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## Offer Formation by Foreign Entities in the Service Sector in Poland. Between Standardisation and Adaptation

### Summary

The growing importance of the service sector in economies, with the simultaneous intensification of competitive phenomena, prompt service enterprises to undertake expansion into foreign markets. Making the decision concerning internationalisation is connected not only with the choice of the target market, but also the concept of marketing activities carried out therein, including those related to the shape of service offer. There ought to be resolved the dilemma connected with the scope of its standardisation. The aim of the article is to identify the degree of standardisation of the services provided in the Polish market by entities with foreign capital and to determine the impact of the variables characterising the organisation on its propensity to standardise or to adapt its service offer. The basis for considerations is findings of the empirical survey among managers of the services enterprises with foreign capital operating in Poland. They show their high propensity to full or partial standardisation of the service offer; however, there is not any statistically significant differentiation of this process depending on the features of the service companies in question. The article is of research nature.

**Key words:** enterprise internationalisation, services, service enterprises, service offer standardisation, service offer adaptation.

**JEL codes:** D22, F23, L80, M21, M31

### Introduction

A characteristic feature of the contemporary economies is the fact they base their development on the tertiary sector, i.e. services. The servicisation processes concern all economies. The more they are developed, the faster are the processes therein. In effect, the share of services in creating gross value added reaches in some countries more than 80%. In 2016, among all countries of the European Union, that level was achieved by five countries (the United Kingdom, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, and Luxembourg; the latter with the share of as much as 87.4%); in case of further twelve countries, the share oscillated between 70% and 80%; in case of ten, services produced from 60% to 70% of gross value added, and only in case of two countries, this ratio was below 60% (the Czech Republic and Ireland). In Poland, gross value added produced by the entities registered in service sections accounted at that time-period for 64.2%. At the same time, the statistical data show that services have the biggest share in the number of employees – in 2016, they generated in Poland 58.3% of all jobs (GUS 2017).

The growing interdependences between economies result in expansion of economic entities into foreign markets. This is also true in case of service companies. They undertake economic activities abroad influenced by various motives and carry out them in various ways. It is also proper to pay here attention to the growth of the share of services in international trade. Their growing role in international transactions is connected with the processes occurring in the contemporary world stemming from the civilizational development and globalisation. The most important include (Szukalski 2009, pp. 17-23; Żabiński 2009, pp. 16-22; Kłosiński 2011, p. 40; Pluta-Olearnik 2013, p. 92) the following:

- the growth of affluence of societies whose consequences are changes in the patterns of behaviours related to the ongoing servicisation of consumption and the accompanying growth of expectations as to the quality level of services provision;
- modernisation of the service sector in result of the implementation of new technologies, inclusive of ICT, what is particularly apparent in new and modern services, and whose consequence is faster internationalisation of production and service provision;
- innovations in the processes of service provision, including the development of e-services and services based on digital technology;
- the growing service specialisation and the emergence of specialised enterprises rendering services in vast trans-border markets;
- the development of systems products in services.

One of crucial decisions faced by the entities entering the path of internationalisation is the choice of the strategy of action related, *inter alia*, to the formation of the assortment offer. In the sphere of services, for which specific is a great variety and flexibility from the point of view of meeting customers' needs, important is the determination of the level of service offer standardisation. As the research shows, in case of service enterprises, the attributes of the market offer (such as price, quality, and customer attendance) are the basic instruments of competition (Nowacki 2012, p. 51). At the same time, as the key sources of competitive edge are considered the flexibility of adjustment to the customers' needs, the brand, and image of the service provider (Nowacki 2017, p. 154).

The aim of the article is to identify the degree of standardisation of the services rendered in the Polish market by entities with the share of foreign capital as well as to determine the impact of the variables characterising the organisation on the propensity to standardise or adapt the service offer.

## **Internationalisation of service enterprises and its consequences to the market offer**

The undertaking of expansion into foreign markets is connected with processes of internationalisation in a broad sense. The very notion of internationalisation (Witek-Hajduk 2010, pp. 24-25; Jarosiński 2013, p. 15) is a complex term considered in various planes, what implies the multiplicity and variety of defining thereof (Witek-Hajduk 2010, p. 17; Barłożewski 2017, pp. 15-19). In the traditional treatment, it is understood as the develop-

ment of international relations between relatively independent economies and enterprises (Liberska 2002, pp. 18-19). The very term 'internationalisation' is connected with the consideration of something as being international or becoming international. In the context of business activities of organisations, they are commonly comprehended as internationalisation of an enterprise related to every type of business activity being undertaken abroad, irrespective of the degree (scope) of foreign involvement of resources (Rymarczyk 2004, p. 19; Wiktor 2010, p. 11; Keegan 1999, pp. 33-57; Karasiewicz 2013, p. 109; Cavusgil, Knight, Riesenberger 2012, pp. 46-47; Pierścioneck 2011, p. 358; Fonfara 2009, p. 11; Strategor 2001, p. 353). Sometimes there is emphasised the necessity to choose a definite strategy (Hill 2013, pp. 492-493) or diversification thereof (Yip 2004, pp. 33-35), or an effect in the form of purchase and sale transaction, or improvement of the enterprise's competitive position (Jarosiński 2013, pp. 19-20). There is also the need to take into account the conditions of the international environment as the determinants of the scale of involvement (Calof, Beamish 1995, p. 116). Witek-Hajduk (2010, pp. 24-25), on the other hand, emphasises the relationships between various elements of the values chain connected with resources acquisition or deployment. Hollensen (2011, p. 58), in turn, pays attention to the carrying out activities in many countries of the world, though often limited to a definite region.

In the literature, one can find many various concepts classifying the factors determining the process of internationalisation. Its origin is seen within the three dynamically intertwined processes: technological development, political and legal measures, and cultural transformations (Gorynia 2005, p. 19). Most often there are mentioned their four basic categories: market, cost, procurement, and political (Rymarczyk 2004, pp. 58-73; Duliniec 2009, pp. 13-20; Grzegorzczak 2009, pp.14-16). In turn, Wiktor (Wiktor, Oczkowska, Żbikowska 2008, pp. 24-28) as well as Limański and Drabik (2010, pp. 21-28) pay attention to the three groups of motives: economic, market (marketing), and political (legal). In the context of service companies, it is worthwhile to refer, in turn, to the concept of Hollensen (2004, p. 74) who specify four groups of factors: information and communication technologies, cultural factors, location of service activity, and service standardisation and individualisation as well as the wider classification taking into account the economic, market, demographic, socio-cultural, political, legal and administration, technological, and natural factors (Pluta-Olearnik 2013, pp. 93-94).

In case of service companies, there are indicated several causative factors of internationalisation (Lenartowicz-Łysik 2002, p. 71). They include: stagnation of the home market and/or growth of the foreign market, threat to the position in the home market, internationalisation of activities carried out by competitors and/or their customers, building or reinforcing the competitive advantage, management's ambitions (Bradley 1995), cultural similarity of the mother and target country, size of the company and possibilities of its growth (Li, Guisinger 1992, pp. 675-696), policy and regulations of the target country, and characteristics of the service product (Dunning 1989, pp. 5-39), particularly in the context of interactions between the service provider and the customer in the process of provi-

sion and the share of tangible assets in that process (Vandermerwe, Chadwick 1989, pp. 79-93).

In the context of the process of formation of the market offer, enterprises operating in foreign markets face the dilemma of the scope of adjustment of its structure to the specificity of the target market. In the literature, there are distinguished the three model strategies in this area (Czinkota, Ronkainen, Moffet 1994, p. 455):

- lack of the measures related to the adjustment of the offer and other marketing activities to the requirements of the potential target market, what is identified with the strategy of standardisation (globalisation);
- adjustment of the offer and other marketing activities to the specificity of each potential sales market separately, what is defined as its adaptation (individualisation);
- combining the indispensable adaptation of the offer and marketing activities to the local determinants with the unification of the strategy and other measures at the regional or global level.

Standardisation is facilitated by quick technological changes, global competition, small cultural distance between markets, homogeneity of consumers' preferences, economies of scale related to the effects of the experience curve, centralisation of the organisation management structures, competitors standardisation, existence of international product standards as well as a favourable image of the company's brand. In favour of adaptation speak, in turn, these factors' opposites (Tayeb 2000, p. 391). It is also assumed that in case of service activity there is a greater ease of the simultaneous offer standardisation and adaptation, primarily through adding to the standardised base services of additional elements adjusted to the local preferences (Yip 2004, p. 192). This concept is defined as the hybrid strategy (Toyne, Walters 1993; Stonehouse et al. 2001, p. 209).

## Research methodology

The problems of the strategy of service enterprises internationalisation in the Polish market were the subject matter of the empirical research carried out in the mid-2017. The research was conducted on a sample of 153 service entities with foreign capital, selected in the stratified quota sampling. The basic stratification criterion was the enterprise size measured with the number of employees. An additional criterion of sampling was the profile of activity determined on the grounds of NACE sections. The structure of the surveyed population of enterprises is presented in Table 1.

From the point of view of the share of foreign capital, the surveyed entities were divided into those with the minority share of foreign capital (up to 50%), the majority one (from 51 up to 99%), and the exclusive (100%). The percentages of these groups of enterprises accounted for 47.1%, 23.5%, and 29.4% respectively.

Taking into account the origin of foreign capital, there were singled out the entities grouped into French (15.7%), German (22.9%), American (13.7%), other European (the prevailing number with the 38.6% share), and other non-European ones (9.2%).

Due to the specificity of the research area related to the necessity to have foreign capital, in the research, there is taken into consideration a clear overrepresentation of large and medium firms. Altogether, the sample comprised 43.8% of large entities, with the number of employees exceeding 249 individuals. In every fourth company, there worked from 50 to 249 people. The similar share was specific to small enterprises, with 10-40 persons, while 6.5% of entities were ranked as micro enterprises, with the number of employees from 5 to 9 persons.

The surveyed enterprises were characterised with a relatively low diversification from the point of view of the number of serviced domestic markets. The biggest group (30.1%) was in case of the entities carrying out their activities in more than 30 countries; a little bit smaller quantities were in case of the groups comprising 4-10, 11-30 markets, while the smallest concerned the companies operating in maximum 3 countries.

In case of the year of start-up of their activity in Poland, there were singled out five groups gathering by approx. 20% of entities – somewhat more numerous (24.8%) was only the category comprising the years 2001-2008.

Having in mind the type of activity, the research was carried out in twelve NACE (Polish PKB) sections, where three of them (G, H, and K) were singled out as the most numerous (inclusive of the dominating Section G with the share of 30.1%). Others were aggregated in two groups: one constituted Sections J, L, M, and N, while the second one – I, P, Q, R, and S.

The last variable charactering the enterprises in question was the prevailing form of internationalisation of enterprises in Poland. Based on that, there were singled out six categories among which the most numerous were a subsidiary/branch of the parent company (with the 38.6% share) and direct investment (the share at the level of 28.8%). Significantly more seldom there was represented the franchise-based activity (15.0%), while the shares lower than 10% were in case of Polish enterprise buyout, licensing, and joint ventures.

In his research, the author touched the problems of expansion of foreign service entities in the territory of Poland, with a particular consideration of its motives, determinants, strategies, including the process of formation of the service offer, human capital management, and building competitive edge. In this article, there are presented the findings related to the issue of formation of the offer of services being rendered in the context of their adaptation to the Polish conditions and preferences of local customers or standardising as the indication of globalisation of activities in foreign markets. The author also formulated the two research hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>: it is assumed that the operating in Poland foreign service enterprises more often apply the concept of standardisation of the offer of services rendered than adaptation thereof;
- H<sub>2</sub>: it is assumed that there is not any statistically significant dependence between the features describing the foreign service enterprises operating in Poland and the applied by them concepts of formation of the offer of services provided by them.

**Table 1**  
**Characteristics of the surveyed population of enterprises**

Specification	Number of entities	Percentage structure
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Share of foreign capital</b>		
up to 50 %	72	47.1
51-99%	36	23.5
100%	45	29.4
<b>Country of origin</b>		
France	24	15.7
Germany	35	22.9
USA	21	13.7
Other European countries	59	38.6
Other non-European countries	14	9.2
<b>Enterprise size</b>		
up to 9 employees	10	6.5
10-49 employees	39	25.5
50-249 employees	37	24.2
250 and more employees	67	43.8
<b>Number of domestic markets serviced</b>		
up to 3	28	18.3
from 3 to 10	44	28.8
from 11 to 30	35	22.9
31 and more	46	30.1
<b>Presence in the market in Poland</b>		
till 1992	31	20.3
1993-1997	29	19.0
1998-2000	29	19.0
2001-2008	38	24.8
2009 and further	26	17.0
<b>Type of activity</b>		
Section G	46	30.1
Section H	15	9.8
Section K	18	11.8
Sections J, L, M, N	18	11.8
Sections I, P, Q, R, S	56	36.6
<b>The prevailing form of internationalisation</b>		
Licence	9	5.9
Franchising	23	15.0
Joint ventures	7	4.6
Polish enterprise buyout	11	7.2
Direct investment	44	28.8
Foreign firm's subsidiary/branch	59	38.6

Source: author's own research, 2017.

In order to verify the formulated hypotheses, the author conducted an analysis of the distribution of responses with structure indices with consideration of the aforementioned variables in the respondents' particulars treated as independent variables (for the purposes of verification of the hypothesis  $H_1$ ) and an analysis of dependences between the dependent variable (the type of the adopted service offer) and the indicated independent variables with the use of a non-parametric test of the Kruskal-Wallis test for identification of dependences, and the Cramer's V coefficient for determination of their power (for the purposes of verification of the hypothesis  $H_2$ ). Computations were made with the use of the IBM SPSS 24.0 package.

### Nature of the offer of service entities with foreign capital in Poland

Decisions on formation of the offer of services rendered in Poland are made with consideration of many various factors. In case of the research in question, the most numerous group of enterprises offer in the Polish market their services in a similar way as in other countries, not introducing whatever modifications in the offer. Such an approach, based on the full standardisation, is specific for 45.8% of entities surveyed. Almost the same number (41.2%) takes into account the specificity of the Polish market and they partly adjust their offer to its requirements. Only 13.1% of them adopt the classical concept of individualisation, offering in Poland the services exclusively tailored to the requirements of Polish customers (Table 2).

In individual correlation cross-sections, one may see some differences in the applied strategies of service products. The individualisation-based approach characterises clearly more often than on average the entities operating in franchising systems and as joint ventures, what is a result of the use of experience of domestic enterprises being business partners. They are more readily applied by the entities with German roots, especially with minority foreign capital and operating in a small number of domestic markets, maximum 10.

The concept of full standardisation of the offer definitely prevails among micro entities, particularly originating from outside Europe and with a minor scope of the markets served. This is also the model of operation characteristic for the entities representing Sections J, L, M, and N.

**Table 2**

**Nature of the offer of services provided in Poland by the enterprises surveyed – research findings (in %)**

Specification	Concept A	Concept B	Concept C
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45.8</b>	<b>41.2</b>	<b>13.1</b>
<b>Share of foreign capital</b>			
up to 50 %	47.2	33.3	19.4
51-99%	36.1	52.8	11.1
100%	51.1	44.4	4.4

Specification	Concept A	Concept B	Concept C
<b>Country of origin</b>			
France	54.2	41.7	4.2
Germany	45.7	31.4	22.9
USA	47.6	42.9	9.5
Other European countries	37.3	49.2	13.6
Other non-European countries	64.3	28.6	7.1
<b>Enterprise size</b>			
up to 9 employees	60.0	40.0	0.0
10-49 employees	41.0	41.0	17.9
50-249 employees	45.9	40.5	13.5
250 and more employees	46.3	41.8	11.9
<b>Number of domestic markets serviced</b>			
up to 3	60.7	21.4	17.9
from 3 to 10	45.5	36.4	18.2
from 11 to 30	48.6	45.7	5.7
31 and more	34.8	54.3	10.9
<b>Presence in the market in Poland</b>			
till 1992	45.2	51.6	3.2
1993-1997	34.5	44.8	20.7
1998-2000	48.3	41.4	10.3
2001-2008	47.4	36.8	15.8
2009 and further	53.8	30.8	15.4
<b>Type of activity</b>			
Section G	45.7	39.1	15.2
Section H	53.3	33.3	13.3
Section K	33.3	50.0	16.7
Sections J, L, M, N	77.8	11.1	11.1
Sections I, P, Q, R, S	37.5	51, 8	10.7
<b>The prevailing form of internationalisation</b>			
Licence	44.4	44.4	11.1
Franchising	43.5	34.8	21.7
Joint ventures	57.1	14.3	28.6
Polish enterprise buyout	45.5	45.5	9.1
Direct investment	43.2	47.7	9.1
Foreign firm's subsidiary/branch	47.5	40.7	11.9

Concept A – We offer in Poland and other countries exactly the same services.

Concept B – We offer in Poland services partly such as in other countries and partly adjusted to the market requirements.

Concept C – We offer in Poland exclusively specific services adapted to the market requirements.

Source: as in Table 1.



**Table 3**

**Offer of the services provided by the surveyed companies in Poland and the features of the service companies in question – analysis of dependences with the use of Kruskal-Wallis test**

	Mean rank	Test value ( $\chi^2$ )	Number of degrees of freedom (df)	Asymptotic significance (p)	Dependence power (Cramer's V)
<b>Share of foreign capital</b>					
up to 50 %	78.67	2.218	2	0.330	0.165
51-99%	82.60				
100%	69.86				
<b>Country of origin</b>					
France	67.71	4.821	4	0.306	0.174
Germany	81.09				
USA	74.29				
Other European countries	82.83				
Other non-European countries	62.21				
<b>Enterprise size</b>					
up to 9 employees	62.10	2.023	3	0.568	0.095
10-49 employees	82.17				
50-249 employees	77.05				
250 and more employees	76.19				
<b>Number of domestic markets serviced</b>					
up to 3	69.04	2.898	3	0.408	0.187
from 3 to 10	79.32				
from 11 to 30	72.07				
31 and more	83.38				
<b>Presence in the market in Poland</b>					
till 1992	73.31	2.725	4	0.605	0.152
1993-1997	87.66				
1998-2000	74.19				
2001-2008	77.05				
2009 and further	72.58				
<b>Type of activity</b>					
Section G	77.96	7.379	4	0.117	0.201
Section H	72.07				
Section K	86.75				
Sections J, L, M, N	54.89				
Sections I, P, Q, R, S	81.51				

	Mean rank	Test value ( $\chi^2$ )	Number of degrees of freedom (df)	Asymptotic significance (p)	Dependence power (Cramer's V)
<b>The prevailing form of internationalisation</b>					
Licence	77.06	0.484	5	0.993	0.136
Franchising	82.11				
Joint ventures	75.86				
Polish enterprise buyout	75.55				
Direct investment	77.06				
Foreign firm's subsidiary/ branch	75.36				

Source: as in Table 1.

Seeing the occurrence of differences between features of the companies surveyed and the nature of their service offer, the author also surveyed the dependences between those variables, using the non-parametric test of the Kruskal-Wallis test. The use of this test did not reveal the existence of any statistically significant dependence between the nature of the offer and whatever independent variable at the level of significance  $p=0.05$  (Table 3). Therefore, the aforementioned dependences are of the contingent nature.

## Resumption

The presented research findings show a relatively little flexibility of enterprises with the share of foreign capital operating in the Polish market for services as regards the formation of the service offer connected with their adjustment to the Polish market's specificity. In the overwhelming majority of cases they apply the strategy of multiplication of the offer from other markets, in a relatively low degree taking into account the specificity of Polish markets and Polish consumers. Based on this, it is proper to state that there are no grounds for rejection of the hypothesis  $H_1$  saying that the operating in Poland foreign service companies more often apply the concept of standardisation of the offer of services rendered than adaptation thereof.

What is very much characteristic, there are not substantial difference in this respect between individual categories of these companies – the research shows that this approach is not differentiated by the variable describing the entities surveyed. Hence, there are not grounds for rejection of the hypothesis  $H_2$  of the lack of statistically significant dependence between the features describing the operating in Poland foreign service enterprises and the applied by them concepts of formation of the offer of rendered services, either.

This primarily stems from the fact that the nature of the market offer is not one of the key factors serving building competitive edge. Foreign companies focus, first of all, on professionalism of customer attendance, including its promptness, as well as the service provider's

brand image. In this context, the shift of the developed models and procedures from other, particularly better developed markets seems to be a symptom of activity optimisation.

The presented findings concern the research implemented in a relatively small scale. Certainly it would be worthwhile undertaking research on a considerable larger scale, both from the point of view of the sample size and more extended issues aimed at identification of the reasons and diagnose of effects of the concepts implemented. It would also be worthwhile assessing statements of the demand side representatives – how they perceive the standardised services and what their expectations are as regards individualisation thereof.

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## **Kształtowanie oferty zagranicznych podmiotów usługowych w Polsce – pomiędzy standaryzacją a adaptacją**

### **Streszczenie**

Rosnące znaczenie sektora usług w gospodarkach przy jednoczesnej intensyfikacji zjawisk konkurencyjnych skłania przedsiębiorstwa usługowe do podejmowania ekspansji na rynki zagraniczne. Podjęcie decyzji dotyczącej internacjonalizacji wiąże się nie tylko z wyborem rynku docelowego, ale też koncepcji prowadzonych

na nim działań marketingowych, w tym również związanych z kształtem oferty usługowej. Rozstrzygnięcia wymaga dylemat związany z zakresem jej standaryzacji. Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja stopnia standaryzacji usług świadczonych na rynku polskim przez podmioty z udziałem kapitału zagranicznego oraz określenie wpływu zmiennych charakteryzujących organizację na skłonność do standaryzacji bądź adaptacji oferty usługowej. Podstawą rozważań są wyniki badania empirycznego wśród menadżerów działających w Polsce przedsiębiorstwach usługowych z kapitałem zagranicznym. Pokazują one wysoką skłonność do pełnego lub częściowego standaryzowania oferty usług, nie występuje przy tym istotne statystycznie zróżnicowanie tego procesu w zależności od cech badanych przedsiębiorstw usługowych. Artykuł ma charakter badawczy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** internacjonalizacja przedsiębiorstw, usługi, przedsiębiorstwa usługowe, standaryzacja oferty usługowej, adaptacja oferty usługowej.

**Kody JEL:** D22, F23, L80, M21, M31

## **Формирование предложения зарубежных субъектов в сфере услуг в Польше. Между стандартизацией и адаптацией**

### **Резюме**

Повышающееся значение сектора услуг в экономиках, при одновременной интенсификации конкурентных явлений, склоняет предприятия сферы услуг выходить на зарубежные рынки. Принятие решения в отношении интернационализации связано не только с выбором целевого рынка, но и концепции проводимых на нем маркетинговых действий, в том числе связанных с формой предложения услуг. Надо решить дилемму, связанную с диапазоном его стандартизации. Цель статьи – выявить степень стандартизации услуг, оказываемых на польском рынке субъектами с зарубежным капиталом, а также определить влияние переменных, характеризующих организацию, на склонность к стандартизации или адаптации предложения услуг. Основу для рассуждений представляют результаты эмпирического обследования среди менеджеров действующих в Польше предприятий в сфере услуг с зарубежным капиталом. Они показывают высокую склонность к полной или частичной стандартизации предложения услуг, при чем не выступает статистически существенная дифференциация этого процесса в зависимости от черт обследуемых предприятий из сферы услуг. Статья имеет исследовательский характер.

**Ключевые слова:** интернационализация предприятий, услуги, предприятия сферы услуг, стандартизация предложения услуг, адаптация предложения услуг.

**Коды JEL:** D22, F23, L80, M21, M31

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