

REVIEW OF THE CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS “OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS TO CURRENT BUSINESS MANAGEMENT IN CROSS-BORDER COMPARISON 2015” (UNIVERSITY OF WEST BOHEMIA, PILSEN)

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In May 2015 the annual conference “Opportunities and Threats to Current Business Management in Cross-border Comparison 2015” of the University of West Bohemia Pilsen/Czech Republic took place. The recently published conference proceedings are edited by Lenka Čechurová and published by GUC-Verlag/Germany. As in the past, this year’s proceedings present a diversity of ambitious research by scholars from various universities and other institutions in the Czech Republic and Germany. They provide interesting insights into current economic trends and issues from a specific perspective spanning the borders between the two countries.

During the last decades, developments in economic and social life have become more and more dynamic and global. Markets have been permanently changing and businesses nowadays can hardly be run with a solely national focus. New communication technologies based on the internet have massively intensified these impacts. This has special relevance in particular for border regions because tendencies from both countries usually overlap there. National effects can be accelerated or relieved by such interferences. Specific opportunities and threats for businesses are the result. An illustrative example of that is given by Ungerman in a case study, where he uses several analysis methods of strategic management to describe specific risk factors when entering foreign B2B markets.

Changes in the way business is done occur especially rapidly in the trade or service sector, where required investments are usually lower and business is based rather on human capital than on machinery and plant. This is especially

valid for tourism in border regions. Therefore, it is not surprising that these fields are of special interest for research. Comparisons and analyses of Czech and German conditions can provide valuable findings in order to improve growth and profitability as well as to avoid risks in these businesses on both sides of the border.

In this sense, Čechurová analyzes key problems in project management and their success rates in terms of time, cost and quality based on surveys of Czech and German service sector companies. Using a case study and an additional customer survey, Dědková looks at customer behaviour and satisfaction in rail transportation within the border region. ZIPS asks generally for reasons why people visit the neighbour country and collects data on their spending. A cluster analysis identifies several typical customer profiles with interesting results for tourism and retail-related businesses. Svoboda/Severová characterise the level of sales of direct-from-farm products and organic food products on markets in the Czech Republic and Germany based on secondary data and present suggestions for improvements.

As mentioned above, recent developments in trade and tourism are strongly furthered by new technologies. Therefore, Janeček/Tluchoř explore the use of online communication in the field of tourism. They conduct a content analysis of the websites of Czech and German Destination Management Organizations comparing in detail several factors like primary focus, navigation/interactivity, visual presentation style or textual information. A similar look at new technologies is to be found in the following articles: Králová describes the use of QR codes in retail businesses based on an online questionnaire on the demand side.

Kunešová/Mičík compare internet use and online purchases for the EU, Germany and the Czech Republic based on secondary statistical data and their own survey of typical online shops in the B2C sector. In addition, new telecommunication technologies can also help to collect research data. Herget/Vogelová show how positioning data from mobile networks combined with classical face-to-face interviews can be used to assess the impact of big events in terms of number and origin of visitors and their estimated total expenditures. Another aspect of new technical developments is indicated by CIMLER. He describes the current technical and administrative burden for businesses linked to the new electronic sales registration which is intended to support taxation purposes in the Czech Republic.

Other articles show a stronger focus on developments within the Czech Republic. HOMMEROVÁ conducted an extensive survey among non-governmental and non-profit organizations in the Czech Republic. She elaborates specific characteristics and the use of classical management techniques, such as long-term planning, PR management, internal communication, funding or staff evaluation and development, in these organisations. Rodonaia/Šrédli characterise the market conditions and the degree of competition for bakery and confectionary products. Šrédli/Mikhalkina demonstrate the correlation between the number of workers and the economic performance of the agricultural sector and evaluate year-to-year changes in the structure of agricultural production in the Czech Republic. Comparable impacts could be assumed for other countries.

Most of the studies mentioned above collected empirical data by conducting original surveys. In most cases, the results are presented descriptively. Statistical tests for significant differences and influencing factors provide interesting opportunities for further research in these fields.

A need to carry on with the work done so far also is evident, of course, for research projects of which interim results are presented. Štolfová introduces the first phase of a four-year

research project entitled "Sustainability of Cultural Heritage in the Czech Republic" which is intended to measure the economic and social impact of tangible cultural heritage. The importance of human capital is emphasized by Myslivcová. She analyzes marketing concepts for human resources via secondary research and individual in-depth interviews with HR experts from several international companies in order to prepare further quantitative research in this field.

Border regions can be seen as a kind of melting pot where influences from two countries interact in manifold ways. The broad spectrum of research work presented at the conference impressively reflects this diversity. The identification of trends, specific driving forces and risk factors is one of the most important goals for economic research that can help business ventures to succeed in this complex and dynamic business environment. Therefore, even more effort - especially in empirical research - is needed to explore and analyse these aspects. This makes one curious about the results of new or continuing research projects which are expected to be presented at this conference in coming years. It would be favourable, if the contributions of German research scientists could be increased again in the next years in order to provide a more equally weighted view from both countries. In addition, the involvement of the manufacturing industry sector could be strengthened so that all parts of the economy could be covered. Nevertheless, the presented results are very interesting and helpful for both practitioners and researchers. They provide a solid and inspiring basis for further research and a successful continuance of this conference in the coming years.

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