tools used

VOSviewer was used to carry out the network analysis. Various tools, such as CiteSpace, HiteSpace, Gephi, R-Studio, and BibExcel, are available to perform bibliometric analysis. However, VOSviewer is a free option that uses effective mapping techniques, making it easy to generate extensive networks (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Furthermore, previous researchers have used VOSviewer to analyze the literature on ambidexterity, as noted in the study by Ragazou et al. (2022b). Specifically, VOSviewer was used to analyze keyword co-occurrence, co-authorship, and bibliographic coupling.

To identify future research areas, ATLAS TI software was used. This software is suitable for maintaining an overview of the content of articles. From the 91 selected articles, the 'future lines of research' section was extracted, from which a word cloud was created. In this cloud, the concepts that appeared most frequently were identified, and various codes were assigned (a total of 135). Next, we sought to identify how the authors related international ambidexterity and what problems most researchers urged to address. Following the literature, the codes were grouped into seven analysis categories.

3. Results

In relation to the first question, the evolution of scientific production on ambidexterity and the citations received between 2003 and 2023 are shown (Figure 2). The year 2022 was highly produced, with a total of 33 documents. Between 2003 and 2013, there were 47 articles. There was a decrease in publications in 2012, 2017 and 2019. A significant increase was evidenced in 2022, with 17 more publications than in 2020.

Although the annual production has experienced a gradual increase, it is observed that citations were more significant in the early years, when outstanding contributions to the literature were made. For example, in 2007, three of the most cited articles in the literature were published: Dittrich and Duysters (2007), Yalcinkaya et al. (2007), and Barkema and Drogendijk (2007), who established connections between exploration and exploitation in the context of internationalization processes. These works represented 95% of the total citations received that year. Similarly, in 2013, the nine published articles received 605 citations, with the works of Turner et al. (2013) and Hsu et al. (2013), who explored the concept of international ambidexterity. It is important to highlight that in 2004, the article by Graebner (2004) received 391 citations, much higher than the 337 citations received by 21 articles in 2001.

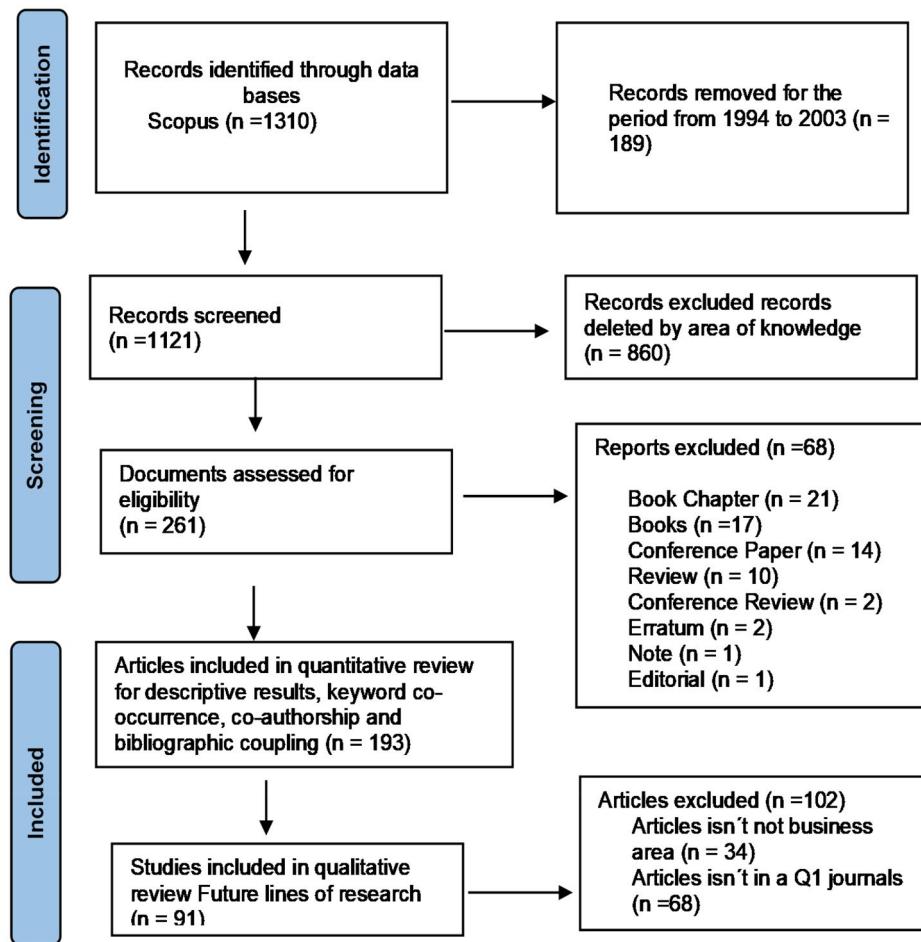


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart. Source: Own elaboration.

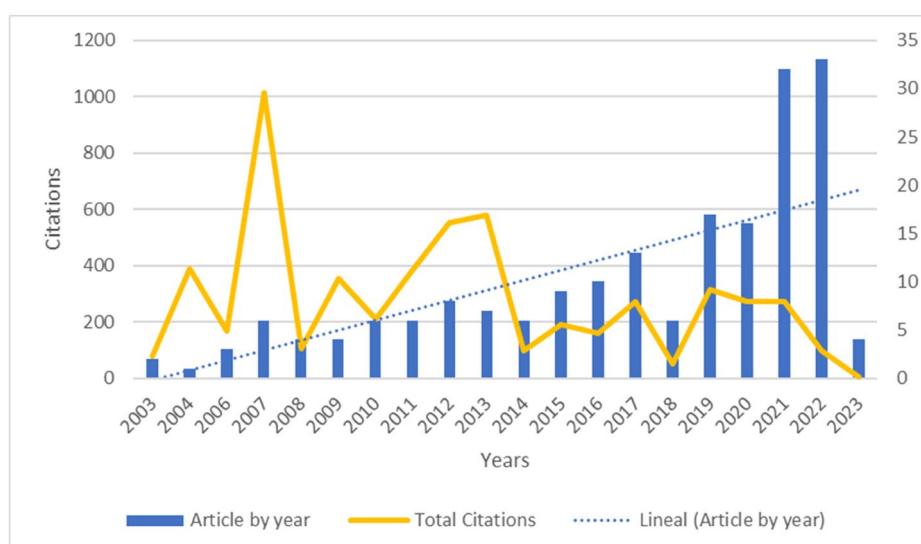


Figure 2. Article and citations per year international ambidexterity. Source: Scopus, 2023.

3.1. Analysis of the most productive journals

On the other hand, in Table 2, the sources where the largest number of documents were found are the International Business Review with 18 articles, the Thunderbird International Business Review and Journal of Business Research with seven documents each, the Journal of International Marketing with 6, International Journal of Human Resource Management, International Marketing Review, Journal of International Business Studies and Journal of World Business with five documents each.

The sources where most of the most cited papers on international ambidexterity have been published were the Journal of International Business Studies, with 549 citations; the Journal of International Marketing has six papers but cited 546 times. Similarly, the Journal of World Business has 508 citations with five papers, followed in third position by the International Business Review with 18 papers and 520 citations. Thus, it is evident that the most cited journals contain a smaller number of documents, as in the Thunderbird International Business Review, with seven documents but only 63 citations. In other words, the most popular and influential journal on international ambidexterity is the Journal of International Business Studies. It should be noted that of the 16 journals that contain 31% of the publications, 88% are quartile 1 in Scimago.

Studies on international ambidexterity have been carried out in 58 countries: 21 European, 20 Asian, 5 African, and 7 Latin American (Figure 3). The countries with the highest contribution of articles are the United States with 27% of documents, the United Kingdom with 22%, and China with 20% of documents, representing approximately 69% of the publications by country. France is next with 5,6% of the total production, followed by Spain with 4,9%, Italy with 4,1%, and Finland with 3,1%; from Latin America, Mexico appears with six publications, Brazil with 5, Colombia with 2, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Bahamas, and Uruguay with one documents each one.

Regarding citations, the United States has 2,144 citations, the United Kingdom has 1,911 citations, and China has 527. However, with four publications, China has four times fewer citations than the United Kingdom. It is followed by the Netherlands with 783, but has only nine documents and surpasses China. France had 479 citations, Italy 420, Denmark 418, Sweden 409, Taiwan 379, Canada 361, Switzerland 269, Spain 231, Austria 231, Russian Federation 176. In Latin America, Brazil stands out with 62, Mexico with 37, and Uruguay with 33. With two documents, Colombia has 20 citations, Chile has 18 citations, Costa Rica has 12.

It was evidenced that international ambidexterity is a highly explored field in the United States, Europe, and mainly the United Kingdom. It is a trend in Asian countries such as China, Taiwan, and Qatar. In the case of Latin America, it is a field under exploration as there are a total of 18 publications that have received 182 citations. This indicates that considerable efforts and awareness should be made to encourage research on international ambidexterity.

Table 2. Most cited sources by number of documents.

Source	Documents	Citations	Q (Scimago)
Journal of International Business Studies	5	549	Q1
Journal of International Marketing	6	546	Q1
International Business Review	18	520	Q1
Journal of World Business	5	508	Q1
European Management Journal	4	330	Q1
Journal of Small Business Management	3	112	Q1
Management International Review	3	109	Q1
International Marketing Review	5	102	Q1
Journal of International Management	4	97	Q1
BRQ Business Research Quarterly	2	81	Q1
Management Decision	3	70	Q1
International Journal Of Human Resource Management	5	69	Q1
Thunderbird International Business Review	7	63	Q1
Journal Of Business Research	7	57	Q1
Cross Cultural And Strategic Management	3	44	Q2
Asia Pacific Journal of Management	2	35	Q1
Multinational Business Review	4	27	Q1
Journal of East Asia And International Law	4	2	Q4

Source: Own elaboration.

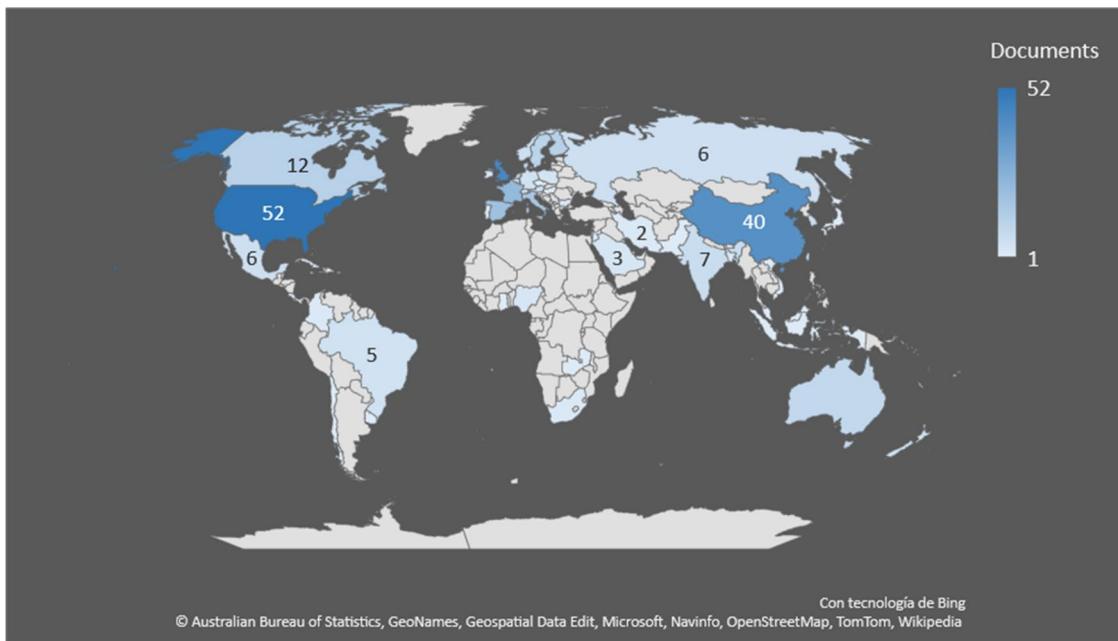


Figure 3. Documents by country. Source: own elaboration.

3.2. Most influential articles

To avoid recency bias and ensure that we do not exclude recently cited articles, we followed the methodology proposed by Calderón-Fajardo et al. (2023). We evaluated the impact of the top 10 articles on the literature through the average number of citations received annually rather than solely based on the total number of citations received. As shown in Table 3, although Graebner (2004) is the author with the highest total number of citations, the highest annual average citation rate corresponds to Shams et al. (2021). Despite being published recently, this article is recognized as the most influential in the field of study. Shams et al. (2021) connected international ambidexterity and strategic agility.

The second place is occupied by the article by Turner et al. (2013), who examined ambidexterity across various levels, including organizational, group, and individual. Stahl and Tung (2015) used exploration and exploitation to explain how cultural diversity among countries encourages exploration while hindering exploitation. Dittrich and Duysters (2007) presented a longitudinal study on open innovation and exploratory and exploitative learning to achieve a multinational company adapted to the market and strategic change. Buccieri et al. (2020) found that ambidextrous innovation and dynamic marketing impact international startups' performance.

Graebner's (2004) contribution to internationalization was the successful implementation of mergers and acquisitions, resolving paradoxical results such as integration, autonomy, and exploration and exploitation. He pointed out that the role of the manager is key to resolving these dilemmas. Yalcinkaya et al. (2007) stated that marketing resources are related to exploitation capabilities, while technological resources arise from exploration capabilities. Prange and Verdier (2011) state that exploration and exploitation capabilities are integral to internationalization success. Luo and Rui (2009) were pioneers in linking ambidexterity with the global expansion of multinational companies in emerging markets. Based on the concept of dynamic capability. Chang and Hughes (2012) found that SMEs can achieve a well-balanced combination of exploratory and exploitative innovations through appropriate organizational structures and the adoption of new leadership styles.

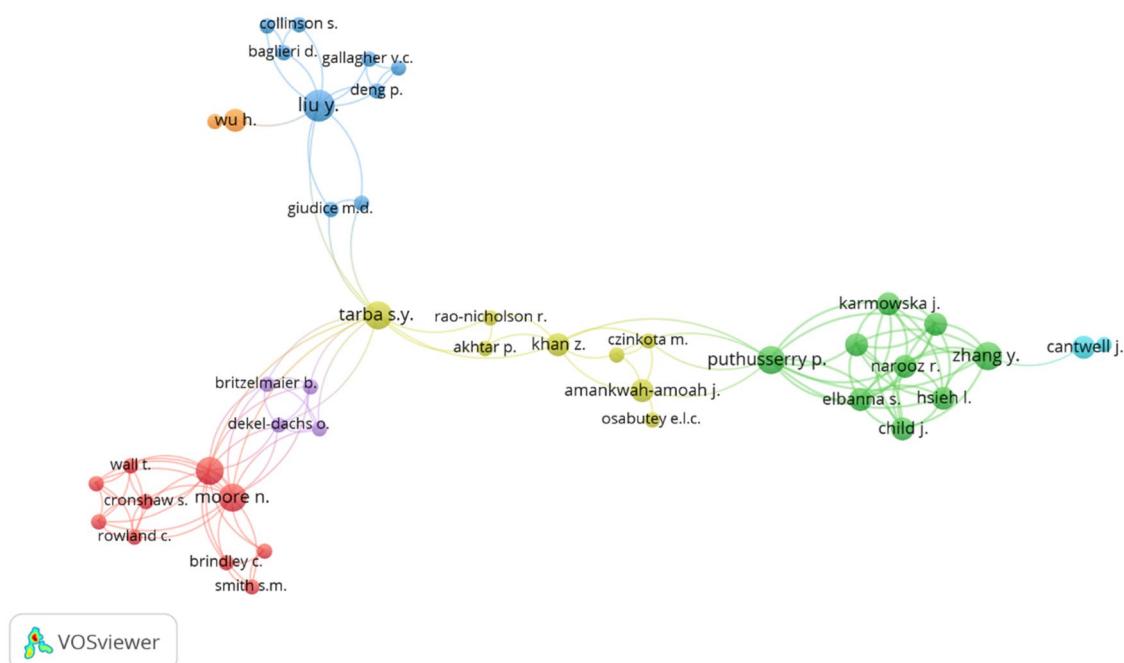
It was possible to identify 156 authors who published articles on international ambidexterity. The authors who presented the greatest academic documents were Christiane Prange, with six documents, and Peng Michael Yao Ping, who published five documents. Seven authors published three documents: Ahammad et al., 2021; Luo, and Moore, N; Puthuserry, P; Stokes et al., 2015; Tarba, S. and Todorov, K. 47 authors published two papers, and 100 authors published one.

Table 3. Top most cited articles on international ambidexterity.

Authors	Titles	Year	Source title	Citations	Citations/year
Shams R.; Vrontis D.; Belyaeva Z.; Ferraris A.; Czinkota M.R.	Strategic agility in international business: A conceptual framework for 'agile' multinationals	2021	Journal of International Management	93	31
Turner N.; Swart J.; Maylor H.	Mechanisms for managing ambidexterity: A review and research agenda	2013	International Journal of Management Reviews	315	28,64
Stahl G.K.; Tung R.L.	Towards a more balanced treatment of culture in international business studies: The need for positive cross-cultural scholarship	2015	Journal of International Business Studies	223	24,78
Dittrich K.; Duysters G.	Networking as a means to strategy change: The case of open innovation in mobile telephony	2007	Journal of Product Innovation Management	377	22,18
Buccieri D.; Javalgi R.G.; Cavusgil E.	International new venture performance: Role of international entrepreneurial culture, ambidextrous innovation, and dynamic marketing capabilities	2020	International Business Review	82	20,5
Graebner M.E.	Momentum and Serendipity: How acquired leaders create value in the integration of technology firms	2004	Strategic Management Journal	391	19,55
Yalcinkaya G.; Calantone R.J.; Griffith D.A.	An examination of exploration and exploitation capabilities: Implications for product innovation and market performance	2007	Journal of International Marketing	331	19,47
Prange C.; Verdier S.	Dynamic capabilities, internationalization processes, and performance	2011	Journal of World Business	248	19,08
Luo Y.; Rui H.	An ambidexterity perspective toward multinational enterprises from emerging economies	2009	Academy of Management Perspectives	282	18,8
Chang Y.-Y.; Hughes M.	Drivers of innovation ambidexterity in small- to medium-sized firms	2012	European Management Journal	198	16,5

Source: Scopus.

3.3. Co-authorship analysis



Source: VOSviewer.

Co-authorship is an indication of collaboration between authors, and the analysis of a co-authorship network allows the analysis of professional connections between scientists (Nabi et al., 2022). In this co-authorship network, seven clusters can be identified, representing collaboration groups between authors. In the context of our research, we examined 198 articles, and despite this number, we observed that the co-authorship network has a small number of nodes. Furthermore, this network is characterized by being dense and disconnected. Among the most prominent authors in the literature on international ambidexterity, Liu maintains a co-authorship collaboration with Tarba, while Tarba has co-authorship ties with Khanz.

On the other hand, Stokes and Moore are the authors who have the greatest number of co-authorship links with other researchers. It is relevant to highlight that authors such as Tarba, Puthusserry, and Khanz greatly influence this network and maintain significant collaboration. Tarba has focused on investigating the micro-foundations of ambidexterity, while Puthusserry and Khanz have focused their studies on ambidexterity in small and medium-sized businesses in emerging economies.

3.4. Keyword analysis

The semantic structure of international ambidexterity can be built based on the keywords that reflect the descriptors selected by both authors and journals. This keyword analysis will allow us to know our field of research. Several steps were followed to analyze the keywords. First, it was established that the word should appear at least four times (in a total of 713 words); three words were discarded because they were repeated, for example, 'exploitation and exploration', 'internationalization', 'dynamic capabilities'. Following this approach, 20 relevant words were chosen to convey conceptual information within the research domain. VOSviewer was employed to visualize the data, and a complete match count of all keywords was conducted, with each match weighted equally. The frequency of occurrence of each keyword is depicted by its corresponding point size. The resulting analysis generated three distinct clusters (refer to Figure 4) encompassing all records in the dataset.

Cluster 1 comprises the exploration and exploitation nodes, with 24 and 23 occurrences, respectively. Both exploration and exploitation are crucial mechanisms for learning in the context of internationalization. March (1991) defines exploration as new possibilities and exploitation as old certainties. It is important to highlight that both capabilities can occur in isolation. A review of the cluster's studies

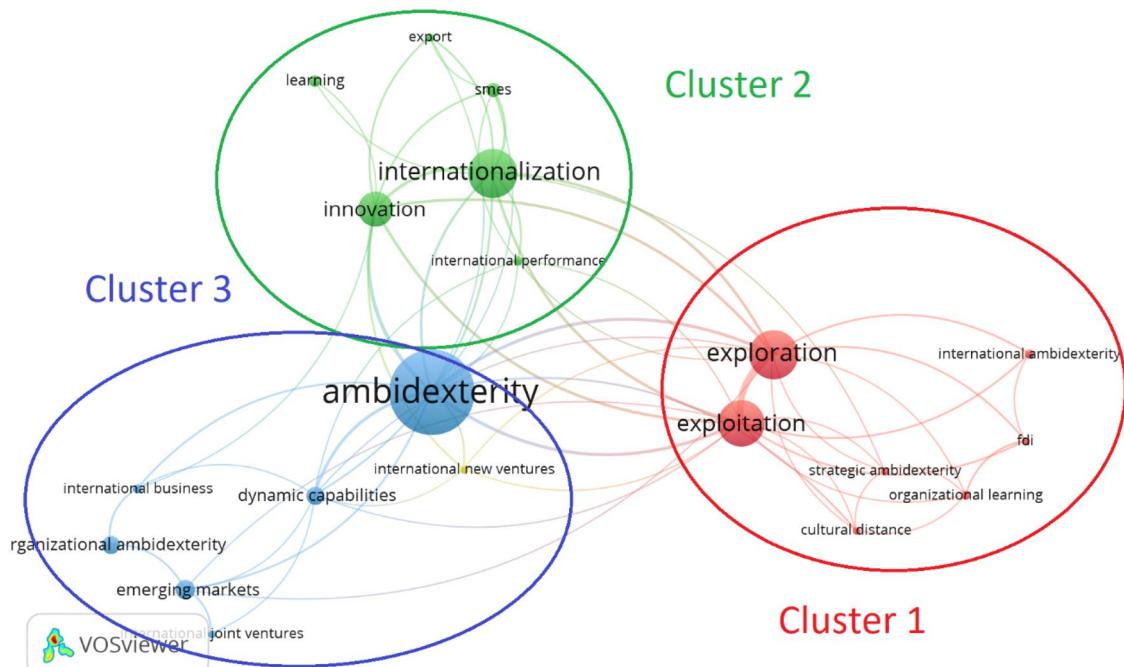


Figure 4. Word cloud graph international ambidexterity. Source: VOSviewer.

revealed that exploration and exploitation significantly impact innovative performance, export performance, and international performance (Jin & Zhou, 2021). However, there are cases where exploration and exploitation act separately and have different effects on yield (Nielsen & Gudergan, 2012; Nölleke-Przybylski et al., 2019), such as a U-shaped relationship (Bruyaka & Prange, 2020).

It is important to highlight that the balance between international exploitation and exploration gives rise to international ambidexterity. This cluster shows that international ambidexterity is more related to multinational companies in emerging markets, mainly to their internationalization strategy (Prange & Zhao, 2018). Studies on exploration and exploitation have been developed in strategic alliances such as Joint Ventures. Empirical studies show that international ambidexterity improves innovative performance (Wu & Chen, 2020; Xiao et al., 2022) and business performance (Hsu et al., 2013).

On the other hand, researchers have explored situational factors such as technological uncertainty, institutions (Xiao et al., 2022), cultural differences (Jin & Zhou, 2021), and top management teams (TMT) (Wu & Chen, 2020) in their research. They have introduced the notion of international cultural ambidexterity as the dynamic ability of a company to effectively navigate both a distant and a proximate culture (Bruyaka & Prange, 2020). Academics point out that FDI tends to prefer geographies with high ambidexterity.

The cluster 2 nodes comprise internationalization (24) and innovation (17). This group examined the correlation between international business, innovation, and ambidexterity (Alayo et al., 2022), utilizing an explore-exploit approach to assess the effect of innovation and internationalization on SME performance (Wu & Chen, 2020). Similarly, they demonstrated how Chinese firms utilize international ambidexterity to foster innovation (Prange & Bruyaka, 2016).

They examined international experience as a characteristic that affects the speed of internationalization, and the researchers found that exporting firms benefit from ambidexterity and improve their performance. In this way, De Noni and Apa (2015) explained that exploratory and exploratory learning could moderate SMEs' export process, improving business performance. From the perspective of the microfoundation of the manager and employees, the mechanisms through which internationalization and innovation contribute to ambidexterity were explained (Liu et al., 2022). Ardito et al. (2019) investigated the positive influence of international alliances on innovation ambidexterity and the moderating role of individual incentives in this relationship.

Bettoli et al. (2022) observe that highly internationalized SMEs are well-positioned to implement ambidextrous strategies to enhance their performance during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, Prange and Verdier (2011) argued that companies with strong dynamic capabilities are better prepared to handle the challenges and opportunities of internationalization and achieve superior performance. Academics (Cui et al., 2014) highlight that contextual factors influence the international business models of SMEs, are shaped by their experience, and require being ambidextrous to be competitive abroad.

Cluster 3, which includes eight constructs, focuses on the 'ambidexterity' node with a frequency of 42. As mentioned above, ambidexterity is a capability that allows two activities to be tackled at the same time that, causes a tradeoff (Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). While exploration and exploitation may reflect the concept of ambidexterity (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004), ambidexterity has developed different approaches. That is why the words from cluster 1, exploration and exploitation, were grouped in isolation from cluster 3.

In this cluster, the researchers focused on ambidextrous innovation and organizational ambidexterity, the third most frequent node with nine appearances. The empirical studies carried out by the researchers of this group demonstrate the positive effects of ambidexterity on performance and knowledge generation in international companies from emerging economies (EMNE). The cluster emphasizes the importance of knowledge management as a critical resource and the need to balance the exploration and exploitation of knowledge to achieve both innovation and operational efficiency (Ubeda-Garcia et al., 2021).

Furthermore, they found that ambidextrous innovation positively impacts the performance of joint ventures, and this relationship can be moderated by the level of trust between partners and resource dependency (Jin & Zhou, 2021). The role of ambidextrous innovation in the performance of international high-tech startups was also studied (Hughes et al., 2010). Environmental innovation was identified as

having key drivers, such as leadership, organizational culture, organizational structure, strategic orientation, external associations, and market orientation (Chang & Hughes, 2012).

Researchers created the concept of external knowledge-seeking ambidexterity (Kraus et al., 2022; Wu & Liu, 2018) and identified through a literature review the factors that affect organizational ambidexterity (Zhou et al., 2020). Researchers point out that companies operating in emerging markets must leverage resources and capabilities and adapt to institutional environments to achieve organizational ambidexterity (Batra & Dhir, 2022; Aviotskii & Tensaout, 2022).

Thus, dynamic capabilities are important to international companies in shaping the nature of ambidextrous international strategies. Peng and Lin (2021) introduced the concept of dynamic internationalization capacity and stated that this capacity favors companies that face rapidly changing global environments. The authors affirmed a favorable correlation between an international network, the dynamic capability of internationalization, and international performance. Similarly, Peng and Shao (2021) validated that there is a positive relationship between market orientation, learning orientation, and international dynamic capabilities.

Researchers (Elo & Silva, 2022; Shams et al., 2021) propose strategic agility as a concept that enables multinationals to develop dynamic capabilities and enhance their international performance. Entrepreneurial strategic agility is associated with an increased likelihood of exporting. The third cluster introduced novel concepts such as resilience, which impacts international ambidexterity (Stokes et al., 2019), and new approaches like the study of dynamic capabilities in the internationalization of companies and agri-food cooperatives integrated into clusters (Fayos et al., 2017).

The three clusters unanimously focused on several theories. First, the theory of resources and capabilities was highlighted, which emphasizes the role of a company's resources and capabilities (Aviotskii & Tensaout, 2022; Elo & Silva, 2022; Hultman et al., 2023; Jin & Zhou, 2021). Second, the ambidexterity theory was discussed, which suggests that companies need to balance exploration and exploitation to succeed (Jin & Zhou, 2021; Nölleke-Przybylski et al., 2019; Wu & Chen, 2020; Zhou et al., 2020). Third, the theory of dynamic capabilities was addressed, emphasizing the importance of companies being able to adapt to changing market conditions (Tolstoy et al., 2022; Prange & Verdier, 2011; Bruyaka & Prange, 2020; Ochie et al., 2022).

Additionally, the exploration-exploitation theory (Wu & Chen, 2020) and institutional theory provide insights into how social norms, values, and beliefs can shape behavior and organizational outcomes (Alayo et al., 2022; Batra & Dhir, 2022; Elo & Silva, 2022), were also addressed. Finally, the contingency theory was discussed, suggesting that the relationship between exploitation and exploration depends on the organization's specific characteristics and the environment (Xiao et al., 2022; Bettoli et al., 2022).

It is important to note that each cluster also addressed additional theories. For instance, in cluster 1, researchers utilized the organizational learning theory (Chung & Ho, 2021) to argue that learning is a crucial process that enables companies to acquire, develop, and utilize new knowledge and capabilities. They also referred to the theory of transaction costs (Jin & Zhou, 2021) to demonstrate that companies encounter unique challenges in managing innovation activities due to their intricate ownership and governance structure. The cultural distance theory was also employed to highlight that cultural differences between the country of origin and the host country can impact the success of international business activities (Bruyaka & Prange, 2020).

On the other hand, in cluster 2, the academics addressed other theories, such as those based on knowledge, which emphasize the importance of knowledge and learning in innovation and internationalization. The family business theory emphasizes the importance of family participation in the management and governance of family businesses. Social exchange theory (Ardito et al., 2019) and social network theory stress the importance of social connections and communication (Hultman et al., 2023).

In cluster 3, the other theory they used was social capital to explain how companies can take advantage of social networks and relationships (Elo & Silva, 2022; Kraus et al., 2022). Network theory (Zhang & Zhang, 2022) and resource dependency theory (Jin & Zhou, 2021; Zhang & Zhang, 2022). The theory of organizational improvisation explains how companies can respond to changing situations (Zhang & Zhang, 2022). The theory of organizational innovation (Borini et al., 2022) is the theory of the reverse transfer of knowledge that explains the process by which knowledge is transferred from subsidiaries to the parent company and the factors that facilitate or hinder this process (Borini et al., 2022).

Regarding the methodology, the authors mostly used quantitative studies with techniques such as structural equation modeling (SEM) (Jin & Zhou, 2021; Khan et al., 2022; Lafuente et al., 2021; Wu & Chen, 2020); polynomial regression, multiple regression. From the qualitative point of view, the systematic review of the literature (Xiao et al., 2021; Chang & Hughes, 2012), case study (Chung & Ho, 2021; Elo & Silva, 2022; Ochie et al., 2022) and multiple case studies (Avioutsou & Tensaout, 2022; Fayos et al., 2017; Nölleke-Przybylski et al., 2019)

3.5. Analysis of authors by document citation

A bibliographic linkage was performed to measure the similarity between documents, thus identifying whether there is a probability that two or more documents deal with related topics. It also helps to identify the most influential authors. To carry out this analysis, the search type is limited to articles we obtained 193. The minimum number of citations was 7. To evaluate 104 articles, 99 articles were connected. The VosViewer program classified 5 clusters, as shown in Figure 5.

Cluster 1 (red color) is the most cited Graebner (2004) with 391, Prange and Verdier (2011) with 248 citations, and Stahl and Tung (2015) with 224 citations. In this cluster, researchers analyzed exploration and exploitation from the perspective of international opportunities (Evers & Andersson, 2021; Kock et al., 2010). Efrat and Shoham (2013) demonstrated a strong orientation of Born Global towards the exploration and exploitation of international opportunities for the choice of entry modes. Some researchers evaluated how religion (Elo & Volovelsky, 2017), the structure and content of interpersonal social networks (Masiello & Izzo, 2019), and the previous experience of the founders (Faroque et al., 2021) affect the exploration and exploitation of international opportunities.

In this cluster, several researchers have conducted analyses from the perspective of international dynamic capabilities that contribute to improving performance in internationalization contexts. Some of these studies include the work of Prange and Verdier (2011) and Han and Celly (2008), which have explored how these dynamic capabilities can positively influence firm performance in an international context. Likewise, research such as that of Hsieh et al. (2019) and Lin and Si (2019) have examined how these dynamic capabilities can accelerate the internationalization process. Furthermore, Monferrer et al. (2015) demonstrated that the dynamic capabilities of exploration and exploitation influence the network market orientation and international performance of Born Global firms.

It is relevant to highlight that most of the studies in this cluster focused on the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Lowik et al. (2012) suggest that smaller companies can improve the

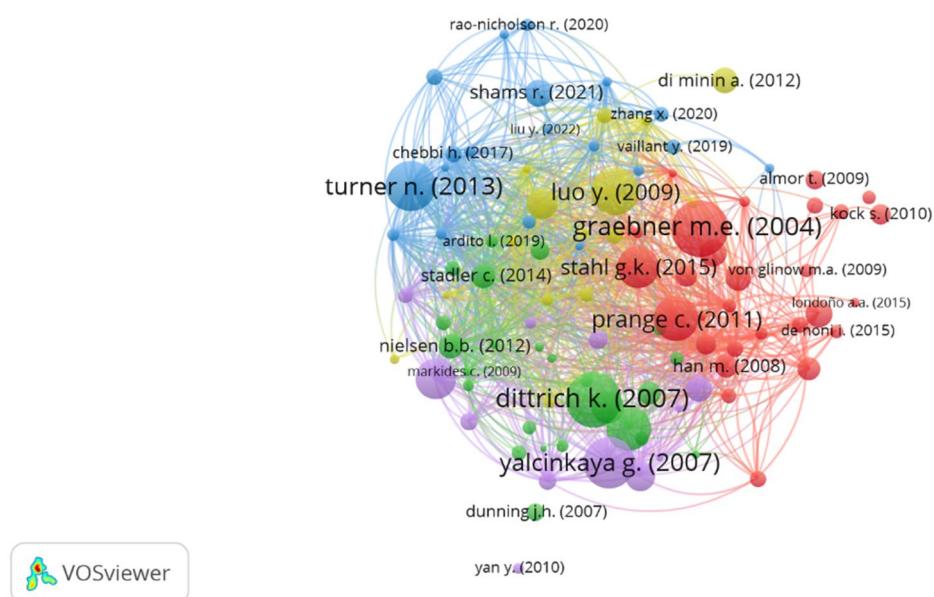


Figure 5. Cluster by bibliographic linkage. Source: Vosviewer.

management of ambidexterity in strategic alliances by investing in the exploration of strong ties instead of increasing their network of weak ties to increase efficiency in this area.

In cluster 2, identified in green, the authors have established relationships between exploration and exploitation and companies' entry modes in international markets. Within this cluster, two widely cited articles stand out: the work of Dittrich and Duysters (2007), with 378 citations, and that of Barkema and Drogendijk (2007), with 251 citations. Nielsen and Gudergan (2012) have argued that exploration and exploitation are conflicting strategies, advocating their separation in the formation of international strategic alliances to achieve better results. Lucena (2016), on the other hand, has shown that finding a balance between exploration and exploitation in technological alliances can positively impact innovation flows.

Dunning et al. (2007) have shown that franchises that seek assets tend to focus on exploration, while those that seek markets tend to exploit. For their part, Madanoglu et al. (2017) have highlighted that applying both exploratory and exploitative learning is essential in selecting franchise partners to improve performance. Wang and Altinay (2008) have shown that international franchisors that incorporate both exploratory and exploitative learning processes in partner selection tend to achieve a balance between both strategies, especially when facing significant cultural differences. Tokman et al. (2007) have shown that local firms can participate in international joint ventures in two different ways: through a learning orientation (exploration) or through strategic behavior (exploitation). This highlights how the tension between exploration and exploitation can be managed through different approaches in entry modes to international markets (Bandeira-de-Mello et al., 2016).

Barkema and Drogendijk (2007) suggest that sequential internationalization strategies remain relevant and that companies must balance exploitation and exploration in their internationalization process. In this context, Schemeil (2013) argues that the success of international organizations is determined by their ability to strike a balance between performance and resilience, exploitation and exploration, and autonomy and cooperation.

In Cluster 3 (blue), researchers explore the microfoundations that help multinational companies become ambidextrous. The most cited article is by Turner et al. (2013) with 315. Lee et al. (2020) state that knowledge management ambidexterity impacts the performance of multinationals. For their part, Liu et al. (2022) and Pereira et al. (2021) explored how the processes, structures, and mechanisms of microfoundations improve the ambidexterity of multinationals from emerging countries. Chebbi et al. (2017) examined how ambidextrous leadership is a fundamental element of multinationals from emerging countries. Rao-Nicholson et al. (2020) investigated how HR practices influence organizational ambidexterity in cross-border mergers and acquisitions.

Stokes et al. (2019) proposed a conceptual resilience framework through organizational ambidexterity using microfoundations. Zhan et al. (2020) presented Mid-View thinking as a microfoundation of ambidexterity. Lafuente et al. (2021) found that specific international experience and acquired experience are relevant micro-foundations of international business expansion.

The authors also address paradox and agility as synonymous with ambidexterity. For example, Beletskiy and Fey (2021) applied paradox theory to argue that ambidextrous human resources are better prepared to adopt corporate management practices. Ahmed et al. (2022) developed a framework to explain how strategic agility through exploitation and exploration influences the international performance of companies operating in highly dynamic and competitive environments. From a paradoxical perspective, Lannon and Walsh (2020) improved the understanding of how knowledge exploration and exploitation can be mutually reinforcing and coexist as a duality.

Cluster 4 (yellow color), the most cited article, is that of Luo and Rui (2009), with 282 citations. In this cluster, research demonstrated ambidexterity's impact on companies' performance in emerging economies. Ubeda-Garcia et al. (2021), for example, confirmed a direct, positive, and significant relationship between ambidexterity and performance; the same result was obtained by Wu and Chen (2020). Zhou et al. (2016) analyzed the effects of ambidextrous capabilities on innovation and internationalization performance in a cross-cultural environment. Hsu et al. (2013) stated that international experience should enhance the firm's ability to implement international ambidexterity and intensify the positive effects on performance. In contrast, Sousa et al. (2020) revealed both negative and positive effects of exploitation, while they found no significant effects of exploration on international sales performance.

Deng et al. (2020) point out that structural international ambidexterity is more promising than sequential ambidexterity in international companies from emerging economies. Zhou et al. (2020) stated that in the initial stages, these companies must develop structural ambidexterity, and to enter foreign markets quickly, market ambidexterity (market exploration and exploitation) is better. For their part, Wu and Liu (2018) say that multinationals must combine the search for local and international knowledge to improve their internationalization process.

Cluster 5 (purple), the article by Yalcinkaya et al. (2007), stands out with 331 citations. The researchers analyzed the ambidexterity of innovation in the context of internationalization. Buccieri et al. (2020) explored the role of international business culture in enhancing the ambidextrous innovation and dynamic marketing capabilities of INVs, thereby improving their performance. Alayo et al. (2022) evaluate how family SMEs develop ambidextrous innovations for internationalization. Chang and Hughes (2012) analyzed the mediating role of ambidextrous innovation between structural, context, and leadership characteristics. Chang and Gotcher (2020) included ambidexterity in environmental innovation, and finally, Lu Jin et al. (2016) state that exploration and exploitation are related to innovation performance.

4. Future lines of research

As noted above, systematic literature reviews on ambidexterity have focused on showing research results (Batra & Dhir, 2022), the approaches, antecedents, and consequences of ambidexterity in the international context (Roth & Corsi, 2023). However, an in-depth analysis of future lines of research on international ambidexterity has yet to be carried out. To fill this gap, a content analysis was conducted to recognize the concepts guiding new research lines.

In this analysis, it was possible to identify how the authors related the concept and the issues most researchers urged to address. According to the literature, the 135 codes found in the 91 articles could be grouped into seven analysis categories: type of ambidexterity, organizational factors, internationalization, context, effects, relationship and capabilities, innovation, and network. Below, Table 4 shows each category with their respective codes representing future research topics.

4.1. Ambidexterity type

The ambidexterity type category groups the approaches with which international ambidexterity should be related. According to Vahlne and Jonsson (2017), ambidexterity can be achieved if exploration and exploitation are combined sequentially, structurally, or contextual. Structural ambidexterity separates exploration and exploitation through organizational structures. Contextual ambidexterity can arise if employees engage in exploitation and exploration simultaneously, depending on the context given by the manager. For its part, sequential ambidexterity seeks to ensure that exploration and exploitation occur at different times and not both at the same time (Roth & Corsi, 2023).

While Deng et al. (2020) state that structural international ambidexterity is better for international companies from emerging economies, Tang et al. (2020) argue that when resources are limited, the best option is sequential ambidexterity to benefit from both activities. Prange (2012) suggests that conflicts should be managed simultaneously and not so much structural options. The challenge for new research lies in matching the strategy of multinationals from emerging countries with their resources and capabilities.

For its part, temporal ambidexterity seeks to reconcile the short and long-term tensions. Emerging markets are characterized by providing long-term opportunities. Therefore, multinationals can seek to materialize their objectives in more stable markets in the short term. Barkema and Drogendijk (2007) found that international exploitation in similar host countries brings short-term benefits, while international exploration in dissimilar host countries generates long-term benefits. When multinationals are ambidextrous, they can prosper over time (Wang et al., 2019). Future research should include temporal international ambidexterity to manage short- and long-term objectives in the internationalization process.

Table 4. Categories of future lines of research on international ambidexterity.

Categories	Codes
Ambidexterity type	Temporal, structural, contextual, sequential
Internationalization	Born Global internationalization, internationalization culture, internationalization processes, internationalization strategies, internationalization speed, and early internationalization
Organizational factors	Environment, accumulated experience, industry, export experience, and the firm's international experience. intellectual capital, differences in hierarchy levels, composition of the TMT, functions, age and international experience TMT, attributes of the TMT, cultural influences on the members of the TMT, self-efficacy, mindsets of entrepreneurs and managers, leadership, communication, engagement and employee empowerment, resilience, professional impact, cognitive reorientation, gender and education, new culture and identity, organizational culture, organizational structure, linguistic boundaries
Context	Environmental turbulence, competitive intensity, market turbulence, institutional distance, culture, home country institutions, country, high market uncertainty, Asian, African, and Latin American, emerging markets, country culture, institutional and cultures contexts, institutional gaps, technological turbulence, coordination mechanisms, regional or national context, 'socio-spatial contexts.'
Effects	Resilience, panarchy, performance, leadership, absorptive capacity, imitative learning, market-political ambidexterity, market orientation, learning orientation, competitive intensity
Relations and capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship between international ambidexterity and innovation and financial performance • Relationship between market-based learning and dynamic capabilities • Relationship between international ambidexterity and sustainability objectives • Relationship among co-production, environmental innovation, ambidexterity, and eco-innovation <p>Relationships between Dynamic Capabilities and early internationalization</p> <p>Dynamic capacities, Dynamic Marketing Capabilities, Dynamic Management Capabilities, Ambidextrous Capabilities, Marketing Capabilities, network capacity, dual network capacity, exploration and exploitation capacity, and capabilities internationalization dynamics</p>
Innovation and networks	<p>Eco-innovation, environmental innovation ambidexterity, international ambidexterity and innovation performance, open innovation, SMEs innovation and internationalization dynamics, innovation ambidexterity, and innovation performance.</p> <p>Interpersonal social networks, complex networks, and global networks of MNEs</p>

Source: self-made.

4.2. Internationalization

The category of internationalization groups together issues that, from the theory of international business, must be addressed with international ambidexterity. A fundamental variable in this category is the speed of internationalization in reaching foreign markets quickly or late. In some cases, moderate and balanced internationalization benefits international ambidexterity (Hsu et al., 2013). In other cases, ambidexterity improves the speed of internationalization (Lin & Si, 2019). Future studies can evaluate whether the speed of internationalization is determined by ambidexterity.

On the other hand, for Ahammad et al. (2019), most studies on internationalization have focused on Born Global. However, studies on ambidexterity are fruitful in companies that make foreign investments. Multinationals from emerging countries can benefit from FDI in advanced economies and thus reduce the gap in innovation and technology (Bandeira-de-Mello et al., 2016), which is why more studies related to this entry mode are requested.

Furthermore, entry modes are another important factor of ambidexterity because it can refute or support exploitation and exploration (Zhang et al., 2020). Ciasullo et al. (2020) state that entry mode could be included as a moderating variable to understand in which situations the effects of international ambidexterity change direction. It is still unknown what type of entry mode increases exploration and exploitation.

Mainly, researchers point out that ambidexterity is typical of multinational companies from emerging countries because these companies face the great responsibility of being foreign and the disadvantages of being newcomers, so it can be explored how ambidexterity contributes or alleviates the challenges of internationalization (Khan et al., 2022). It can be investigated whether the results of these multinationals can be generalized to other countries.

4.3. Organizational factors

The category of organizational factors groups those elements of the company's structure, hierarchy, and organization. The category has 24 research topics, and it is highlighted that the studies must consider

the experience of the companies, specifically the MNES; likewise, the development stage of the company, country of origin, and location can be included.

Current studies indicate that international ambidexterity is limited to manufacturing industries. Whether ambidexterity applies to most industries, such as e-commerce, healthcare, information technology, biotech, and biopharmaceutical industries, the affiliation with conglomerates can facilitate international ambidexterity because the clusters are more endowed with resources (Gaur et al., 2014).

In this category, theoretical and practical implications of the micro-foundational foundations of international ambidexterity can be found. Within this category, the following stand out: organizational culture, routines, work groups, management teams, senior executives, the type of leadership (Escandon-Barbosa & Salas-Paramo, 2022), and the organizational structure. Furthermore, research must consider the impact of professional, cultural, and linguistic boundaries to broaden our understanding of the nature of, and possible responses to, international ambidexterity.

Likewise, the attributions of the Senior Management Teams (TMT) must be studied separately and together; for example, the dynamics between the composition of a TMT and the degree of international ambidexterity can be explored. An extensive TMT generates coordination and communication problems (García-Granero et al., 2018). The roles, ages, gender, education, and experiences of TMTs abroad are important aspects of diversity that lead to ambidextrous decisions (Huang et al., 2021).

A call is made for research on international ambidexterity that includes leadership, communication, commitment, empowerment (Ochie et al., 2022), cognitive reorientation, intellectual capital, self-efficacy, and individual resilience (Zhang & Cantwell, 2011). It would also be useful to understand the role that the mindset of entrepreneurs and managers (Bettoli et al., 2023) plays in international ambidexterity.

4.4. Context

In line with what was proposed by Liu et al. (2022), the context category was identified, which groups together the dimensions that can affect the results of international ambidexterity. As evidenced in the keyword analysis, China is the country in which the most research on international ambidexterity has been carried out, so it would be useful to verify the results of multinationals from other countries and regions (Xiao et al., 2022) such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America (Liu et al., 2022).

Companies' regional, national, and international contexts should be analyzed, and the contextual role of institutional gaps and their impacts on ambidexterity and international business should be investigated. Include institutional differences, whether regulatory, normative, or cognitive, and coordination mechanisms between foreign and local partners. Also, material factors include the industry's technical knowledge base and national institutional support.

The literature identified that cultural and institutional differences excessively influence the performance of exploration and exploitation (Nielsen & Gudergan, 2012). Lee et al. (2020) proposed testing the moderating role of cultural dimensions, such as individualism-collectivism, power distance, masculinity, and long-term orientation. By mixing cultural dimensions with ambidexterity (Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013), it is possible to identify countries more prone to international exploration and exploitation. Research that includes international cultural ambidexterity should be included to reduce the negative effects related to cultural distance (Bruyaka & Prange, 2020).

Future studies may wish to create formal measures in various 'socio-spatial contexts' (i.e. based on home country and host country). It also includes moderating variables such as technological and market turbulence (Nagy et al., 2022), market uncertainty, competitive intensity, and regional and country cultures.

4.5. Effects

In the effects category, the variables that can affect international ambidexterity were identified. One of the most mentioned is the innovation performance that can be affected by international ambidexterity;

the mediation mechanism of international ambidexterity and innovative performance can also be explored (Xiao et al., 2022). Likewise, variables with objective measures of performance are proposed in future research (Chen & Eweje, 2022), such as financial performance, business performance, export performance, international performance, and organizational performance.

Resilience and panarchy have gained significance after the pandemic and can be linked to international ambidexterity (Khan et al., 2022). Resilience pertains to the capacity of multinational corporations to confront challenges and adjust to survive. Meanwhile, panarchy describes the evolutionary feature of complex adaptive systems, which focuses on the critical elements that influence or trigger the reorganization and transformation of a system (Allen et al., 2014).

Kumalaningrum et al. (2023) that the main difficulties faced by companies in developing countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic are related to the shortage of raw materials, which requires better management of supply chains. Likewise, changes in demand have changed due to social restrictions. Facts that require companies to explore new ideas while maintaining their business model, that is, to be ambidextrous to survive and recover from such circumstances.

Some researchers have linked ambidexterity to resilience. The case of Trieu et al. (2023) demonstrated how dynamic capabilities such as ambidexterity and resilience can improve the performance of SMEs in dynamic environments. Belhadi et al. (2022) used ambidexterity to analyze how additive manufacturing allows the supply chain to be efficient and resilient at the same time in the post-pandemic era. Makona et al. (2023) verified that the ambidexterity of innovation promotes resilience. However, studies related to these variables and international ambidexterity must be conducted. It is feasible to examine how organizational structures enable resilience and panarchy through international ambidexterity (Khan et al., 2022).

4.6. Relations and capabilities

Some authors propose to relate international ambidexterity to marketing from different approaches: international marketing agility, industrial marketing, international marketing and risk marketing, and online marketing capabilities. Another important variable is relational learning and imitative learning (Magnani & Zucchella, 2021). Within the moderating and controlling variables are the accumulated experience and the export experience. The moderating role of absorptive capacity in international ambidexterity can be studied.

The relationships category clusters the main relationships that can be further investigated, including the association between international ambidexterity and innovation and financial performance by analyzing a wide range of companies. The link between market-based learning, dynamic capabilities, and the correlation between international ambidexterity and sustainability objectives. Ciasullo et al. (2020) recommend exploring whether the connection between international ambidexterity and sustainability goals differs across various industries where multinational corporations operate. The connections between co-production, environmental innovation, ambidexterity, eco-innovation, and the relationship between dynamic capabilities and early internationalization (speed and scale) can be further examined.

4.7. Innovation and networks

The category of international ambidexterity is associated with innovation and networks. In terms of innovation, future research should focus on the relationship between ambidexterity, innovation networks, open innovation, and participation in crowdsourcing. As for networks, researchers suggest examining the different functions of network members and their impact on profitability, analyzing complex networks, global multinational networks, and social networks. It is recommended that future studies explore the content of relations between companies from the perspective of networks or clusters (Peng & Shao, 2021).

Most studies agree that longitudinal research is necessary to illustrate the long-term benefits of international ambidexterity (Deng et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021). To advance theoretical development, Liu et al. (2022) propose adopting an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach to investigating the multi-faceted micro-foundations for international innovation and businesses and utilizing methodological

pluralism and research integrity. A comprehensive examination of social phenomena from multiple theoretical perspectives can be achieved by using a variety of research methods, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods.

5. Conclusions and discussions

In the context of globalization and the unprecedented competitive environment in which multinational companies from developing countries find themselves, they require 'international ambidexterity' in developing their strategies, allowing them to carry out simultaneous exploitation and exploration tasks. These multinationals can take advantage of ambidexterity during the internationalization process to improve their international performance. Given the relevance of the topic, this document aims to provide an overview of the existing literature on international ambidexterity and the identification of the main authors, journals, topics, most productive countries, and future lines of research.

This study set out to address three research questions: What has been the evolution and productivity of research? What are the intellectual interactions and structural connections of authors and themes? Furthermore, what are the potential areas for future research?

Regarding the first question, it should be noted that scientific production has increased mainly since 2019 and with greater productivity in 2022. The country-level findings reveal that the United States, the United Kingdom, and China are leading the way in research on this topic. However, Latin American countries such as Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia have begun to develop increasingly relevant research on the subject. We found that the International Business Review, The Thunderbird International Business Review, and the Journal of Business Research concentrate most of the articles.

We highlight that the main theories that researchers associate with international ambidexterity are the theory of resources and capabilities, the theory of dynamic capabilities, the theory of ambidexterity, the theory of exploration-exploitation, the institutional theory, and the theory of contingency. Regarding methodologies, the quantitative studies mostly used structural equations, while the qualitative studies mainly focused on case studies.

Regarding the second question, the analysis of keywords and the bibliographic coupling show that although both exploration and exploitation have been shown to promote internationalization and impact the performance of multinationals, international ambidexterity has been proven in multinationals from emerging countries and mainly affects the strategy for internationalization. Studies have included contingent variables of international ambidexterity, such as culture, context, and environmental uncertainty, and ambidexterity has been related to agile and paradoxical strategies.

There is a winning triad: international business, innovation, and ambidexterity that improves international SMEs' innovative and export performance. In the same way, there are catalysts of ambidexterity from micro-foundation, such as individual incentives and knowledge management of human capital. It should be noted that the main studies related to international ambidexterity were based on organizational ambidexterity and innovative ambidexterity, demonstrating its impact on Joint Ventures, mergers and acquisitions, New International Companies, and Born Global.

In addition, we identified a very important emerging theme for the study of ambidexterity in the international context, which is the introduction of international dynamic capabilities, which Peng and Lin (2021) define as a higher-order construction, encompassing international exploration and international exploitation to achieve not only the performance but also the survival of SMEs from emerging countries in international markets.

Finally, the third question sought to answer future lines of research. We suggest that scholars focus their studies on international ambidexterity, primarily on international SMEs from emerging economies. Addressing seven categories, the study categories were found in the present study. The type of ambidexterity that is intended to be addressed must be identified, including key variables of internationalization, such as speed and internationalization processes, and company variables, such as international experience and the immediate environment of the multinational. The micro-foundation includes variables of the TMT, the organizational culture, and the organizational structure. Mainly, the new research on international ambidexterity must remember the context and include the turbulence of the environment, the institutional framework, the culture of each country, and progress in studies in Africa and Latin

America. There are emerging themes such as resilience, panarchy, and sustainability. Open innovation and international networks that have formed international companies cannot be ignored.

Research shows that multinationals from developing economies with an international orientation of ambidexterity will generate better dynamic capabilities to survive in the international context. Ambidexterity is a tool to reduce negative factors and, therefore, help to accelerate internationalization. It is concluded that the study in this field is in a period of development, mainly in international SMEs from Latin American and African countries, and many problems can be addressed in future research, taking into account the seven categories proposed in this research.

The conventional theories of international firms and dynamic capabilities have highlighted the significance of exploitation strategies and the resulting implications for firms active in international markets. However, in the current competitive environment, multinational corporations must be ambidextrous. Despite this, there needs to be more systematic research on international ambidexterity. This study attempts to fill this knowledge gap.

International ambidexterity involves effectively balancing both exploratory and exploitative capabilities in a company's foreign expansion. Firms must prioritize exploitation to ensure their viability, while exploration is necessary to secure their future competitiveness. As ambidextrous firms are more adaptable and better suited to navigate uncertain environments, researchers should continue focusing on this study area. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the various facets of international ambidexterity can aid in predicting and comprehending the antecedents, outcomes, and contingencies related to international business practices across different levels. We urge scholars and practitioners to contribute to this crucial and compelling research agenda.

6. Theoretical and practical contributions

Bibliometric analysis makes several contributions to the literature on ambidexterity. A theoretical approach to international ambidexterity was carried out based on the theory of resources and capabilities, dynamic capabilities, international strategy, and business theory. A balance of research within the field of studies was shown, and future lines of research were organized into nine categories. Thus identifying the type of ambidexterity that should be related to international exploitation and exploration strategies. The organizational factors must be evaluated, including the micro-foundations essential for success in international markets. Likewise, it includes the context, mainly cultural and institutional variables. Some relationships that can be addressed from the perspective of marketing, open innovation, networks, and sustainability stand out. Finally, our findings demonstrate that international ambidexterity is diversifying into other branches of research, such as international cultural ambidexterity, geographic ambidexterity, and international dynamic capabilities. We hope to fill the gap in new research in this field by providing a systematic analysis.

Regarding practical implications, it is shown that international ambidexterity is a promising field for multinationals from emerging countries. In addition, some internal and external factors have been identified that must be evaluated to support international exploration and exploitation activities. These factors range from management teams, organizational culture, international experience, environmental uncertainty, cultural and institutional distance of countries, as well as interpersonal social networks and a network of international business partners. Therefore, managers of multinationals must combine their internal and external factors with international ambidexterity to improve their performance and internationalization process.

7. Limitations

The literature review is biased by the review of articles, books, and book chapters that were omitted. Also, the database used was Scopus, due to its scope, it may not include other important research. Other databases, such as Web of Science, not indexed in Scopus, can be explored. Although an objective criterion was sought in the selection of articles, the subjectivity of the authors is not ruled out in the review of future research. The indicators and clusters are associated, although they are associated with the constructs, the scope of the study did not allow for, for example, a meta-analysis, a conceptual

review, or hypotheses relevant to the field of study. Another limitation is the sampling period, which was limited to articles published between 2003 and February 2023. This did not capture previous research that could have been interesting and new trends that have emerged since that date. Therefore, future revisions may include earlier dates and expand the search equation to 'international dynamic capabilities'.

Ethical approval

All authors accept the consent to participate is completely voluntary. The research may not be of direct benefit to authors. The signed consent to publish gives the publisher the permission of the author to publish the work.

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Data availability statement

The availability of data and material will be send as a request if the reviewers consider.

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